

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****CABINET****DATE: 24 NOVEMBER 2020****REPORT OF: MR TIM OLIVER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****LEAD OFFICER: RACHEL CROSSLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR STRATEGY AND COMMISSIONING****SUBJECT: COVID-19 COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT****ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: Tackling Health Inequality / Empowering Communities****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

COVID-19 has amplified the stark inequalities that persist in our society and we must do all that we can to support communities who have been disproportionately impacted.

The Covid-19 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) explores how communities across Surrey have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, what support communities need as the pandemic continues, and communities' priorities for recovery. Thousands of residents, people working in frontline services and partners have taken part. The research has brought us closer to residents at this crucial time and provides a strong understanding of local priorities.

Early findings have already been incorporated into parts of the council's strategic, financial and service planning, and now the research has concluded this should extend further across all areas of the council's work. This work is also informing healthcare partners and guiding their strategic prioritisation and service planning. The council will work with a range of partners who also have a role to play in responding to the research, as well as communities themselves, providing support and empowering them to tackle local issues where they can.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Note the findings from the Covid-19 Community Impact Assessment, summarised in Annex 1.
2. Consider how the findings from the Covid-19 Community Impact Assessment can best be incorporated into the council's strategic, financial and service planning and delivery.
3. Highlight areas or issues of interest and for future focus in terms of further research and analysis.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Thousands of community members and people working in frontline services have taken part in the CIA through interviews, focus groups and surveys, and the findings are rooted in what they have told us. Further incorporating the CIA findings into the council's strategic and operational planning is an opportunity to embed community voices in our work, support

affected communities, build community resilience as the pandemic continues and support Surrey's recovery.

## DETAILS:

### Community Impact Assessment – Research Approach

1. The CIA is a suite of intelligence products that explore the health, social and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on communities across Surrey, what support communities need as the pandemic looks set to continue and communities' priorities for recovery.
2. The primary aims of the CIA are:
  - To enable partners to provide targeted support to communities impacted by Covid-19
  - To enable partners to act preventatively to mitigate future impacts
  - To better understand the experiences of residents to create resident led recommendations for improvements.
3. The CIA has been developed using a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods, designed to ensure that we have a comprehensive understanding of impact, and to capture the views and experiences of a wide range of residents. Thousands of residents, people working in frontline services and partners have taken part in the research starting in May of this year and concluding in October 2020.
4. The project involved conducting a survey of over 2,000 households in Surrey to provide a broad understanding of residents' experiences across a wide range of topics, oversampling on known low response groups to ensure robustness. Existing data sets on health, social and economic risks and outcomes were also analysed and mapped to understand the prevalence of certain vulnerabilities, and to identify local impacts.
5. In parallel, needs assessments were undertaken to understand the impact of Covid-19 on communities. A mixed method approach was utilised which involved conducting detailed interviews with residents who have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19, including those living in areas that have seen significant social and economic impacts, and people belonging to groups with pre-existing vulnerabilities or who have a high risk of mortality from the virus. To ensure robustness, data was gathered through interviews with community members and people working in local services. The qualitative findings were incorporated with quantitative data. These assessments provided insights into communities' experiences and recommendations for strategy and action.
6. The products that make up the CIA are:
  - Geographical Impact Assessment - Presents analysis of the impact of Covid-19 on local communities across health, economic and vulnerability dimensions. The analysis helps to identify which places in Surrey have been most affected by the pandemic and how.
  - Temperature Check Survey - Survey of over 2,000 households from across Surrey to understand their experiences of the pandemic and lockdown.

