Gedling
Borough Council

Report to Council

Subject: Covid-19 Response

Date: 18 November 2020

Author: Service Manager Community Relations

Purpose

To update Council on the Authority's on-going Covid-19 Response work.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

1) **Council note the contents of this report.**

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1 Background

1.1 Since March the Council has been operating an Incident Management Team (IMT) to coordinate both the emergency response work relating to the Covid-19 and the Reset Strategy work to enable a future economic, community and operational recovery from the pandemic.

1.2 Since October, there has been a sharp rise in Covid-19 cases in the Borough. Due to these circumstances the Reset Strategy coordination work has been stood down and full focus has been on IMT Response coordination.

Local Tier Status

1.3 On 30 October, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham became a "Very High" Risk, Tier 3 area. This is the highest tier of local restrictions available, as part of the Government's three tier approach. This imposed additional local restrictions for our area, the objectives of which was to curb the rise in cases across the area.

1.4 On 31 October, the Prime Minister announced additional restrictions planned for the whole of England that would replace the existing Tiered approach across the Country. These national restrictions came into force on 5 November 2020 and will currently remain in place until 2 December 2020. An overview of these current restrictions affecting the Borough can be viewed on the

Government website - https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november.

1.5   From the 2 December 2020, local areas will return to their Tier status. However, the timeline for reviewing a Tier 3 area designation is 28 days. Therefore it is anticipated, a review of the local Tier designation for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, will be required with Government before the end of the national lockdown, given the Tier 3 status will have expired by December. IMT is currently monitoring the situation and preparations for a return to the local Tier system, working closely with partners through the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF).

