

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Policy & Resources Committee	21/01/2021
<b>Subject:</b> COVID 19 Debrief	<b>Non Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	All
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	No
<b>If so, how much?</b>	N/A
<b>What is the source of funding?</b>	N/A
<b>Has this funding source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	N/A
<b>Report of:</b> Peter Lisley, Assistant Town Clerk & Director of Major Projects COVID 19 Gold	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Angela Roach, Assistant Town Clerk & Members Services Director Richard Woolford, Town Clerk Security Advisor Gary Locker Town Clerks Head of Resilience	

### Summary

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 the City of London Corporation is a Category 1 responder. It therefore has statutory responsibilities under the act and the emergency provisions that comes with it. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic earlier this year resulted in officers deploying command and control structures in order to effectively manage the City Corporation's response to the global crisis. Officers worked with Public Health England and other partners, in accordance with current Government guidance, to maintain the organisation's critical and other services and to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on the City's communities in the lead up to a return to normality.

An independent debrief was commissioned during the summer recess to assess the operational response to COVID-19. This report sets out the recommendations of that debrief which was carried out at an officer level. The focus was on learning for the officer teams to assist in the continued mitigation of the crisis and identification of transferable learning to cope with other resilience scenarios. The independent debrief included over 400 responses from staff engaged in crisis mitigation, through questionnaires, followed by 8 structured de-briefs, through Gold and the thematic command teams. Learning points have been captured and implemented whilst we continue to mitigate against the fluid evolving crisis.

## **Recommendation**

The committee is recommended to:

- i) Note the range of activity undertaken in mitigation against the COVID-19 crisis.
- ii) . Members views are sought on: -
  - whether an alternative means of Member-level decision making is required should a future crisis occur.
  - whether civil resilience training should be included as part of the Member development programme training offered to Members each year,

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

As a result of the outbreak of COVID-19 earlier this year officers deployed command and control structures in order to effectively manage the City Corporation's response to the global pandemic. Officers worked with Public Health England and other partners, in accordance with current Government guidance, to maintain the organisation's critical and other services and to minimise the impact of the pandemic on the City's communities in readiness for a return to normality.

During the City of London Corporation's response to the COVID-19 crisis, an operational debrief was carried out at an officer level. The recommendations of this exercise are set out in the Appendix 1 and are being implemented. Recommendation 18-20 specifically relate to governance and Member engagement and are commented on below. The Committee's views are sought on these outcomes.

### **Current Position**

In accordance with best practice, an independent and thorough de-brief of the response was undertaken to ensure learning is fully captured to inform the response to future crises impacting on the organisation or the City.

The structured de-brief on the preparedness and response of crisis management reviewed the thematic responses across the command structures considering:

- Public Services
- Communities (including schools)
- Communications
- Business Continuity
- Facilities Management
- Business and Economy

- Those who attended the Gold Meetings
- Chair of Policy and Resources Committee

Through considering, what went well, what did not go so well and what would we do differently.

The independent structured debriefer advised that it was clear from all the responses received and de-briefs conducted that the COLC response to the COVID-19 crisis was of the highest quality. The command and control processes implemented and the way in which the organisation, and its people, adapted, in exceptionally challenging circumstances, was exceptional.

In considering the findings, that were overwhelmingly positive, constructive comments, and suggestions that were formed into recommendations crossed into five areas:

1. Communication
2. Service delivery and collaboration
3. Staff and remote working
4. Command, control and coordination
5. Member involvement

Recommendations 1 to 17 covering the above first four areas, have been implemented and captured by the Town Clerk's security and resilience team, for current and future crisis mitigation.

Recommendations 18 to 20 relate to governance and Members. For ease they are set out below,

### **Member Findings & Key Recommendations**

Town Clerk's Members' Services to consider any learning from this crisis with the governance review.

