

BARNSELY COUNCIL'S REPOSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's (BMBC's) response to the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- 1.2 The report describes the response in the context of the wider Barnsley and South Yorkshire response structures and includes information on data and intelligence, risks and mitigating actions.
- 1.3 Given the ongoing changes in relation to the Coronavirus pandemic, updates regarding key information will be provided at the OSC meeting.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 19 March 2020, in response to the significant challenge facing everyone in the borough, the Council declared the Coronavirus (COVID-19) a major incident.
- 2.2 Declaring a major incident in this way meant that the Council put in place new structures and ways of working, with partners such as Barnsley Hospital; with local people and communities; and with local businesses, to respond to the pandemic and ultimately protect lives.

3.0 Response Arrangements

- 3.1 At the outset of the pandemic, the 'Gold Strategy' was developed, which begins by describing the high-level aims of the organisation. These are:
 - to co-ordinate the Council's activity, as a category one responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
 - to endeavour to save lives and minimise the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Barnsley
 - to support Barnsley to move forward post-pandemic
- 3.2 The strategy was developed and signed off by the Gold Strategic Group, the membership of which mirrors the Senior Management Team (SMT) of the Council.
- 3.3 The aims and objectives of the Gold Strategy can be found in Appendix 1 (attached).
- 3.4 As part of the response arrangements, the 'Silver Tactical Response Plan' outlines the structure in place to implement the strategy. It includes a number of thematic subgroups, co-ordinated through a Silver Tactical Group with strategic management and direction provided from the Gold Strategic Group.
- 3.5 The diagram below shows the work of the subgroups and section 4 of this report describes the work in detail:

BMBC Response Structure

SMT (Barnsley MBC Gold)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair: Chief Executive • Role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic decision, direction and resourcing ○ Translate LRF/LHRP aim and objectives

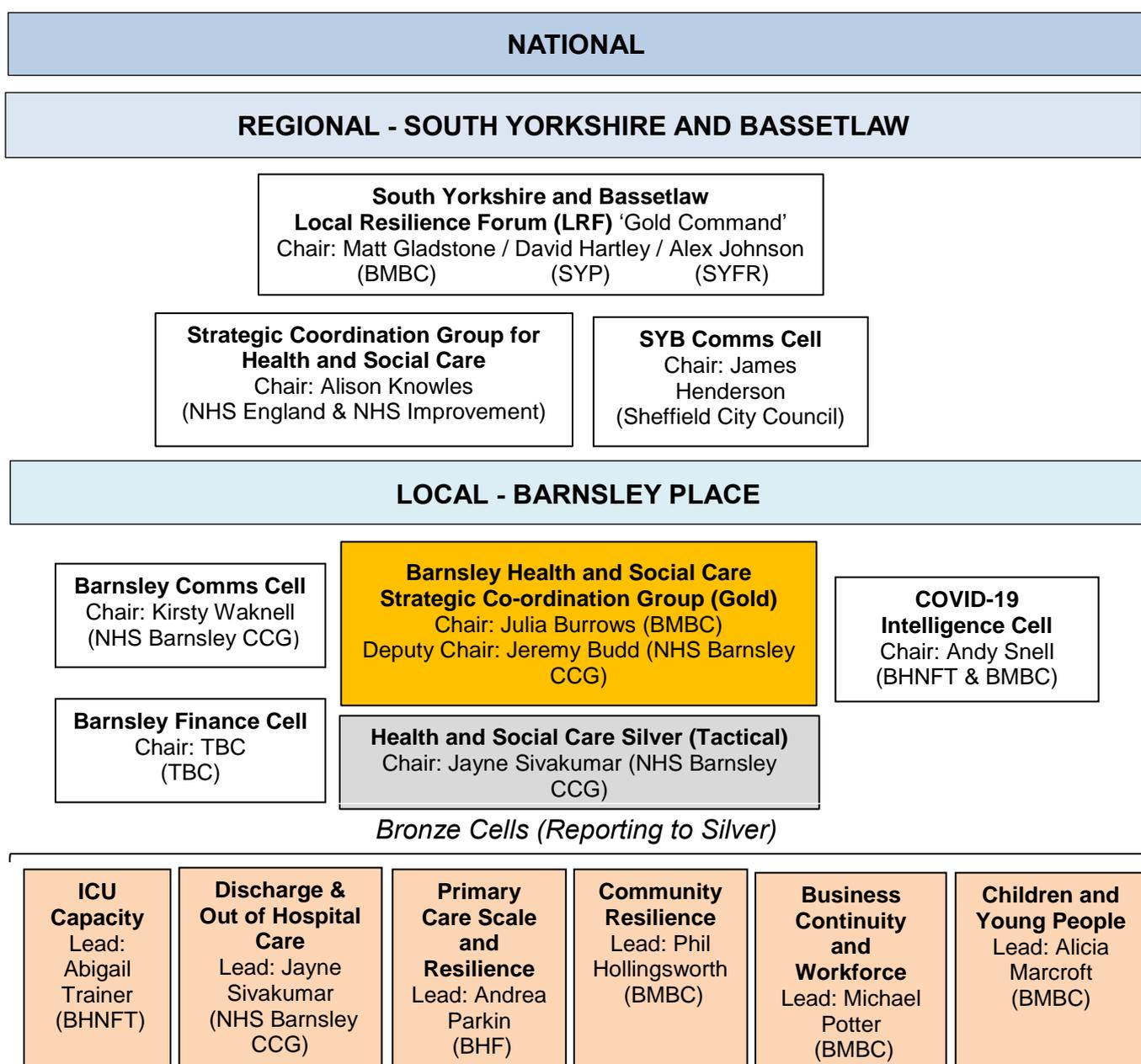
Covid-19 Co-ordination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair: SD Public Health and Regulation, Carrie Abbott / SD Business Improvement, Human Resources and Communications, Michael Potter • Membership: chair and deputy chair of thematic sub-groups below: • Role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tactical planning/co-ordination of response and emerging concerns ○ Internal consideration and co-ordination of response and key themes ○ Implement the SMT strategic aim and objectives