Local Data

1.6   Daily reporting of local data on positive Covid-19 cases has been undertaken since the start of October by IMT. These data are reported into Senior Leadership Team daily and reported to Cabinet members weekly. The source of data is the National Covid-19 dashboard and Members can access the latest daily updated from this website - https://coronavirus-staging.data.gov.uk/. Figure 1 shows the rise in cases in Gedling between 30 August and 8 November 2020. Tracking this rise in cases has enabled the Council's IMT to anticipate and prepare for new restrictions and the impact on our services and communities.
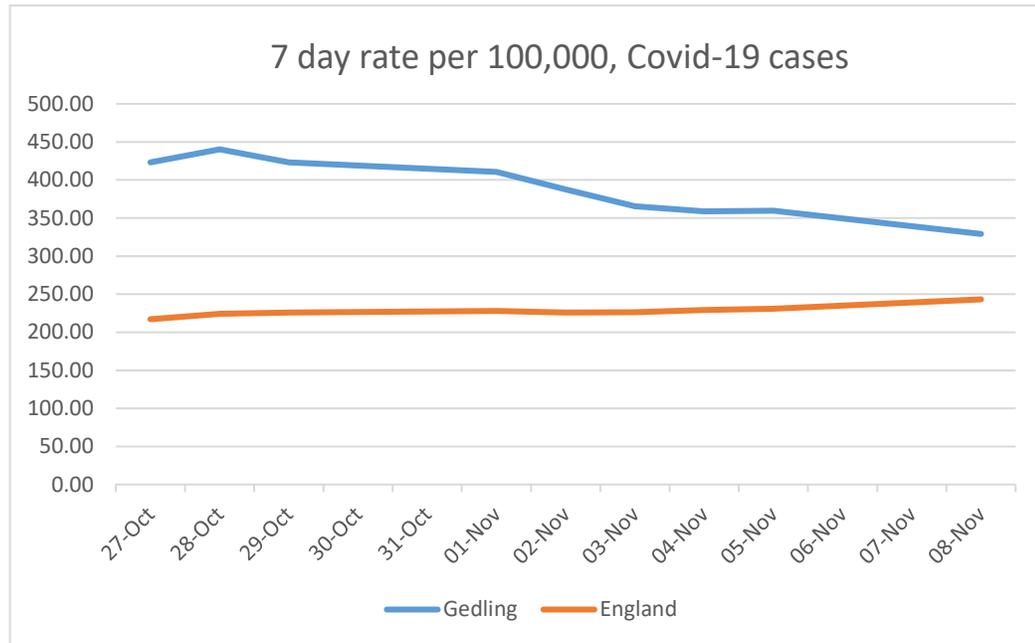
Figure 1
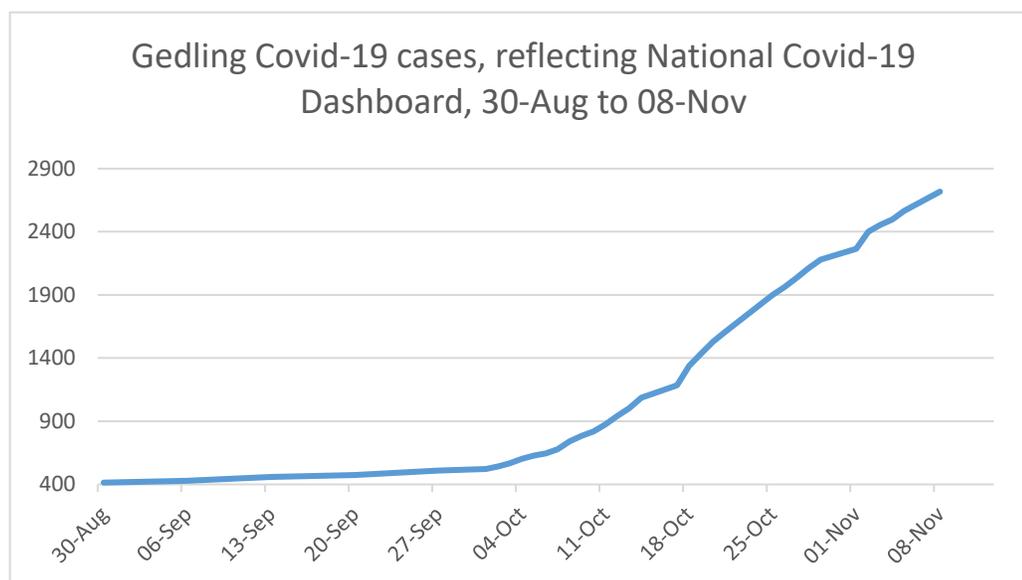
1.7   The best comparator between areas for measuring the infection rate is the 7 day rate of positive Covid-19 cases per 100,000 population. On 8 November, the 7-day rate for Gedling was 329.10 cases per 100,000. This compared to the England average of 243.2 cases per 100,000 the same day. On this day Bassetlaw, Mansfield and Nottingham had higher 7 day rates than the Borough. October saw a considerable increase in number of positive cases in Gedling,

reaching a peak of 440.20 per 100,000 on 28 October. November has seen a gradual decrease in the number of positive cases being recorded. Figure 2 compares the Gedling rate with the England average between 27 October and 8 November.

Figure 2

7 day rate per 100,000, Covid-19 cases

1.8   Figure 3 shows more localised data within the Borough, recorded by Middle Super Out Area (MSOA). This data also calculates the 7 day rate per 100,000 population for each area. For the period 27 October to 3 November, Bestwood Village had the highest rate of 446.2 per 100,000 (44 cases), followed closely by Carlton and Arnold Town. Other areas of Arnold and Carlton also had the highest rates for the Borough during this period and 13 of the 15 Borough's MSOA's were above the national average. The orange coloured column in Figure 3 represents data from 31 October and gives a comparison against the 3 November rate. It could be assumed from these data transmission is largely within the community.

