

Report to	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of report	3rd September 2020
Lead Member / Officer	Julian Thompson Hill, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets/Steve Gadd, Head of Finance and Property
Report author	Steve Gadd, Head of Finance and Property
Title	Denbighshire County Council Coronavirus Response: Infrastructure – Council Buildings

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the Infrastructure – Council Buildings recovery theme as set out in the ‘Denbighshire County Council Coronavirus Response: Planning for Recovery’ report agreed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Cabinet.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To outline progress around:
- Getting our buildings ready for opening again
 - Decommissioning any temporary uses
 - Maintenance backlogs
- 2.2 To enable Members to fulfil their scrutiny role by examining these issues.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 For the Committee to discuss the contents of the report and, if appropriate, identify any aspects of the recovery work which may benefit from detailed examination in the future.

4. Report details

4.1 It should be noted that the work in this area is very operational in nature and needs to adapt and change quickly to any change in regulations and guidance that has been received. The paper does not include Schools or Housing Stock in detail as these come under separate Recovery Themes, as do the arrangements, guidance and any permanent changes to working patterns which come under Alan Smith's Recovery Theme designing the new Business As Usual (BAU) arrangements and the Staffing Recovery Theme under Catrin Roberts.

4.2 The area of bringing Council Buildings back into use crosses departments and services and as such involves a number of specialisms and expertise from a number of individuals. The themes and leads in this area are listed below:

- **Office Buildings Working Arrangements** – Tom Booty, County Landlord and Nigel Highfield, Principal Manager – Contracts and Facilities
- **Health and Safety** – Gerry Lapington, Corporate Health and Safety Manager
- **Business Continuity** – Alan Smith, Head of BIM
- **Buildings Infrastructure** – Dave Lorey, Lead Officer Corporate Property and Housing
- **Facilities' Status** – Managed by Jamie Groves during the crisis – Russell Vaughan, Project Manager.

4.2 Office Buildings Working Arrangements

Appendix 1 is a report that has been developed by Tom Booty in consultation with Facilities Management and the Business Continuity Group. It details:

- The offices the guidance will apply to (although the guidance includes good source of advice for other properties also)
- General Advice and Principles including advice around staff displaying symptoms
- Basic infection prevention measures
- Detailed work guidelines

4.3 Health and Safety

A sample / template Risk Assessment has been developed and is included as **Appendix 2**. However, it needs to be stressed that the contents of the template are not exhaustive

but can be used to help develop a risk assessment relevant to each Service, Teams and/or activities. Each Service needs to undertake their own risk assessment in relation to the work activities of their staff to prevent or reduce any potential risk of exposure to Coronavirus.

There is UK Government advice on what to consider for specific work areas on the following website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

It is important to note that Health and Safety is a **statutory duty** and needs to be taken seriously for the health of all our staff and residents.

4.4 Business Continuity

Coordinated Timetable for Service Recovery - This was discussed at the Corporate Business Continuity Group. The consensus was that efforts to try to establish a single coordinated programme of service reinstatement would not be effective. Each Service managed the closure of all but its critical services at the start of the lock down and each is generating plans for their eventual reinstatement. Services should continue to manage return to BAU as they are best placed to understand the local or national requirements. SLT's role should be to ensure that as services are returned to BAU (as far as this is possible under Social Distancing conditions), this is properly communicated to the public and our partners.

4.5 Buildings Infrastructure

Opening the buildings shouldn't be an issue in terms of their operation – however the following compliance issues will need to be considered:

- **Asbestos** - We anticipated that the risk was low regarding the reduced number of Asbestos Re-Inspections being completed over recent months. This is due to the fact, that most high risk materials and those items in poor condition have already been removed from Denbighshire's property stock. An accelerated programme will be undertaken when normal service resumes. We will do this by asking both surveyors to work at the same time to cover the surveys of all properties that have been missed due to coronavirus. (Usually the surveyors alternate each month).
- **Fire Risk Assessments** - The performance on this dropped initially as access to schools became a challenge. We anticipate that mostly Category 1 properties

(which need an annual review) and Category 2 properties (bi-annual review) will be the most affected. The Fire Safety Manager produced a revised schedule which involves delaying the Category 2 properties in order to complete the Category 1 properties first (meaning an inevitable dip in Category 2 KPI performance).

Following this, the category 2 properties will be completed once the back log of Category 1s have been updated. The Team have taken on a new member of staff to complete a lot of the administrative functions, which will relieve pressure on our Fire Safety Manager to focus on completing the assessments. It is anticipated that by Christmas, KPI performance will be back in the 90th percentile and we will have re-designed the whole programme in order to ensure a manageable and well-structured programme for 21/22

- **Gas Servicing etc.** - All compliance servicing is continuing, boilers, water monitoring, Fire, Lifts and sprinkler systems. Security alarms are not being serviced but will be repaired if they go faulty (not a compliance issue). Where we have not be able to gain access for an extended period of time, before the building opens, particularly for water hygiene, the systems will need to be flushed. Also the lifts will be tested and the boiler serviced if overdue. We have asked HSL (water hygiene) and Knowsley Lifts to inform us where they have not been able to gain access.
- The **Building Maintenance Teams** are working with Services and building managers to ensure that all systems are operational and compliant prior to buildings being brought back into full operation. Checks are being made in terms of mechanical ventilation systems to ensure that any internal mechanical air circulation is identified and isolated. In the short term this may mean that some buildings will be reliant on natural ventilation sources only (opening the windows).

4.6 Status of Facilities

Regular monitoring and updates have been carried during the crisis so we have a complete list of the status of properties – it is envisaged that this will continue during the recovery phase. The latest list details:

- Service Area and point of Contact
- Details of Asset
- Status - (RED closed), (AMBER - partially open / reduced hours) & GREEN - fully open)
- Management Arrangements – Purpose of Inspections

- Responsible Person
- Site Contacts
- There is also a short checklist that has been developed to help secure the building for use as a reference point for regular checks during temporary closedown periods.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1. Enabling staff to carry out their roles efficiently and effectively will help ensure that the Corporate Priorities can continue to be delivered and achieved.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. The short term costs have involved the purchasing of signage and PPE items such as hand sanitiser. Most of these initial costs were able to be claimed from the WG COVID-19 Local Authority Hardship Fund. No major works have been necessary to date.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. It is felt that a Well-being Impact Assessment is not required for this paper.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. The contents report has been discussed with the Lead Member, SLT, Informal Cabinet and Trade Unions during May 2020. Informal Cabinet (June 2020). Further discussions and consultation are being carried as and when new guidance is required.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. Financial implications are set out in Section 6.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. The risks of not getting this right could have huge impact on the health and well-being of staff and visitors. Specific risks are detailed in the appendices and the

specific risk assessments for each service area will identify and mitigate service specific risks.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1 Scrutiny's powers in relation to matters detailed in this report are as per:

- 7.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000;
- 7.2 Section 7 of the Council's Constitution