Health	Adult Social Care	Communities	Mental Health and Resilience	Business Intelligence	Business Continuity	Communications	Excess Deaths	Children and Education	Business and the Economy	Finance and Legal
<p>Chair: Head of Public Health Alicia Marcroft</p> <p>Deputy chair: Tracy Letchford, Service Manager 0-19 Service</p>	<p>Chair: SD Adult Social Care and Wellbeing, Julie Chapman</p> <p>Deputy chair: Head of Service, Liz Taylor</p>	<p>Chair: SD Stronger, Safer and Healthier Communities, Phil Hollingsworth</p> <p>Deputy chair: Head of Service Stronger Communities Rachel Payling</p>	<p>Chair: Head of Public Health, Diane lee</p> <p>Deputy chair: Senior Public Health Practitioner, Phil Ainsworth</p>	<p>Chair: Head of Business Improvement & Intelligence Malachi Rangepcroft</p> <p>Deputy chair: Senior Public Health Principal, Rebecca Clarke</p>	<p>Chair: SD Business Improvement, Human Resources and Communications, Michael Potter</p> <p>Deputy chair: Head of Corporate Health Safety and Emergency Resilience, Simon Dobby</p>	<p>Chair: Head of Communications and Marketing, Katie Rogers</p> <p>Deputy Chair: Communications and Marketing Manager</p>	<p>Chair: SD Environment and Transport, Paul Castle</p> <p>Deputy chair: Group Leader Bereavement Services, Anthony Davenport</p>	<p>Chair: SD Education, Early Start and Prevention, Nina Sleight</p> <p>Deputy chair: Head of Children in Care Services, Jonathan Banwell</p>	<p>Chair: SD Culture and Regeneration, David Shepherd</p> <p>Deputy chair: Head of Service, Paul Clifford</p>	<p>Chair: Head of Finance, Steve Loach</p> <p>Deputy chair: Head of Strategic Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement, Chris Arnold</p>
<p>Themes Liaison with health partners</p>	<p>Themes Commissioned services Home care</p>	<p>Themes Waste and street cleansing Community safety Provision of food to the most vulnerable Medicines distribution Social isolation Financial hardship Homelessness Asylum provision</p>	<p>Themes Mental health support Bereavement support</p>	<p>Themes Business intelligence COVID-19 performance indicators Handling ad-hoc BI requests</p>	<p>Themes Human Resources IT Assets/ facilities management Events Information governance Business intelligence and data Customer Services</p>	<p>Themes Public messages Staff messages Elected members</p>	<p>Themes Bereavement Services Registration Service Intestate deaths</p>	<p>Themes Early start Community schools Academies liaison Children's Social Care</p>	<p>Themes Business resilience Economic impacts Wider South Yorkshire economic impacts and liaison with Sheffield City Region</p>	<p>Themes Finance Legal Procurement Governance</p>

- 3.6 The Council's Coronavirus (COVID-19) response arrangements align with the wider Barnsley Health and Social Care Gold, Silver and Bronze structures. The Council is represented as follows:
- The Director of Public Health chairs the daily Health and Social Care Gold meeting
 - We have representatives on the Health and Social Care Silver meeting
 - Our Service Directors (SDs) chair the Business Continuity and Workforce Bronze, the Community Resilience Bronze and the Children and Young People Bronze meetings
- 3.7 The diagram below shows the full governance and workstreams structure chart for health and social care in Barnsley:

Governance and Workstreams - Barnsley Place Response to COVID-19

NOTE: Organisations have their own Gold/Silver/Bronze structures in place, those under 'Local' below refer to those in place for the Barnsley Health and Care Partnership.



Version 2.2 – 8 April 2020

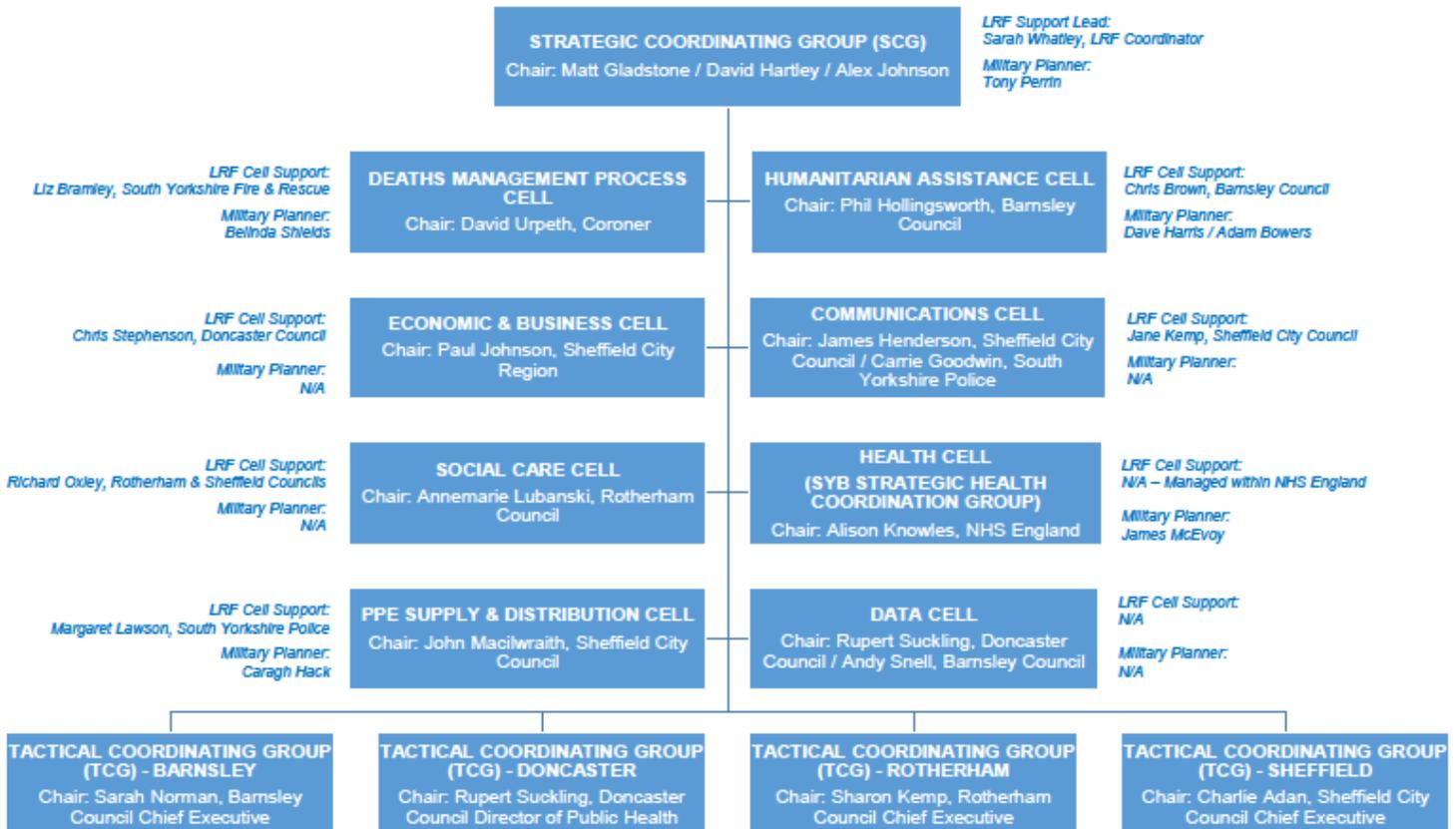
3.8 The Council is also connected to, and a key partner in, the overarching South Yorkshire Local Resilience Framework Command, Control and Communications (C3) structure. The Executive Director Place co-chairs the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) and the Safer, Stronger, Healthier Communities Service Director chairs the Humanitarian Cell.