- The City Corporation may wish to examine Members governance during a crisis to ensure a consistent approach.
- The City Corporation may wish to consider training for Members in relation to London Councils '*Civil Resilience Handbook for Councillors in London Local Authorities*'

### **Response to the Recommendations**

At the beginning of the pandemic concerns were expressed about the level of communication with Members, particularly as not all Members were fully conversant with the emergency planning arrangements, the operation of the Gold command structure or what fell within their remit in terms of decision-making. This resulted in concerns about communication, the lack of democratic oversight and confidence in the decision-making process as well as concerns about the pace at which formal

virtual meetings were introduced. It also resulted in the receipt of over 120 independent queries from Members within a 5 day period between 12-18<sup>th</sup> March.

Whilst a Member level Sounding Board was quickly established at the beginning of the first lockdown period, most Members were unaware of its existence and some questioned its composition. As a result, and in order to engage Members on an informal basis more widely, the Policy Committee agreed to the Sounding Board being replaced by thematic consultation groups covering, public services, communities, culture and finance. In doing so it acknowledged that whilst this would provide a mechanism for Members to comment on emerging issues at an early stage there were limitations as it would not always be possible or practical to canvass the views of 125 Members on all items. The Committee also agreed to its Resource Allocation Sub-Committee meeting informally on a fortnightly basis in order to facilitate any urgent decisions being made in a more transparent manner. Members' views are nevertheless sought on whether an alternative means of Member-level decision making is required during a crisis. Whilst the introduction of virtual meetings goes some way to address this, it is an issue which could be examined further as part of the *committee structure* element of the governance review which is scheduled to be discussed in March.

The importance of sharing information with Members in a timely manner to ensure there is an awareness of how it is intended things will be managed, how frequently Members will be briefed on departmental/officer activities and which group of Members have oversight of things that need to be dealt with urgently has been noted and will be borne in mind in future.

Establishing a mechanism for dealing with Members' queries at the outset is also crucial as this enables queries to be managed more effectively and reduces any adverse impact on officer time. A COVID19 mailbox was set up specifically to address Members' queries and although it is now used infrequently, it proved to be a valuable part of the communication process. 773 separate emails have been received from Members since March. Other means of communication established specifically for Members during the crisis included, amongst other things, a weekly broadcast to all Members of the Court hosted by the Chair of Policy, a fortnightly forum with Chairs to share information and discuss emerging issues arising in respective service areas and a weekly email updating Members on COVID related activities.

In the short period prior to the introduction of virtual meetings, matters which required an immediate formal committee decision were dealt with in accordance with Standing Order No 41(a) i.e. under the urgency procedures. Whilst decisions taken in this manner usually involve consultation with just the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of a committee, the process was extended so that all Members of a committee were given the opportunity to comment before a decision was taken.

Virtual meetings are now running smoothly. Relevant technology has now been installed in the Committee Rooms in readiness for the delivery of hybrid meetings. Meetings which take place in the event spaces within Guildhall such as the Court of Common Council and the Planning and Transport Committee, can also be held in hybrid format. Whilst there is a separate AV replacement project to fully equip event spaces such as the Livery Hall and Great Hall in train, until it is delivered the City

Corporation's current AV contractor is able to provide the necessary technology at an additional cost.

With regard to recommendation 20 i.e. the civil resilience training offered by London Councils, a number of Members have attended the training and found it quite useful. Members views are sought on whether this training should be included as part of the programme of training offered to Members each year, or a bespoke local training package for members delivered by Town Clerks Resilience/Security team, in line with our bespoke officers training, or whether it is something that would merit being made mandatory.

## **Key Data**

Key data is presented at **Appendix 1**.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

Strategic implications – these recommendations are actioned to ensure learning is in place for any future crisis to support operational delivery of the City of London Corporation Strategy and business plans, as well as support both regional and national response to crisis.

Financial implications – early provision of COVID contingency levels of delegation agreed by Members aided quick responses whilst ensuring appropriate governance.

Risk implications – This is mitigated through the Corporate Risks, CR34, COVID-19 but also within CR01 Resilience and CR24 Security all three corporate risks sit with the Town Clerk. These recommendations support the current and future mitigation of these risks.