- Place Based Ethnography - Detailed research to understand the financial, emotional and community impacts of Covid-19 on individuals living in communities that have been most impacted.
  - Rapid Needs Assessments - 10 in-depth assessments of how vulnerable communities have been affected during Covid-19 and these communities' needs and priorities.
  - Local Recovery Index (LRI) - The LRI is a surveillance tool for monitoring how well Surrey is recovering from the pandemic. It looks at a range of indicators across three themes: economy, health and society.
7. The work has been guided by a steering group made up of representatives from county, district and borough councils, health partners, the police, the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) and residents in Surrey. Organisations represented on the steering group include Surrey County Council, Surrey Heartlands CCG, Frimley ICS, North West Surrey ICP, Surrey Downs ICP, Surrey & Borders Partnership, Healthwatch, Surrey Voluntary Action, Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, Spelthorne Borough Council, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council and Surrey Police.
8. The full findings and more information on the research methodology of the CIA is available on Surrey-I, our data repository website, at the following link:  
<https://www.surreyi.gov.uk/surrey-insights/>

## Key Findings

9. A summary of key findings is in Annex 1. The research shows that Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on certain groups within Surrey, including people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, people experiencing domestic abuse, people with mental health conditions and those in residential care. Specific places within Surrey also appear to have been impacted more than others, including areas in Spelthorne, Reigate & Banstead, Mole Valley and Waverley.
10. Various cross-cutting themes and impacts have emerged from the research. These include:
- Mental health – there have been significant emotional and mental health impacts felt by residents. Many residents have felt isolated and lonely, and others have suffered emotionally due to a deterioration in their personal financial situation. The mental health impacts have been felt most by younger people aged 16-34 and those living in low income households. 52% of those aged 16-25 say they felt lonelier due to lockdown, and 46% of those from low income households felt the same.
  - Vulnerable groups – groups with pre-existing vulnerabilities have been disproportionately impacted, including those with pre-existing mental health conditions, residents living in residential care homes, people experiencing domestic abuse and people from BAME communities. Common themes included feelings of isolation, exclusion, stigma and confusion around information, guidelines and accessing services. For example, in our temperature check survey 48% of BAME respondents were unaware of food banks compared to 19% of respondents overall.

- Finance – many households have felt a high financial and economic strain with over a third of households reporting a negative impact on their finances. The number of people claiming out of work benefits has increased nearly three-fold since the start of lockdown. There are also widespread concerns about the local economy and the demise of high streets.
- Neighbourliness – in urban and suburban areas there has been a greater feeling of neighbourliness and helping out between local people, with hyper-local networks forming, and a greater sense of community being developed. This was particularly reflected in the response from vulnerable communities.
- Information and guidance – many groups have found information and guidance (e.g. from government) about lockdown and the pandemic confusing. There is mistrust amongst many residents towards official communications and messaging. Vulnerable groups felt effective engagement and culturally appropriate communication was needed.
- Services – there have been many positive messages about local services and use and access during the pandemic. This includes health services such as telephone GP appointments, services for vulnerable people such as food and medication delivery, and the role of the VCFS. For example, over 90% of those who needed help getting food and medicine received support, showing that these services for vulnerable people were effective. However, for some vulnerable people, e.g. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, access to some services was challenging although overcome by support from outreach teams.

11. As part of our ethnographic research we spent time with over twenty residents to deeply understand their experience of the pandemic and how it had affected them emotionally, financially and in terms of their community feeling. Using this research, we have developed resident profiles which are a rich source of insight that bring to life the experience of residents during this time. A sample of these can be found in Annex 1.

### **Responding to the Findings**

12. On 27 October 2020, [Cabinet agreed](#) the content of the refreshed organisation strategy. The refreshed strategy has been informed by the themes in the CIA and emphasises four priority objectives as our new focus areas to deliver on our long-term aims:

- Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit - support people and businesses across Surrey to grow during the economic recovery and re-prioritise infrastructure plans to adapt to the changing needs and demands of residents at a time of financial challenges.
- Tackling health inequality - drive work across the system to reduce widening health inequalities, increasing our focus on addressing mental health and accelerating health and social care integration to reduce demand on services while improving health outcomes for residents.
- Enabling a greener future - build on behaviour changes and lessons learnt during lockdown to further progress work to tackle environmental challenges, improve air quality and focus on green energy to make sure we achieve our 2030 net zero target.

- Empowering communities - reinvigorate our relationship with residents, empowering communities to tackle local issues and support one another, while making it easier for everyone to play an active role in the decisions that will shape Surrey's future.