3.9 Council representation on other cells within the structure is outlined in the diagram below:

OFFICIAL



South Yorkshire LRF COVID-19 C3 arrangements



4.0 Current Position

4.1 The following section provides up to date information on activity and performance for each of the ‘Silver’ subgroups as identified in the diagram at paragraph 3.5.

Adult Social Care

4.2 The Adult Social Care subgroup continues to:

- develop the discharge model they have implemented which operates 8am-8pm, 7 days per week, to support the acute hospital in maintaining safe and effective patient flow
- commission additional residential care capacity with Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to support discharge arrangements
- offer support where family members are sick or self-isolating
- provide appropriate support to family carers, personal assistants, shared lives and the external care market
- ensure residential care homes are protected and supported
- closely monitor staffing levels. Staffing levels are currently high in social care, staffing levels and safeguarding work is prioritised

Communities

- 4.3 67,000 people have been identified who may need extra support due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) which includes:
- 6,000 people who have been recognised by the NHS as people who should be shielded from Coronavirus (COVID-19)
 - 2,000 people we've identified as being highly vulnerable
- 4.4 Data has been used to help recognise and contact those who may be at risk. This means the organisation can make sure that resources and community volunteers are mobilised in the most effective way.
- 4.5 All 67,000 people will receive a letter shortly, giving them information on who they can contact if they need some help. Calls will also be made to the 2,000 people identified as being highly vulnerable to help identify the support they might need.
- 4.6 A great strength of Barnsley is that there is already a robust and well-established community infrastructure. As a result, a significant volume of support activity is taking place across communities through existing commissioned activity and voluntary groups. The primary focus is providing early help wherever possible.
- 4.7 For emergency help and support, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency support line continues to provide a 7-days a week response to the pandemic (all data correct as at 23/04/20):
- 1,638 calls have been received via the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Emergency Contact Centre
 - of these calls, 77% of people require help with food, 22% help with prescriptions, and 7% are calling due to social isolation
 - 1,082 Community Responders have been recruited
- 4.8 Barnsley Community Responders are volunteers supporting Barnsley Council and Barnsley Community and Voluntary Services in delivering vital emergency assistance to individuals and families. The volunteers play a vital role in supporting the many residents that may need support to cope with disruptions due to Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Health

- 4.9 In addition to the Barnsley Health and Social Care Gold and Silver arrangements described above, the health subgroup reports that:
- there is a mutual aid response in place, coordinating staffing and resources required to address the increased demand on health and social care services
 - they are proactively contacting children, young people and families to make sure that they continue to offer support and signposting to sources of online advice, with a focus on emotional health and wellbeing
 - the reduction in people presenting at A&E and other hospital departments is a significant cause for concern. It's very important that people still go to hospital for help if they need it. As a result, work has been done with health partners to create communications messages around how and when people should access health services
 - some health services are being centralised. The South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Integrated Care System (SYAB ICS) COVID-19 Strategic Coordinating Group is established to coordinate the health response across South Yorkshire. It is overseeing the consolidation of some services across the patch as a temporary measure to make sure all areas can respond to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pressures. For example, temporary changes to

children's hospital services means that all emergency children's surgery will take place at Sheffield Children's Hospital.

- Barnsley Hospital have established a local testing facility, initially this was for NHS staff, however this has now been extended to include the wider NHS, social care and key worker workforce. Local arrangements are now in place to allow the testing of employees who both meet the criteria for testing and are involved in delivering a critical role. The process for testing is provided through two routes:
 - via Barnsley Hospital and South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SWYPFT) with a local testing point in Barnsley at Barnsley Hospital
 - via South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Integrated Care System with a regional test centre at Doncaster Sheffield Airport

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- 4.10 Personal protective equipment (PPE) is protective clothing. In the case of Coronavirus (COVID-19) it may include masks; face shields; gloves; aprons; gowns; and other equipment designed to protect a person from infection.
- 4.11 Nationally, the supply of PPE continues to present a considerable challenge. Continuous efforts are being made locally, and regionally at the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum, to secure the PPE needed in Barnsley. Issues regarding supply, guidance and staff concerns across partner organisations are being managed as the safety of staff is taken as seriously as that of residents. Guidance and processes are in place for ordering and distributing the supply of PPE. Mutual aid across health partner organisations locally and regionally is in operation and we will continue to work together to manage the risk of a shortage of supply.