1.9   Table 1 shows Covid-19 cases data for each MSOA in the Borough and includes the actual number of positive cases for the 7 day period up to 3 November. It reflects the highest transmission areas for the Borough cited in paragraph 1.8.
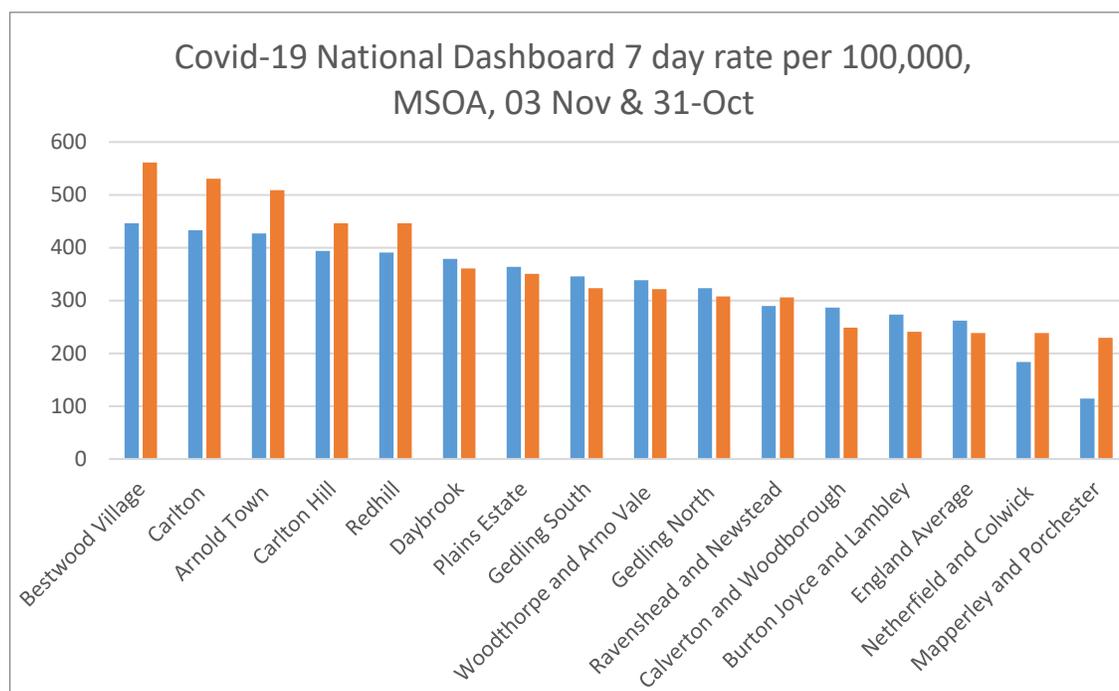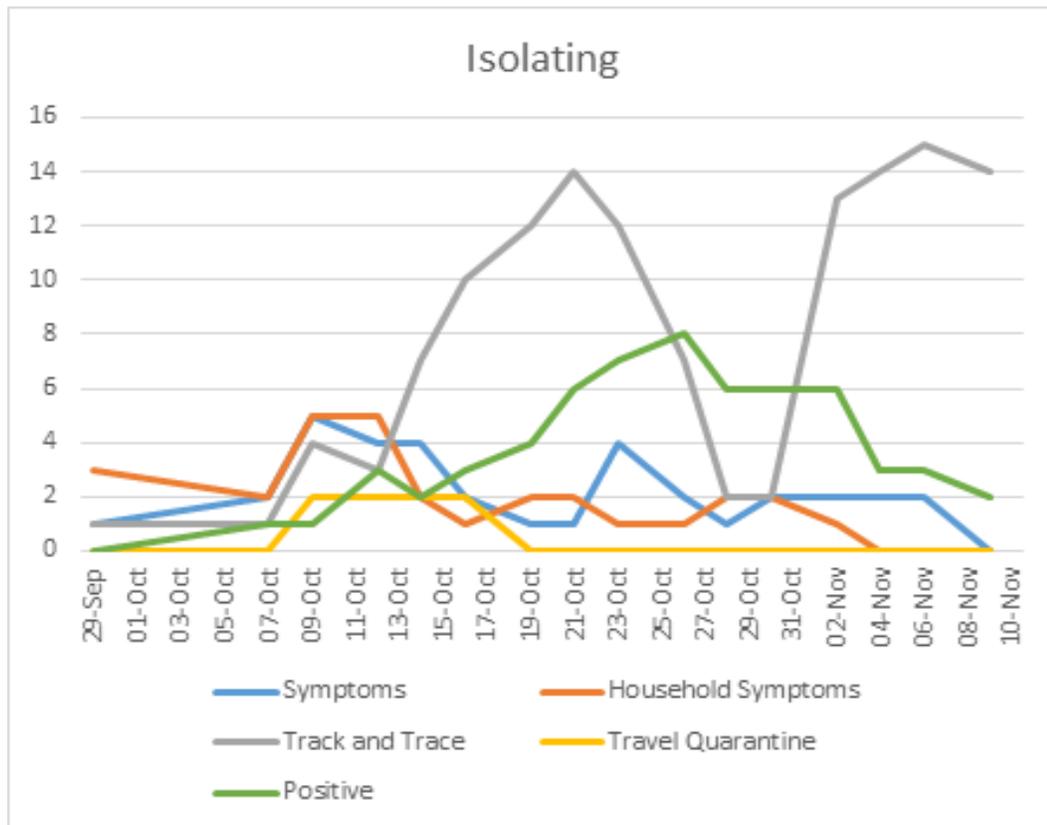
Figure 3