Resource implications – Any changes to resources will be identified and delivered through the move to the Target Operating Model.

Equalities implications – Equalities were considered in service delivery, with staff welfare and wellbeing supported throughout.

Climate Implications – There are no impacts in these recommendations

Security implications – during this crisis, the UK threat level raised to Severe with ongoing security threats. This is and has been mitigated through the Town Clerks Senior Security Board and the Protect thematic boards in delivering the Corporations security strategy with appropriate partners to mitigate security matters.

## **Conclusion**

This report presents the recommendations of the response to COVID-19, learnings have been implemented currently and have been captured by the Town Clerks security and resilience team, for current and future crisis mitigation. Members guidance on how they wish to develop their areas, is sought.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – COVID Gold Debrief recommendations

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## Appendix 1

	Recommendations	Emerging from:	Action Agreed Y/N	Update and Owner
I.	<p>That the Corporation should recognise the initial command structure adopted as best practice and seek to replicate it in the event of future crises with the following, possible, adaptations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Produce early guidance/a schematic re the C3 structure implemented, including roles &amp; responsibilities of post-holders and Silver/Bronze functional areas</li> <li>2. Continually review the structure, particularly as the crisis moves from Response to Consolidation to Recovery, where necessary, adapting and adjusting the structure, membership, participants and terms of reference to suit the varying stages of the crisis</li> <li>3. Consider the future role of HR within the structure, including whether or not HR need to lead a specific Silver area (and/or have HR BP's on each of the other Silver Groups to advise, inform and feedback issues identified by the respective Silver Groups)</li> </ol>	<b>Command, Control &amp; Coordination</b>	<b>Y</b>	<p><b>Action Owner Town Clerks Security &amp; Resilience GL / RW:</b></p> <p>All points are accepted and embedded, being fluid throughout this crisis adapting to changing threats, from lockdowns, tier systems, crisis and recovery mitigation, as well as protest, Brexit and threat level changes.</p> <p>We remain in a posture to manage the crisis whilst looking towards a longer-term recovery and the Command structures are continually reviewed and adapted, to support City, regional and national planning.</p> <p>Learning audit of command has been captured for future crisis.</p> <p>TC Resilience to consider HR in command structures future crisis.</p>
II.	<p>That the Corporation examines the meeting structure adopted during the crisis and, where possible, develop a pre-planned meeting rhythm/cycle for implementation in future crisis situations.</p>	<b>Command, Control &amp; Coordination</b>	<b>Y</b>	<p><b>Action Owner Town Clerks Security &amp; Resilience GL / RW:</b></p> <p>Recommendation continually reviewed and captured for future crisis.</p>

III.	That the Corporation continues with its programme of command training and professional development but extends it to include a wider Silver and Bronze cohort. Such training and development should include input on audit trails and log-writing.	Command, Control & Coordination	Y	<p><b>Action Owner Town Clerks Security &amp; Resilience GL / RW:</b></p> <p>Recommendation in train now and for future crisis</p> <p><b>Action - All Chief Officers to identify named staff members for a) command roles now and future b) loggists training now and future.</b></p> <p>Resilience pool enough at this time however further training to be delivered.</p> <p>Loggist training booked for January to increase CADRE, will be delivered via teams.</p> <p>Command training will take place in Q 1 or 2 2021 to increase CADRE.</p>
IV.	That the Corporation examines its business continuity planning to ensure BC plans take account of the likelihood of protracted crises in the future. Such plans could also benefit from greater Chief Officer ownership and involvement.	Command, Control & Coordination	Y	<p><b>Action Owner Town Clerks Security &amp; Resilience GL / RW:</b></p> <p>This action is in place.</p>
V.	That the Corporation examines in detail the source, frequency and impact of requests for data during crisis and implements measures which would manage such processes in the future in order to ensure they do not impact on tactical or operational activity. This could include a single point of contact for all requests received and collation of responses sent to avoid duplication.	Command, Control & Coordination	Y	<p>It is acknowledged that data management is important in any crisis.</p> <p>During this COVID crisis a lot of data was driven centrally (London-wide) not locally.</p> <p><b>Action will be owned by Town Clerks:</b></p> <p><b>Resilience and SPOC's from all departments into TC_BECC to minimise unnecessary duplication feeding local and regional requirements</b></p>