Mental Health & Resilience

- 4.12 The current pandemic will impact on the mental health and resilience of people who live and work in Barnsley. Due to the cross-cutting nature, the Mental Health and Resilience subgroup comprises membership from across the Council and several local partners. The focus of the group ensures that residents' mental health and wellbeing is at the forefront of our Coronavirus (COVID-19) response and forward planning work.
- 4.13 The group will continue to work with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Emergency Contact Centre to monitor the mental wellbeing of residents through the pandemic. In addition, the group will provide advice and guidance to employees, the voluntary sector and to external businesses, to enable them to successfully support employee mental wellbeing.
- 4.14 In direct response to the pandemic, in partnership with South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw colleagues, a local bereavement support service has been commissioned which will be available to everyone. The service went live on Monday 20 April 2020 and is available to anyone in the South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw area. There is an initial 8-week pilot period. Calls will be monitored to identify a need and inform future service provision. BMBC's Communications and Marketing team are promoting the service across various communications channels.
- 4.15 The Mental Health and Resilience subgroup is working with BMBC's Communications and Marketing team on a 'Kindness' campaign - the theme for this year's Mental Health Awareness Week (18 - 24 May 2020).
- 4.16 Being in a lockdown situation is immensely difficult for us all, but it can be particularly worrying for those who are isolated with abusive people whose behaviour may escalate due to increasing uncertainty, pressure on finances and cramped conditions. The Council's partner, Independent Domestic Abuse Services (IDAS), is providing support in several ways, including:
- online video support sessions
 - WhatsApp messaging

- telephone calls
- online live chat on our website
- email

Children & Education

4.17 The Children and Education subgroup continue to ensure that:

- children known to Children's Social Care and Early Help Services are supported and visited, so that, as a minimum, statutory timescales are being met. In many cases, contact may be more frequent
- children in care placements are being maintained (notwithstanding the potential for future challenges) and personal education plans are in place
- the Coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance has been issued to Children's Social Care and Early Help Family Support Workers. Vulnerable children's guidance has also been issued to schools
- the children's workforce is working with parents to support more vulnerable children to attend school
- the vast majority of schools and 115 early years settings are open to vulnerable children and those children of key workers (this included over the Easter holiday period)
- free school meal provision and the national voucher scheme is available to eligible families (including over the Easter holidays) with many schools going beyond the expectation and issuing food parcels
- there's a continued education offer via digital resources and home learning through schools to all pupils. Concerns for families who cannot access digital resources has been escalated to the Department for Education (DfE). Locally, schools are identifying children who have not accessed online learning, and are developing ways they can access, either in school or through the provision of a device if available

Business Continuity

4.18 The Business Continuity subgroup has a broad remit. However, focussing on human resources, staffing, redeployment and securing frontline service delivery, it can report that:

- 309 staff are currently absent or self-isolating. 175 of these are Coronavirus (COVID-19) related: 163 self-isolating fit for work but cannot work and 2 with Coronavirus (COVID-19). 160 staff are in COVID isolation but working from home (not included in overall absent figure)
- a new Human Resources framework has been launched and agreed with the Trade Unions for deployment of staff in emergency situations. As a result, the Workforce Redeployment Team are successfully matching members of staff in non-business critical roles into essential roles in business-critical services such as waste management; PPE distribution; and into the COVID-19 Contact Centre
- social distancing measures continue to be implemented in services such as waste management
- 310 staff have been sent letters inviting them to volunteer for redeployment
- work continues with Norfolk Property Service (NPS) and Berneslai Homes to redeploy staff and Barnsley Premier Leisure (BPL) staff continue to be encouraged to become community responders

Mortuary and Funeral Capacity

- 4.19 Every death is a tragedy and it is important that family and friends can mourn their loved ones. Services will ensure bereaved people are treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect, while at the same time making sure everyone is protected from the risk of Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.
- 4.20 Public Health England guidance around social distancing will continue to be followed in order to keep people safe and to make sure that people can mark the life of a loved one. Weekend funeral services are now taking place and cemeteries remain open.
- 4.21 Bereavement impacts people in lots of different ways. It is recognised that the death of a loved one, from any cause, at this present time will be even more difficult. While there's a range of support available, as highlighted in paragraph 4.14 above, a new bereavement support service was launched on Monday 20 April for anyone who is experiencing the loss of a loved one.
- 4.22 This is a challenging time for funeral and mortuary service providers, and the Council continues to support them. We're confident that enough mortuary places have been commissioned at Barnsley Hospital and at the crematorium.

Business and the Economy

- 4.23 The Business and Economy subgroup report that:
- all businesses have been rebilled where new business rate reliefs apply
 - £35.4m in grants have been distributed to date to 3,212 businesses
 - 971 enquiries have been dealt with by Enterprising Barnsley
 - Barnsley is seen as a good practice exemplar for how grants have been made available in advance of the funding being received from central government
 - Barnsley is leading the way in shaping the regional recovery
 - gaps continue to be addressed, including providing support for major employers, businesses in incubation centres etc.
 - support is being given to the development of a regional recovery plan and the prioritisation of future funding
 - Regulatory Services are responsible for enforcing the new Coronavirus (COVID-19) Restrictions Regulations along with South Yorkshire Police (SYP), and there's a protocol in place to support joint working. Regulatory Services continue to deal with all enforcement concerns and are undertaking frequent unannounced inspections at ASOS, at their invitation
 - Barnsley's visitor attractions and Museums are closed. People can access parkland and the majority of people are observing social distancing measures
 - partner organisations, including National Trust and Barnsley Civic have furloughed their staff
- 4.24 In terms of the economy and jobs:
- at the outset of the pandemic, a single point of contact was established to support residents requiring employment support with a call back from an advisor the same day (employmentsupport@barnsley.gov.uk). The service went live on the 3 April 2020
 - 34 enquiries have been dealt with (50% of those who contacted were unemployed); the focus is mainly on benefit claims and financial hardship. It is believed that demand for this service will grow as the restrictions are lifted because:

