

Subject:	COVID-19 Death Management : Financial Report		
Date of Meeting:	14th May 2020		
Report of:	Executive Director Health and Adult Social Care		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Annie Sparks Regulatory Services Manager	Tel: 07767 613460
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 In response to the COVID -19 pandemic a Pan Sussex Death Management Plan has been developed and implemented in accordance with duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The Sussex Resilience Forum have been responsible for the coordination and delivery of the plan. This report presents the costs for delivering the plan and how these will be distributed across Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 Agree a further contribution of £0.068m to the pan-Sussex response to death management of the COVID-19 pandemic based on the council's share of 17% of a maximum additional Sussex-wide spend of £0.400m. This is in addition to the £0.046m contribution (17% of £0.270m) reported to Policy & Resources Committee on 30th April.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 On 19th March 2020, as part of the response to the COVID–19 pandemic, the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) declared a Major Incident under the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. This triggered the establishment of a Strategic Coordination Group (SCG), including executive leads for partner organisations and agencies.

3.2 An emergency command and control structure was immediately implemented that ensured quick and timely communication channels with central government through to local GOLD executive leads and down to a coordinated tactical operational response.

3.3 Immediately, a Death Management Process Cell was established, and a pan Sussex Death Management Plan was implemented. To be both responsive to the emerging risk, and ensure a swift and timely response, the cell membership included coroners, NHS and CCG representatives, Police and local authorities. It was also agreed that Brighton & Hove City Council would be the strategic lead for the delivery of the plan.

- 3.4 The development and implementation of the plan was informed by not only national Public Health England modelling data but also local data relating to the end-to-end body management processes.
- 3.5 On 7th April 2020 it was agreed by the SRF SCG that spending to deliver the death management response would be split across the 3 administrative areas, Brighton & Hove City Council, West Sussex County Council, and East Sussex County Council. It was agreed that the division would be in accordance with population count.

	% share
Brighton & Hove - BHCC	17.0%
East Sussex - ESCC	32.5%
West Sussex - WSCC	50.5%
Sussex overall	100.0%

- 3.6 On 9 April 2020, using officer urgency powers, the designated Gold Command officer authorised the immediate purchase of additional equipment and facilities to provide for PAN Sussex excess death management on behalf of the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF).
- 3.7 Following updated Public Health modelling and in order to manage the projected risks, contingency plans for additional body storage were urgently required as the number of storage containers made available by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) were insufficient to meet the required capacity. A supplier for refrigerated containers, shelters and storage became available at short notice and the Gold Command (and SRF lead) therefore, considered that the use of officer urgency powers was appropriate to secure the required facilities for Sussex given the very high national demand for storage facilities.
- 3.8 This cost is expected to be approximately £0.270m once all invoices are settled and was reported to Policy & Resources Committee on the 30th April 2020. However, it should be noted that Brighton & Hove City Council's share of this expense will be 17% or approximately £0.046m.
- 3.9 To manage risk and be responsive, additional body storage facilities were aligned with existing body storage and mortuary facilities across the county, and this has enabled existing skilled staff and resource to be utilised. This has also helped to minimise the movement of bodies, and reduce associated risks.
- 3.10 Four sites across Sussex have been utilised and additional cost has been incurred in setting up the sites, and the provision of services and equipment. In addition, ongoing site management costs including security and body transportation are being incurred. This is approximately an additional £0.280m across Sussex (Brighton & Hove's share of this expense at 17% is approximately £0.048m).

- 3.11 The majority of infrastructure, processes and procedures are now in place. The Death Management Cell continues to meet to review risks and review the national and local data implications.
- 3.12 The impacts of the changes to the national restrictions on infection and death rates is uncertain. Therefore, additional Sussex-wide contingency funding of £0.120m is recommended and will need to be kept under review to ensure a fast effective and dynamic response and reflect changes in the death rate and changes to how bereavement services are delivered and managed.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 As an emergency response, no alternative responses have been considered. Not preparing effectively for the potential consequences and outcomes indicated by national and local data, including Public Health England analysis and guidance, would clearly leave local council's open to severe criticism and reputational harm, particularly given the government's Emergency Response Funds provided to councils to meet such costs.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Communication has been coordinated through the Sussex Resilience Forum Warning and Informing GOLD Communications Team, and the SRF Strategic Coordinated Group represented by the BHCC Executive Director for Health and Adult Social Care.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic a pan-Sussex Death Management Plan has been developed and implemented. This has been informed by national public health modelling, and local data.
- 6.2 The majority of the infrastructure to deliver the plan is in place.
- 6.3 The SRF Death Management Process Cell routinely reviews the risks and data and adjusts the plan and response as required. This includes a response to the changes in the national restrictions and the impacts this will have on the death rates and delivery of bereavement services.
- 6.4 All actions, risks, and costings are reported through to the SRF Strategic Coordinating Group and membership includes executive leads for WSCC, ESCC, BHCC and partner agencies and organisations.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 Expenditure of £0.270m in respect of death management (BHCC share £0.046m) was reported to Policy & Resources Committee on 30th April and this was planned to be funded from the £8.157m of Government grant that had been announced at that time.

- 7.2 This report details a further £0.400m (BHCC share £0.068m) of expenditure which would bring the total BHCC share up to £0.114m. The government has announced a further £8.048m grant but it is important to note that because it is not possible to accurately quantify all of the costs that might arise in response to the Coronavirus pandemic it is therefore not possible to say if the government funding will be sufficient to cover these emergency costs including the excess death management costs in this report. Should these funds be insufficient, members are advised that the council would need to call on its reserves which may include the working balance and other earmarked reserves.

Finance Officer Consulted: Jeff Coates

Date: 11/05/20

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 The proposals in the report are consistent with the council's powers and obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act and Government direction and guidance.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Culbert

Date: 12th May 2020

Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 Specific bereavement cell established considering communication and support in relation to faith groups and vulnerable sectors of the community and ensuring dignity throughout the death management process

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.5 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.6 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.7 Risk logs are reviewed weekly by the death management cell and reported to the SRF SCG.

Public Health Implications:

- 7.8 Actions and plans are informed by Public Health intelligence data and in close consultation with all three Coroners, NHS, CCG and Public Health colleagues.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.9 This is a coordinated pan Sussex response as part of the Sussex Resilience Forum.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices: None