13. Overall, the research identifies a risk that inequality between communities is likely to increase as a result of Covid-19 and its likely long-term impacts. This is reflected in the refreshed organisation strategy, which reaffirms our commitment to 'no one left behind' as our single guiding principle. We have also identified data as a key enabler within the refreshed strategy to support us in our ambitions and the CIA demonstrates the importance of taking an insight-driven approach to strategic and operational planning and delivery to affect positive outcomes for residents.

14. The findings of the CIA will enable partners to target resources and support towards those communities where there has been the greatest impact, and which are most susceptible to falling behind. Over 200 stakeholders from different partners have been involved and consulted in developing the CIA to date, and we have been disseminating early findings at various partnership forums and will continue to do so now the research has concluded. The findings will allow partners to more effectively support communities during recovery and help tackle inequalities in Surrey.

#### **CONSULTATION:**

15. A wide range of partners and residents have been involved in the research and have been consulted in the development of the findings and recommendations. This includes:

- Over 2000 respondents to our temperature check survey
- Dozens of residents who have been involved in our qualitative research, including the Rapid Needs Assessment and the ethnographic research
- Front-line staff involved in providing care to vulnerable people from across councils, the NHS, community organisations and the voluntary sector
- Over 200 stakeholders consulted from across a range of partners and partnership forums including county and borough councils, health partners, the police, the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS).

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

16. The primary risk identified through the research is that the impacts of Covid-19 have been felt disproportionately by the most vulnerable groups in Surrey and it is likely that the pandemic will increase inequality between communities in the long term. Acting on the data and integrating it into our strategic plans is important to mitigating this risk and ensuring that nobody is left behind.

#### **SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTARY**

17. Although significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve the council's financial position, the medium-term financial outlook is uncertain. The public health crisis has resulted in increased costs which are not fully funded in the current year. With uncertainty about the ongoing impact of this and no clarity on the extent to which both central and local funding sources might be affected from next year onward, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be

constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term.

18. There are no direct financial implications of the Covid-19 CIA but using the evidence base will allow us to prioritise and ensure we are targeting resources most efficiently and effectively to improve outcomes for residents.

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER**

19. There are no significant legal implications raised in the report.

#### **EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY**

20. The CIA provides a rich source of insight into how Covid-19 has impacted residents and communities in Surrey, with a particular focus on groups including people with disabilities, people with mental health conditions, homeless clients, older people who live alone, over 80s, carers, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and residents from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.
21. Overall, the research identifies a risk that inequality between communities is likely to increase as a result of Covid-19 and its likely long-term impacts. The refreshed organisation strategy strengthens the council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, with the guiding principle of leaving no-one behind at the heart of the strategy. Four equality objectives have been integrated into the strategy, around the economy, health, communities and workforce, which will enable us to prioritise activity to tackle inequality.

#### **PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

22. The insights derived from the CIA products, particularly through the lens of Rapid Needs Assessments, highlight key priorities for focus, particularly in tackling health inequalities that Covid-19 has amplified in Surrey. Our joint efforts to support communities who have been disproportionately impacted remains at the forefront of public health action through targeted health protection, prevention and health promotion. Moreover, the CIA informs our wider partnership efforts across health and care to support targeted interventions and place-based health and wellbeing improvements.

#### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

23. The CIA has been published on Surrey-I, and a summary report disseminated to stakeholders that brings together the findings and recommendations across all the products. A communications campaign to disseminate the findings to internal stakeholders, members, partners and residents is underway. Various mediums will be used to ensure appropriateness of messaging for each audience. We will also be working with various teams and partners over the coming months to ensure that the findings and recommendations of the work lead to action on the ground.
24. It is expected that CIA will form the basis for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), and a paper will be prepared in the next few months to take to the Health and Wellbeing Board outlining a proposal for how the JSNA will be completed.

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**Consulted:**

Cabinet

Corporate Leadership Team

Health and Wellbeing Board/Community Safety Board

Recovery Coordination Group

Surrey Heartlands Quality and Performance Board

Partners in the voluntary, community and faith sector

**Annexes:**

Annex 1 – Surrey Covid 19 Community Impact Assessment - Cabinet Presentation  
November 2020

**Sources/background papers:**

Surrey County Council Organisation Strategy 2021 – 2026

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