Covid-19 National Dashboard 7 day rate per 100,000, MSOA, 03 Nov & 31-Oct

Table 1

Covid-19 National Dashboard 7 day rate	Local rates per 100,000	Total Cases
MSOA	**27-Oct**	**27-Oct**
Bestwood Village	446.2	44
Carlton	433.3	34
Arnold Town	427	31
Carlton Hill	394	28
Redhill	391.1	28
Daybrook	378.6	27
Plains Estate	363.8	27
Gedling South	345.9	27
Woodthorpe and Arno Vale	338.3	26
Gedling North	323.6	26
Ravenshead and Newstead	289.4	26
Calverton and Woodborough	286.7	26
Burton Joyce and Lambley	273.3	17
England Average	261.9	
Netherfield and Colwick	183.5	14
Mapperley and Porchester	114.7	10

1.10 Since March 2020, IMT has requested a situation report in terms of staffing levels to understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's front line services. In October, given the rise in local cases identified by IMT's daily tracking of community transmission, the staffing situation report was collated and escalated to Senior Leadership Team 3 days a week. A traffic light warning system was used to highlight risk areas across the Council, with RED identifying critical status of a service area.

1.11 The situation report identified staff absence enforced by isolation due to Covid-19. Figure 4 shows the levels of staff isolation for the period 29 September to 9 November. It reflects an increase in levels of staff isolation during October and November.

Figure 4: Reasons for GBC Staff Isolation, 29/09/20 to 09/11/20

1.12 Part of this assessment is to determine the proportion of front-line service staff affected, who are unable to work from home if required to self-isolate. Figure 5 shows the proportion of staff isolating but unable to work as of 9 November. On this day 16 staff were isolating and 6 were unable to work. Both Waste Services and Public Protection have been flagged as Critical Services during October and November due to their levels of staff absence relating to Covid-19. This information is used by SLT and IMT to identify solutions to cover staff affected to enable on-going delivery of front line services where possible.

Absence in both Waste Services and Public Protection has continued to be managed to avoid major disruption to these services.

