

COUNCIL
22 APRIL 2021

Report of the Chief Executive

COVID-19 ORGANISATIONAL ROADMAP AND RECOVERY

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report outlines the Government's four-step roadmap out of Covid-19 lockdown and discusses the District Council's proposals for the resumption of post lockdown service delivery.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Council notes the Government's four step roadmap out of Covid-19 lockdown and endorses the District Council's proposed approach to the resumption of post-lockdown service delivery.

WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards

STRATEGIC LINK

Effective Risk Management provisions enable significant risks to be identified, controlled and monitored so contributing to the provision of all services and priorities.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 22nd February 2021, the Prime Minister announced the Government's four-step roadmap out of the Covid-19 lockdown, which is intended to offer a route back to a more normal way of life.
- 1.2 At each of the four steps, the intention is to lift restrictions across the whole of England at the same time. However, in order to avoid a surge in infections that would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS, all of the dates in the roadmap are indicative and subject to change.
- 1.3 There will be a minimum of five weeks between each step: four weeks for the scientific data to reflect the changes in restrictions and to be analysed; followed by one week's advance notice of the restrictions that will be eased. Only when the Government is sure

that it is safe to move from one step to the next will the final decision be made. The decision will be based on four tests:

- That the vaccine deployment programme continues successfully;
- That evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated;
- That infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations, which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS;
- The assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new 'Variants of Concern'.

1.4 The Government intends to continue to protect the public by ensuring local outbreaks are managed quickly and effectively and that we combat new dangerous variants, both within the UK and at the border.

2 Step 1: 8th and 29th March

3 Changes made on 8th March

3.1 In Step 1, all children and students returned to face-to-face education in schools and colleges. Childcare and children's supervised activities also resumed where necessary and twice-weekly rapid testing for secondary and college pupils was initiated, in addition to regular testing for all teachers - to reduce the chance of the virus spreading in schools.

3.2 People were allowed to leave home for recreation and exercise outdoors with their household or support bubble. Care home residents were also allowed one regular visitor.

4 Changes made on 29th March

4.1 On 29th March, outdoor gatherings (including in private gardens) of either 6 people or 2 households were allowed to be undertaken, outdoor sports facilities such as tennis and basketball courts, and open-air swimming pools, were allowed to reopen, and people were able to take part in formally organised outdoor sports.

4.2 Whilst the official 'stay at home' rule ended on 29th March, many restrictions remained in place. People were advised to continue to work from home where they can and minimise the number of journeys they make where possible, avoiding travel at the busiest times and routes. Travel abroad continues to be prohibited, other than for a small number of permitted reasons, however holidays abroad are not allowed.

5 Step 2 - 12 April

5.1 Step 2, saw the opening of non-essential retail; personal care premises such as hairdressers and nail salons; and public buildings, including libraries and community centres. Indoor leisure facilities such as gyms will also reopen (but only for use by people on their own or in household groups); as will most outdoor attractions and settings including outdoor hospitality venues. Self-contained accommodation such as

campsites and holiday lets, where indoor facilities are not shared with other households, can also reopen.

- 5.2 Hospitality venues are allowed to serve people outdoors and there will be no need for customers to order a substantial meal with alcoholic drinks and no curfew. Wider social contact rules will apply in all these settings to prevent indoor mixing between different households.
- 5.3 In terms of events, funerals can continue with up to 30 mourners, the number of people able to attend weddings, receptions and commemorative events such as wakes will rise to 15.

6 Step 3 – 17th May at the earliest

- 6.1 As part of Step 3, no earlier than 17 May, the Government will look to continue easing limits on seeing friends and family wherever possible, allowing people to decide on the appropriate level of risk for their circumstances.
- 6.2 This means that most legal restrictions on meeting others outdoors will be lifted - although gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal. Indoors, the Rule of 6 or 2 households will apply.
- 6.3 As soon as possible and by no later than Step 3, Government will also update the advice on social distancing between friends and family.
- 6.4 Most businesses in all but the highest risk sectors will be able to reopen. In all sectors, COVID-Secure guidance will remain in place and businesses may not cater for groups bigger than the legal limits. Indoor hospitality will reopen. Other indoor locations to open up in Step 3 include indoor entertainment venues such as cinemas and children's play areas; the rest of the accommodation sector, including hotels, hostels and B&Bs; and indoor adult group sports and exercise classes. The Government will also allow some larger performances and sporting events in indoor venues with a capacity of 1,000 people or half-full (whichever is a lower number), and in outdoor venues with a capacity of 4,000 people or half-full (whichever is a lower number). In the largest outdoor seated venues, where crowds can be spread out, up to 10,000 people will be able to attend (or a quarter-full, whichever is lower).
- 6.5 Up to 30 people will be able to attend weddings, receptions and wakes, as well as funerals. This limit will also apply to other types of significant life events.
- 6.6 Finally, before Step 4 begins, the Government will complete a review of social distancing and other long-term measures that have been put in place to cut transmission. This will inform decisions on the timing and circumstances under which the rules on 1 metre plus, the wearing of face coverings and other measures may be

lifted. This will also inform guidance on working from home – which should continue wherever possible until this review is complete.

7 Step 4 – 21st June at the earliest

- 7.1 Step 4 which will take place no earlier than 21 June, the Government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact.
- 7.2 It is hoped to reopen remaining premises, including nightclubs, and ease the restrictions on large events and performances that apply in Step 3.