- the current focus on JobCentre Plus staff is on processing new claims, reducing emphasis on job-search
- there are high numbers of people furloughed
- large numbers of people will not be seeking work in the current climate and therefore are inactive
- due to economic uncertainty employees may not be actively seeking work and support in taking steps

4.25 Alongside this, the following actions are being taken as part of the longer-term response plan:

- the Council is maintaining and developing existing adult skills and community learning by supporting learning online; through social media; by phone; and posting out paper-based learning materials for approximately 1,553 adult learners. They are looking to enhance and expand the learning offer so that digital classes can be delivered, and distance learning courses commenced
- information, advice and guidance is being provided to employers to help them support staff-wellbeing through BeWell@Work
- guidance and support is being developed to help employers bring employees back into the work, supporting their wellbeing and refreshing skills

Other Critical Frontline Services

4.26 In terms of the critical frontline services, it's important to note that:

- grey, brown and blue waste continues to be collected. However, green waste has been paused in line with other South Yorkshire authorities
- Household Waste Recycling Centres are currently closed to the public. However, the Council is working with the government to see how it can open these as soon as possible
- Neighbourhood Services have paused grass cutting to support Waste Services and additional fly tipping / general detritus being littered has been noted in communal areas in some communities
- the transport operators' licence is still being maintained, and all services are operating in accordance with Traffic Commissioner changes
- most large highways works have been paused to support Waste and Neighbourhood Services
- Highways safety works continue with reduced resources to maintain the borough's highways
- Highways winter maintenance season (Gritting) has now finished
- Waste; Highways; Home to School Transport; and Neighbourhood Services staffing has been severely impacted by staff self-isolating for several reasons, and the introduction of new safe systems of work to maintain protection and social distancing measures. However, services are working alongside the Workforce Redeployment Team to ensure that services continue to be delivered
- the Home to School Transport services are meeting the need and transporting those children that need to go to school
- the Council's digital offer continues to be developed and includes contributions from museums; libraries; and the music service. This is seen as an exemplar, with strong

engagement and good positive media coverage for Barnsley, both nationally and internationally (Brazil and Australia - BBC, Sun and Telegraph)

Berneslai Homes

4.27 Berneslai Homes is a key partner in the response effort and is part of the Silver and subgroup arrangements. They report that:

- construction services and Kier are delivering a limited repairs service in order to keep tenants safe
- an emergency repairs service is being provided, continuing the Gas safety work and that empty homes works are ongoing
- lettings to homeless people, hospital discharge and urgent management moves are ongoing
- fire safety inspections and works continue to be delivered
- rent collection, advice and support is being provided
- staff are working from home, but Berneslai Homes are considering furloughing a number of staff. The Board meets every three weeks and will decide at the next meeting on the furlough situation
- 15 staff have volunteered to assist with waste and are being trained. A number of other staff are helping with key tasks
- tenants are being updated via the website, and involved tenants are being contacted regularly

5.0 Moving On – Recovery and the Future for Barnsley

5.1 A tactical recovery group will be set up to co-ordinate the recovery activity across both the Council and for the borough. It will consider the following:

- introduce a Silver Recovery Group that sits in the same governance arrangements as Silver Response Group
- to provide a coordination forum for subgroups to escalate issues for resolution, approval or escalation to our Gold Strategic Group or the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum (SYLRF)
- to align and participate with SYLRF arrangements, Sheffield City Region arrangements, Health and Social Care Gold and other local cells
- the strategy of the Silver Recovery Group will be 'place-based' to move Barnsley through this current acute crisis. It will set out the recovery strategy in line with the new normalities, building on shared values as we progress through the changing stages of the situation towards a future for Barnsley that everyone wants to see
- Barnsley 2030 will play a significant role in helping the borough to move forward. There will be work needed to make the starting point reflect our journey through the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- to be clear how this superimposes on current business as usual arrangements, to use them wherever possible
- to work with the current subgroup arrangements
- to develop a concise, balanced, affordable recovery plan that can be quickly implemented

- to agree and set out the “handing over process” from Silver Response Group to Silver Recovery Group
- to work with subgroups and develop their thinking about recovery planning
- to challenge the subgroups to ensure that they have the right stakeholder representation for recovery planning
- to carry out initial impact assessments with the subgroups to develop the Silver Recovery objectives and working Recovery Strategy:
 - to set out the key recovery risks and threat assessments for each subgroup
 - set out the working recovery strategy and confirm the subgroup arrangements
 - the output of this being an initial high-level overall Recovery Plan
- to initially meet twice a week, Tuesday and Thursday, and at an appropriate time, to replace two Silver Response Group meetings

6.0 Consideration of Alternative Approaches

- 6.1 The response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) is being managed using the civil contingencies response arrangements that have been developed over many years, with these tailored to the specific nature of this emergency, and the breadth, depth and longevity of the multi-agency response.
- 6.2 The response is centred on a command, control, co-ordination and communication framework used for all emergencies and this dovetails with the arrangements implemented by local health and care partners, South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum, wider regional partners and nationally.
- 6.3 These arrangements are reviewed regularly and have been adapted over the course of the response to reflect changing needs. Therefore, while ongoing review of the response arrangements will take place, an alternative framework for the management of the incident is not considered appropriate and indeed may hamper necessary close multi-agency working with partners.