Figure 5: Proportion of Isolating Staff Unable to Work, 09/11/20
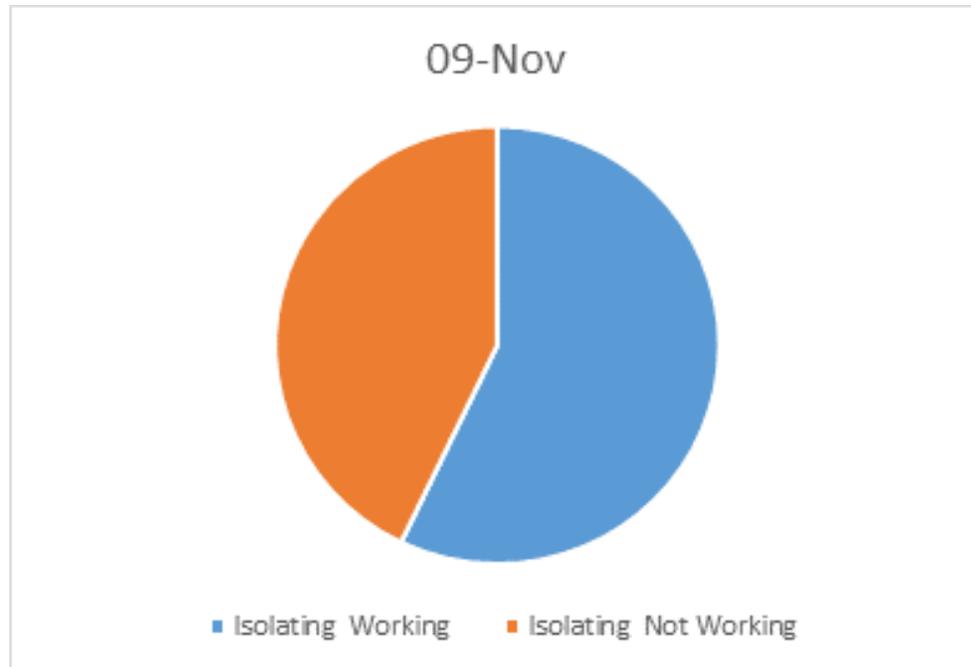
Changes to Services

1.13 During the Covid-19 Response it has been required to re-focus service delivery and consider our organisational management of the on-going emergency. IMT has been established and coordination of this has been allocated to the Service Manager Community Relations, led by the Director for Health and Wellbeing. Staff time has been allocated to IMT from a range of services instrumental in the Response work and these have included the Health and Safety and Emergency Planning Officer, Community Relations, Public Protection, Customer Services and Communications. In addition, much of the Legal services team has been focused on reviewing the weekly changes to Government legislation and advising service areas accordingly.

1.14 Throughout October and November, IMT Response meetings were scheduled weekly due to the recorded increase of infections in the community and new restrictions introduced by the Government. Following the new Coronavirus restrictions, the LRF has stepped up its coordination activities, into which Council officers are participating. Response work has increased significantly since the start of October, which has required significant additional resource from the service areas highlighted in paragraph 1.13. IMT Response remit during this time has been to consider:

- The impact of the "High" alert tier 2 restrictions on the Council's services during October;

- The impact of the " Very High" alert tier 3 restrictions on the Council's services from 30 October to 4 November 2020;
- The impact of the National lockdown imposed by Government from 5 November;
- Daily tracking of positive Covid-19 cases in the community;
- 3 weekly situation report of staff having to self-isolate given the rise in local cases;
- Locating mobile testing units in the Borough;
- Preparing the deployment of semi-permanent Local Testing Units and supporting Public Health with other options for local testing;
- Identifying local events in the Borough and assessing against national restrictions;
- Management of local outbreaks in community settings;
- Preparing for enforcement activity;
- Overseeing the on-going Giving for Gedling Humanitarian work;
- Supporting families during half-term that are eligible for free school meals.

1.15 Waste had been flagged as critical status due the level of Covid-19 related staff absence during October. Nonetheless all Waste crews have continued to operate. Agency drivers and loaders have been utilised as cover and drivers from Parks and Street Care (PASC) are also supporting waste streams. In addition all of the PASC crews have remained operational during the period, apart from one large sweeper on a single day. The situation for depot services is being reviewed on a daily basis.