				<b>Town Clerks, corporate strategy and performance to support Gold, Chief Officers and members.</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<p>That the Corporation should ensure an audit is maintained of Gold and thematic recommendations</p>	<b>Command, Control &amp; Coordination</b>	<b>Y</b>	<p><b>Action Owner Town Clerks Security &amp; Resilience GL / RW:</b></p> <p>Audit to be maintained by Town Clerks Resilience team.</p> <p>TC Resilience as per all debrief audits to maintain and review any cross over or outstanding from other debriefs.</p> <p>TC resilience to work with departmental resilience SPOC's to ensure all thematic action are owned and actioned.</p>
<b>VII.</b>	<p>That the Corporation should examine how it can use the learning from this crisis to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Short-cut the sign-off process for draft internal communications at a senior level</li> <li>2. Examine how the organisation can use learning from this crisis to see if there are different ways of communicating to business, resident and internal audiences at a time when traditional methods were limited by the pandemic.</li> </ol> <p>Internal Communications:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Examine ways to ensure more effective communications to staff at 'local level' in the early stages of crisis</li> </ol>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Y</b>	<p><b>Town Clerks Director of communications to own points 1 &amp; 2</b></p> <p><b>Town Clerks Resilience</b> will ensure in all future training both internal and external communications are part of future training. Learning from COVID will be shared in future training.</p> <p>Recommendations 3,4,5,6 <b>All Chief Officers</b> to reflect on their and corporate communications throughout COVID and consider how or if these can be enhanced, cascading of communication throughout their departments and update BR re corporate Comms and RW &amp; GL re resilience and future training learning for command training..</p>

	<p>4. Identify how key messages and decisions (from Gold, HR, TC's, etc.) can be better cascaded via departments or service areas to the workforce</p> <p>5. Examine ways of delivering quick summaries of decisions taken to functional areas not represented in decision making meetings/forums</p> <p>External Communications:</p> <p>6. Explore additional or alternative channels of communication with residents and businesses to aid future crisis communications if similar limitations arise</p>			
VIII.	That the Corporation should review what happened in the early stages of the crisis (from a resilience/service delivery perspective) to ensure key roles/workers across the COLC are identified in order that the functions they performed can be prioritised and incorporated in to updated BC/Response plans	Service Delivery and Collaboration	Y	<p>Critical workers posts were captured during the initial in crisis phase and posts are now held in HR and TC Resilience.</p> <p><b>Action all chief officers</b> to keep this up to date and reviewed, in the short term re second wave and future core resilience with TOM amendments, as necessary.</p>
IX.	That the Corporation should examine how they can take further services "online" in order to aid remote working and reduce in-bound post	Service Delivery and Collaboration	Y	<b>Action all Chief Officers to consider in their service delivery areas, both in and out of crisis with future modelling incorporating the effect of TOM.</b>
X.	That the Corporation review the in-crisis staff re-deployment processes to support critical activity in the event of future crisis	Service Delivery and Collaboration	Y	<b>Director of HR (CM) and Comptroller (MC) to consider how we can consider a corporate response with flexibility to move staff with more flexibility in the next phase of the crisis and for any further requirements for the organisation.</b>
XI.	The Corporation may wish to consider some form of survey of external recipients of services during the crisis in order	Service Delivery and Collaboration	To be advised	<b>Town Clerks, Corporate Strategy and Performance team to consider with appropriate service areas and advise.</b>