7.0 Implications For Local People/Service Users

- 7.1 Coronavirus (COVID-19) has significant implications for every person living, working or studying in Barnsley. All the responses which are described in this paper have been developed with the overall aim of protecting and safeguarding lives; improving health and wellbeing; and supporting the local economy. The Council is working alongside all partners in both the response and recovery phases. There are no parts of society which are not affected, and so the response covers every Council function.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is expected to place significant pressure on the Council’s financial position both in 2020/21 and beyond.
- 8.2 While central government have provided some financial support, it’s considered that this funding will be inadequate to cover the full cost of the pandemic and ongoing recovery. The estimated costs of maintaining the Council’s critical services is some £14 million more than the funding received. Even more concerning is the anticipated loss of £24 million in income from Council tax, business rates and other fees and charges.
- 8.3 While the Council continues to lobby government for additional funding, in the meantime, it has put in place a moratorium to protect financial standing should additional government support not be enough to cover the full cost of the pandemic.

9.0 Employee Implications

- 9.1 The Council followed and applied Government, Public Health England and National Joint Council guidance in relation to workforce and employment issues to fairly and consistently manage the effects of the pandemic in relation to employees, including taking necessary steps to protect those who fall into 'at risk' categories.
- 9.2 To support employees, a dedicated intranet page has been developed for employees to access that includes advice and guidance in a frequently asked questions format. The advice includes a variety of scenarios that employees may face and includes links to the latest government advice. This is supplemented with daily communication to employees which provides updates on key employment issues.
- 9.3 Advice and guidance is also being provided through the HR Business Partner network to ensure that if employees want to speak to someone about their circumstances and get advice, they can. There is also a dedicated email address set up should employees prefer to email.
- 9.4 Weekly briefings are also being undertaken with the trade unions to ensure they are kept up to date with any emerging issues and to provide a dedicated forum to collectively identify and address any employee relations issues.
- 9.5 The wellbeing of employees is paramount, and this is even more so during this pandemic. A range of health and wellbeing support has been launched including:
- redevelopment of the Well@Work intranet site which provides information about wellbeing support employees can access including specific topics relevant to Coronavirus (COVID-19)
 - a range of relevant Well@Work topics has been circulated via the daily Coronavirus (COVID-19) update emails, covering homeworking tips, social interaction, sleep, mindfulness etc.
 - counselling support
 - Human Resources, Communications and Marketing and IT colleagues have also developed a solution to enable non-networked staff to access the Well@Work intranet site and daily emails
- 9.6 Further actions have also been identified as part of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) employee health and wellbeing action plan, developed specifically to identify the support required, particularly in relation to mental health.

10.0 Legal Implications

- 10.1 The need to give due consideration to obligations under the law remains an important consideration. No general legal immunity is provided to local authorities in the Coronavirus legislation. Likewise, there is no general legal principle of necessity to relax the normal public law principles that apply to decision making, i.e. rationality, proportionality, relevant considerations, adherence to Convention obligations etc.
- 10.2 Statutory requirement to consult will still apply. However, inevitably in the practical application of all of these principles the context of the emergency is likely to influence the nature and standard of what has to be done, and what the Courts will realistically expect to be done in any Judicial Review. Therefore, particular issues will be addressed on a case by case basis.
- 10.3 Proper oversight of these issues is secured through the input of the Monitoring Officer and Service Director Legal into Gold Strategic Group and Silver Tactical Group meetings. Support will be targeted on specific issues such as the impact on contractual and procurement arrangements; data protection; governance arrangements for decision making; enforcement of additional powers; and relaxation of social care obligations.

11.0 Customer & Digital Implications

- 11.1 The Contact Centre has stayed fully operational throughout the pandemic as capability already existed for advisors to work remotely. Although initial call volumes and wait times were high, this has eased in the last 2 weeks which is a testament to the success of communications messages and the swift establishing of the specific Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency response team.
- 11.2 The Contact Centre and IT teams have worked together closely to ensure that technology solutions are resilient and that the Council remains contactable across all channels. In addition, Barnsley was one of the first Councils with the capability to allow Registrars to work from home, which has helped ensure the continuity of this vital statutory service.
- 11.3 The Council were quick to activate a range of customer channels including:
- the Enterprising Barnsley Team have provided specific advice and support to Barnsley based businesses relating to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) economic challenges
 - council tax and the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Council Tax Hardship Scheme – while Council tax funds vitally important services such as adult and children's social care; waste collection; police and fire services; we realise that some people may have had a reduction in household income as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and may be finding it difficult to make payment. People may be entitled to claim Council tax support and in addition, the government have also announced a Council tax hardship fund for customers in receipt of Council tax support
 - humanitarian support has been described above and by harnessing the combined efforts of 1,000 volunteers we can help people in need access food, medication and the support they need
- 11.4 The Children's Social Care Front Door and the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub is fully operational with all workers based at home. Requests for support for families, including concerns about children's welfare, are being screened and assessed in line with practice standards, and visits are being made where needed.
- 11.5 Children's Social Workers continue to work jointly with South Yorkshire Police in the multi-agency safeguarding hub, undertaking joint child protection assessments and investigations together. The number of contacts received by the service has fallen significantly in the last four weeks and proactive communications have been issued to remind the public about what to do if they need help or are concerned about a child.

12.0 Communications Implications

Communications and Marketing

- 12.1 The Communications and Marketing Team are an integral part of the recovery and response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- 12.2 The Head of Communications and Marketing is a member of the Gold Strategic Group, with the Communications Managers supporting the Silver Tactical Response Group.
- 12.3 The Communications and Marketing Team are classed as the communications subgroup and feed into other subgroups such as Business Continuity; Business and the Economy; and Communities. There is currently a full team and they are operating as set out in the Communications critical and major incident plan. The usual out of hours support is also being provided.

12.4 The Council is part of the Barnsley Health and Social Care Communications Cell and the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum (SYLRF) Communications cell. The Head of Communications and Marketing also provides communications support to the SYLRF Humanitarian cell.