1.16 IMT have been assessing staff re-deployment options to support Waste, PASC, Public Protection and the growing work of the IMT. This will consider the National Lockdown implications that require some closure of services, such as leisure centres.

Local Response Operations

1.17 Lead coordination of the emergency response sits with the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum on which the Council is a key district partner. There have been a number of measures implemented locally to support the reduction in infections and to support communities during this challenging period. These measures have included:

- Giving for Gedling Humanitarian Team with a role to support vulnerable communities and voluntary and community sector during the crisis. The team coordinated by Community Relations officers also includes Public Protection, Customer Services and Leisure staff and is currently being broadened to include a range of public health and other commissioned community support partners.

- On-going provision of the Giving for Gedling Food Hub at Richard Herrod Centre in collaboration with local Church Leaders and Foodbanks.
- Offering support for families with children on Free School Meals during October half-term by promoting our Customers Services team as a contact for advice, support and emergency food parcels if required.
- The Feeding Gedling Fund to raise money to support families in need during forthcoming school holiday periods - www.spacehive.com/feeding-gedling-children-fund.
- Deployment of Covid-19 Mobile Testing Units in Carlton and Arnold.
- Planning the locations for semi-permanent Local Testing Units in our local area.
- Planning other local testing options, such as possible door-to-door street level testing.
- Delivery of Test and Trace support payments for residents forced to self-isolate.
- Deployment of local Covid-19 Marshalls.
- New enforcement powers to ensure business and other premises are complying with Covid-19 legislation.
- New mandatory and discretionary business grants schemes are currently being developed subject to support businesses during the latest lockdown restrictions.

Financial Support

1.18 During the on-going Response the Council has used government grants to offer support to communities and business.

Council Tax Hardship Fund: By the end of September, awards totalling £647,820 had been made to 2007 individual households.

Business Grants: The administration of both the Small Business Grants / Retail and Hospitality and Leisure Grants Scheme paying £16.8m to over 1500 businesses, and the Discretionary Business Grants Scheme paying £896,250 to over 190 business, was concluded in September, with both schemes providing essential support for those businesses facing financial difficulty during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Test and Trace Support Scheme: Designed to relieve some financial pressure to those on low incomes who cannot work from home and who have tested positive for Covid-19 and their close contacts to ensure they self-isolate for the required period to stop the onward spread of the virus. Individuals are entitled to apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment (main award) of £500 if in receipt of benefits or a discretionary support payment of £500 for those on low incomes but not on benefits. By 27/10/20, 101 applications have been received and payments have commenced.

1.19 Enforcement

The Council's Public Protection Service Area investigate reports and intelligence and offer advice and guidance to businesses on how to comply with restrictions. If this guidance is not followed the Council may look to take further enforcement action but this always dependent on the reliability of any evidence and whether there are specific enforcement powers; much of the literature from Government is "guidance". Operations have included:

- Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) working with two pubs to support voluntarily closure following outbreaks.
- EHOs were also made aware of other premises closed of their own accord following positive Covid-19 cases.
- EHOs have investigated 418 service requests about Covid-19, of these 222 were since the beginning of September. These requests are mostly either from businesses seeking advice or reports about concerns or alleged non-compliance at businesses / community settings.
- Since the end of September EHOs have completed over 150 proactive spot checks to businesses in the urban areas along the boundary with Nottingham City Council in addition to reactive visits as required following reports from the community.

2 Proposal

2.1 Council to note the contents of this report.

3 Alternative Options

3.1 No alternative options.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 No financial implications.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 No legal implications.

6 Equalities Implications

6.1 No equalities implications.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

7.1 No carbon reduction implications.

8 Appendices

8.1   None.

9   Background Papers

9.1   None.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 03/11/20

Approved by the Monitoring Officer
Date: 03/11/20