	to inform future service delivery and / or crisis communications			
<b>XII.</b>	The Corporation may wish to consider a bespoke staff survey to ascertain staff views on how people-related issues were managed during the crisis and other measures which would support remote working in crisis in the future.	<b>Staff and Remote Working</b>	<b>To be advised</b>	<b>Director of HR and Town Clerks, Corporate Strategy and Performance team to consider and advise.</b>
<b>XIII.</b>	That the Corporation review staff-related issues which arose during the crisis with a view to identifying what HR-related policy development can be undertaken now (in advance of further crisis) and what clarity can be provided to staff and managers for activation at a future date (if required). This activity could include reviewing the corporate risk assessment template (this relates to work place not corporate risk, which some respondents viewed as cumbersome).	<b>Staff and Remote Working</b>	<b>To be advised</b>	As staff are completing the return work risk assessment it is felt that this is not bureaucratic or burdensome but provides a sensible mechanism for a 1:1 conversation between employees and their line manager.  <b>Director of HR and City Surveyor to consider and advise.</b>
<b>XIV.</b>	That the Corporation reviews its approach to remote working to develop a “blended model” which strikes a balance between enhancing BaU service delivery, crisis service delivery, welfare needs and productivity. Such activity may include reviewing office facilities to support partial remote working.	<b>Staff and Remote Working</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Action all Chief Officers to consider with their future ways of work, cognisant of TOM</b>
<b>XV.</b>	The Corporation may wish to review its in-crisis IT equipment distribution processes to support protracted remote working	<b>Staff and Remote Working</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>This action can be closed:</b>  The COL IT Division are currently going through the gateway process to obtain funding for its End User Device replacement project.

				<p>In addition to replacing all the End User Devices, the IT Division are improving the way that devices are ordered, built, prepared and delivered to our customer.</p> <p>This will reduce the delivery times from order to “ready-to-use” from 5-10 days to 2 days. In addition, throughput will increase also from 20-30 devices a week to 200+ a week.</p> <p>Devices will be shipped directly from the supplier to users’ chosen working location (Office/home), rather than to the Guildhall. The new technology and processes the IT Division have implemented mean that devices will self-build, without needing onsite IT resources and will therefore be ready for use within a few hours of arriving at the home of our customer.</p> <p>The IT Division is also implementing a new system that should enable the automation of ordering peripherals and screens that again if necessary be delivered to any location including an employee’s home.</p>
<b>XVI.</b>	The Corporation may wish to review PPE supply, storage and distribution processes to ensure the supply of PPE to critical staff when required	<b>Staff and Remote Working</b>	<b>Y</b>	<p><b>This action can now be closed.</b></p> <p>There were no issues with supply of PPE during crisis and this action is owned by Andrew Carter, in line with CR34 risk owner on PPE, with data from all chief officers. We have just joined a new resilient pan London supply chain for emergency provision if necessary.</p>

<b>XVII.</b>	The Corporation may wish to consider ways in which it can recognise exceptional work by staff members during the crisis.	<b>Staff and Remote Working</b>	<b>Y</b>	<p>All Chief Officers have individually shown appreciation of their staff throughout the crisis.</p> <p><b>Director of HR to consider corporate policy and there is a paper going to Establishment Committee in October/November.</b></p>
<b>XVIII.</b>	Town Clerks Members Services to consider any learning from this crisis with the governance review.	<b>Members</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Action Town Clerks, Members Services Angela Roach (AR)</b>
<b>XIX.</b>	The Corporation may wish to examine Members governance during a crisis, to ensure a consistent approach.	<b>Members</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Action Town Clerks, Members Services Angela Roach (AR)</b>
<b>XX.</b>	The Corporation may wish to consider training for Members in relation to London Councils <i>"Civil Resilience Handbook for Councillors in London Local Authorities"</i> document, coupled with the outcome of recommendation XIX above	<b>Members</b>	<b>Y</b>	<p><b>Action Town Clerks, Members Services Angela Roach (AR)</b></p> <p><b>Supported by Town Clerks Resilience command training RW/GL</b></p>