12.5 Communications and Marketing Activity

- The key messages remain around social distancing, service disruptions, links to help and support, e.g. mental health and wellbeing and financial support
- The team are working with services to provide the #beattheboredom portal, to provide a site of activities people can take part in while social distancing measures are in place
- Social media channels are helping the organisation to engage with residents and communities and providing insight into what information people need. Social media engagement rates remain high, and sentiment remains mainly positive. Negative engagement is mostly around Council tax payments and guidance for people around Council tax support
- By working closely with the Digital Team, the website pages are being kept up to date with the latest information
- The team continues to be proactive, sending our Coronavirus (COVID-19) daily update emails to staff; managers; Councillors; partners and MPs. These have been well received. From week commencing 20 April 2020, a weekly update will also be provided to non-networked, front line staff
- Adverts have been placed in the local print media to target residents who might not have access to the Council's digital resources. The service has teamed up with local partners to share the cost and to make sure that information is joined up
- The team is working in partnership with a range of partners, including Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group; Barnsley Hospital; South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust; South Yorkshire Police; South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR); IDAS; Berneslai Homes; and Norfolk Property Services (NPS), to promote Barnsley wide information through our channels
- The team are working with the Silver Tactical Recovery Group to start to plan a way forward for Barnsley and its residents

13.0 **Consultations**

13.1 From the initial stages of the pandemic through to the current position, key partners, nationally, regionally and locally have been consulted and are supportive of the approach that the Council is taking in managing the response to Coronavirus (COVID-19).

13.2 Involvement in national meetings such as conference calls with the Chief Medical Officer, regional meetings such as the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum and local involvement in the Health and Social Care arrangements, ensure that the Council remains aligned; can share best practice; and learn from colleagues in order to protect the people of Barnsley.

14.0 **The Corporate Plan & the Council's Performance Management Framework**

14.1 The Council's response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic involves an ongoing assessment of its duties and responsibilities. Business continuity plans have informed Gold and Silver Groups of business-critical and non-business critical services. In some areas, staff have been diverted from their usual duties in order to ensure critical services can continue to be delivered, where existing staff are self-isolating for a number of reasons. It's likely that this

current response will impact on business plans, the corporate plan and the performance management framework.

15.0 Promoting Equality, Diversity & Social Inclusion

15.1 The Council's response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is fundamentally about protecting everyone in families, communities, places of study and work across the borough. The response strategy described in the report covers all aspects of life in Barnsley. As described earlier, the Council will continue to assess the impact of the pandemic as it moves from response to recovery to make sure that it promotes equality, diversity and social inclusion.

16.0 Tackling the Impact of Poverty

16.1 The financial impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) can be seen across all parts of the Council and across all sectors. Unfortunately, those living in more deprived areas of the borough are more likely to be affected. Tackling the impact of poverty is a common theme across all subgroups reporting into the Silver Tactical Group. For example, the finance, procurement and legal subgroup reports exceptions on a daily basis to the Silver Tactical Group meeting.

17.0 Tackling Health Inequalities

17.1 Health inequalities as a result of Coronavirus (COVID-19) will continue to be monitored and addressed. The Silver Business Intelligence subgroup and the Partnership Intelligence Cell are collating, interpreting and communicating key information that includes hospital activity; out of hospital activity; all and excess deaths; and current gaps in expected non-Coronavirus (COVID-19) health needs. Healthcare and Local Authority datasets are being combined to identify vulnerable groups in the local population, and to inform proactive and reactive support to those most at need.

17.2 The Council knows that there are many groups in society who will be hit harder by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic; not only older people and those with underlying health conditions, but those who are vulnerable simply because they do not have the same opportunities to stay well. These groups experience unjust and avoidable differences in their health - resulting from a lack of the things many of us take for granted: stable, well paid work; secure housing; or a support network of friends and family to rely on.

17.3 Although Coronavirus (COVID-19) has been and continues to cause great harm, stress and uncertainty, the Barnsley people and the health, care and wider system has worked together in incredible ways that can be learned from far beyond response and recovery.

17.4 Recovery is going to be a complicated and cautious exercise, but one that requires the system to continue to work together, put historical barriers behind it, and energetically address the inequalities in Barnsley that may be greater now than they were before.

18.0 Crime & Disorder

18.1 Crime statistics are being monitored on a weekly basis, and the Council continues to work closely with colleagues in South Yorkshire Police. The Safer Neighbourhood Service (SNS) are flexing their approach to make sure that the most vulnerable in our communities are prioritised and protected. The planned response includes considerations for asylum seekers and refugees; Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs); people who are homeless or rough sleeping; and gypsy and travellers.

19.0 Risk Management

19.1 In order to guide the Council's response to Coronavirus (COVID-19), a Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment has been developed and is reviewed at each Gold Strategic Group meeting. Risks being considered include: adult social care; business and the economy; business continuity; children and education; communications; communities; death management; finance,

legal and procurement; health; mental health; personal protective equipment; public health/general data and intelligence. All of these risks are managed through the management structures outlined in section 20.

20.0 Health, Safety & Emergency Resilience Issues

20.1 The response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) impacts the Council both as a category one responder to civil emergencies and as an organisation through impacts on business continuity and service delivery.

20.2 Business continuity plans have been used to guide the critical functions that need to be maintained. These have been defined as those having a critical or high priority at 24/48 hours within their business continuity plans. The overall response arrangements include:

- a regularly reviewed response strategy with strategic aims and objectives
- a full multi-tier response structure. Additionally, the Council is inherent to the multi-agency response both within the borough (Barnsley Health and Social Care multi-agency coordination) and county (South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum)
- a regularly reviewed strategic threat and risk assessment

20.3 Critical services continue to be provided through the pandemic. There are direct health and safety implications for staff in carrying out their duties while maintaining suitable risk control. This includes the application of social distancing, use of personal protective equipment (for which guidance has been developed and issued) and hand hygiene/infection control practices. The changes in working practices necessitated by the pandemic have further potential health and safety impacts which are being managed including: potential impacts on employee wellbeing; homeworking; and premises/facilities management (statutory inspections/maintenance).