8 DERBYSIRE DALES ORGANISATIONAL ROADMAP

- 8.1 In response to the publication of the Government Roadmap, it is essential that the District Council has a clear plan for how the organisation itself will emerge out of 'lockdown', and gradually resume a more normal state of business operation.
- 8.2 Covid-19 guidance for the safe use of council buildings was published by Government on 25th March. The guidance sets out the principal considerations for the management and use of council buildings in accordance with applicable legislation, including health and safety legislation. The guidance emphasises that any opening plans must be consistent with core public health guidance, safe workplace guidelines and Covid-19 risk assessments.
- 8.3 Throughout the pandemic, Covid-19 risk assessments have been used to influence all key decisions taken by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and this will continue to be the case. Maintaining a safe working environment for employees and members is of paramount importance. As Chief Executive, I have a legal responsibility to protect officers, elected members and others from risk to their health and safety, including from the risks of Covid-19 in the workplace.
- 8.4 Government guidance remains that office workers who can work from home should continue to do so. For the vast majority of Town Hall based employees, this continues to be the case. During the last 12 months, occupancy at the Town Hall has been subject to a self-imposed maximum of 50 people per day in accordance with our Covid-19 risk assessment, in order to maintain social distancing, reduce crowding and reduce face to face meetings. Maximum occupancy thresholds have also been defined for shared office accommodation and intensive cleaning regimes have been implemented. All of these measures continue to be deployed.
- 8.5 Despite the challenges, the District Council has maintained the effective delivery of all of its frontline customer services as well as responding to the additional demands of Covid-19. The capability and capacity of the organisation to work remotely has recently been further enhanced by the mobilisation of the Horizon 'cloud' telephony system. There is therefore, no over-riding reason for a large scale, imminent return to the Town Hall until such time that it is considered safe to do so and even then, there is a question as to whether a wholesale permanent return is necessary for all employees.
- 8.6 The Covid-19 experience has caused many businesses across the public and private sectors to reflect on how they operated prior to 23rd March 2020 and to consider whether they should return to their previous mode of operation and means of service delivery. Whilst there have been many disadvantages arising from the Covid-19 experience, some valuable lessons have also been learned. CLT are therefore in the process of engaging with employees in order to gain their views and reflections of the

last 12 months and to explore how we can maximise some of the opportunities that have arisen as a result of our collective Covid-19 experience. As a public service provider, our primary concern must always be to ensure that we are able to deliver the best quality of services possible to the residents and businesses that rely upon us.

- 8.7 Despite the tremendous progress made on the vaccination programme and the decreasing prevalence of positive Covid-19 cases in the community, there remains a possibility of a third wave of Covid-19 which we must continue to safeguard against. CLT therefore consider that any wholesale return of staff or members to the Town Hall prior to 21st June would be premature and would not be appropriate. As such, it is proposed that the Town Hall should remain closed until at least this date and services will continue to be delivered remotely, enabled by the very successful 'CRM' (Customer Relationship Management) system and the recent implementation of the internet enabled Horizon telephone system. The only exception to this will be Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), who are accepting visitors by appointment only from 13th April (between 10.00am and 2.00pm), subject to their risk assessment, social distancing and wearing of face coverings. It is also proposed to continue with successful video conferencing for staff team meetings until 21st June. Proposals for formal Council decision making are considered elsewhere on this agenda.
- 8.8 A decision on the timing of the Town Hall re-opening and in person meetings must be based upon circumstances as they develop during the next 6-8 weeks, as informed by the Covid-19 risk assessments and Government guidance. This is a situation that will be kept under constant review. However, in the interests of public service delivery, it is considered desirable to re-open at the earliest date it is considered safe to do so.
- 8.9 Corporate Leadership Team will consider when staff should return to the Town Hall and increase the occupancy in a phased, measured and safe way through updated risk assessments. Applications for agile working can be considered in light of service need and the need of customers (external and internal), team working, collaboration and staff well-being. The date for applications is to be confirmed, but likely not before mid- June, to be effective from the summer.
- 8.10 At each stage of the national and organisational roadmaps, there are specific demands placed upon the organisation which creates extra work and service demands, notably within Regulatory Services (Environmental Health, Licensing, Estates and Facilities) and Economic Development (grant funding regimes). These additional service pressures need to be managed alongside regular service delivery.

9 RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 Legal

This report is designed to outline the Government's four-step roadmap out of Covid-19 lockdown and discusses the District Council's proposals for the resumption of post lockdown service delivery.

Given that the recommendation is for the Council to note the Government's four step roadmap out of Covid-19 lockdown and to endorse the District Council's proposed approach to the resumption of post-lockdown service delivery, the Legal risk at this time has been assessed to be low.

9.2 Financial

This report seeks endorsement for the District Council's proposed approach to the resumption of post-lockdown service delivery. It is expected that any costs can be accommodated from within the existing revenue budget. The financial risk is therefore assessed as low.

10 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

10.1 In preparing this report, the relevance of the following factors has also been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equalities, environmental, climate change, health, human rights, personnel and property.

11 CONTACT INFORMATION

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12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 Government Roadmap Out of Lockdown (February 2021)
Covid-19 : Guidance for the Safe Use of Council Buildings