21.0 Invited Witnesses

21.0 The following witnesses have been invited to attend to answer questions from the committee:

- Sir Steve Houghton, Leader of the Council, Barnsley MBC
- Sarah Norman, Chief Executive, Barnsley MBC

22.0 Possible Areas for Investigation

22.1 Members may wish to ask questions around the following areas:

- What have been the biggest challenges in responding to the pandemic?
- What are your key concerns for the future for both the community and the organisation?
- How effective have partners been in engaging with each other and working together?
- Have any areas of the organisation been made vulnerable as a result of re-directing resources to deal with the pandemic?
- What positive lessons have been learned that you hope to maintain in future, such as new ways of working?
- What planning was undertaken to manage the impact of the pandemic and to what extent have these plans been effective in managing services and mitigating the impacts?
- What changes could be made to plans to better equip Barnsley for any future pandemics?

- Is the governance structure proving to be fit for purpose with clear division of responsibility?
- What safeguarding challenges has the pandemic presented the organisation with?
- What do you consider to be the most significant organisational risk at present and how is this being managed?
- What are the next steps in responding to and recovering from the pandemic – what changes can we expect to see in the next few weeks?
- What can Members do to support the response and recovery?

23.0 Background Papers

Appendix 1: Barnsley Council Response Gold Strategy Aims & Objectives (attached)

Coronavirus Act 2020:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/7/contents/enacted>

24.0 Glossary

A&E	Accident & Emergency
BHNFT	Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
BMBC	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
BPL	Barnsley Premier Leisure
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
DfE	Department for Education
HR	Human Resources
ICS	Integrated Care System
IDAS	Independent Domestic Abuse Service
LHRP	Local Health Resilience Partnerships
LRF	Local Resilience Forum
MPs	Members of Parliament
NPS	Norfolk Property Services
OSC	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SCG	Strategic Coordination Group
SD	Service Director
SMT	Senior Management Team
SNS	Safer Neighbourhood Service
SWYPFT	South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
SYB	South Yorkshire & Bassetlaw
SYFR	South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue
SYLRF	South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum
SYP	South Yorkshire Police
TBC	To be confirmed

25.0 Officer Contact

Anna Marshall, Overview & Scrutiny Team
01 May 2020

Appendix 1: Barnsley Council Response Gold Strategy Aims & Objectives

Gold Strategy – Coronavirus and COVID-19

Aim: Coordinate the Council's activity, as a Category One responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, to endeavour to save life and minimise the impact of coronavirus/COVID-19 in Barnsley, and support recovery to normality as quickly as practicable.

Objectives:

1. Minimise the potential health impact of coronavirus and COVID-19 by:
 - a. Supporting efforts to detect the virus' emergence and early assessment by sharing information.
 - b. Promoting individual responsibility and action to reduce the spread of virus through good hygiene practices.
 - c. Working with local, regional and national NHS partners to ensure the health and social care systems are co-ordinated and ready to provide treatment and support for the numbers likely to suffer the virus or its complications whilst maintaining other essential care.
 - d. Encouraging those most at risk of infection to self-isolate.
 - e. Encouraging and as empowered to do so enforcing the limiting of social contact including by supporting measures for achieving social distancing and revision and/or closure of premises, car parks, services etc. in line with Government requirements to reduce and discourage social gathering.
 - f. Supporting vulnerable people in isolation, whether or not they are ill.
2. Ensure and promote the health, safety, welfare and wellbeing of all staff so far as is reasonably practicable, including support to staff who need to have essential contact with each other and the public and staff in a homeworking environment.
3. Minimise the potential impact of coronavirus and COVID-19 on society and the economy by:
 - a. Protecting the safety of communities by supporting the continuity of essential local authority services and where these services need to be curtailed or suspended for a temporary period (such as aspects of waste management) working to ensure that subsequent impacts are minimised.
 - b. Ensuring targeted support to the most vulnerable to address hardship and isolation
 - c. Supporting the continuation of everyday activities as far as practicable.
 - d. Supporting schools to provide a strong on-line home learning offer to pupils
 - e. Upholding the democratic process.
 - f. Working alongside South Yorkshire Police to maintain public order across Barnsley.
 - g. Supporting cohesion of affected communities.
 - h. Supporting individuals, families and communities to stay safe.
 - i. Preparing to cope with the possibility of significant numbers of additional deaths.
 - j. Providing advice and direct support to adversely affected small and medium businesses and the self-employed to enable them to hibernate or diversify so that they can survive the crisis.
 - k. Providing a response to enable the survival and rebirth of the town centre and principal towns after the crisis.
 - l. Providing a response to individuals in financial difficulties and facing worklessness.
 - m. Working with communities, residents and volunteers to support and facilitate them to respond to the impacts of coronavirus.
 - n. Providing a community hub, be it physical, online or by telephone, to act as a base for visible Council community support.

- o. Promoting a recovery and return to normality and the restoration of disrupted services at the earliest opportunity including through partnership working.
 - p. Working with central government departments to seek the necessary support to maximise opportunities, enhance and extend the Council's response and extend this through into recovery.
- 4. Develop and maintain a strategic overview of the impact of and response to the evolving situation (including through impact modelling in conjunction with partners), managing and coordinating the strategic organisational response (including by developing empowered command, control and coordination arrangements) and reporting appropriately.
- 5. Instil and maintain trust and confidence by:
 - a. Ensuring that staff, Elected Members, the public and partners are engaged and well informed throughout the response period and receive information and guidance in a timely way.
 - b. Promoting national public messaging.
 - c. Promoting consistency of messaging across agencies.
 - d. Promoting community resilience and support, and social responsibility to others' welfare.
- 6. Develop a recovery strategy and plan to return the communities of Barnsley to a normality reflective of their needs and as a minimum to the standard prior to the incident

Sarah Norman
Chief Executive
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Version 8.0
Dated 14 April 2020