

Report to:	EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	24 June 2020
Executive Member / Reporting Officer:	Cllr Allison Gwynne – Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Community Safety and Environment) Ian Saxon – Director of Operations and Neighbourhoods
Subject:	REVIEW AND UPDATE OF SERVICE CHANGES ACROSS OPERATIONS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS
Report Summary:	To provide an update on proposed service change decisions across Operations and Neighbourhoods in response to the evolving national guidance and the relaxation of certain Covid-19 lockdown measures.
Recommendations:	<p>That Executive Cabinet agree that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The revised opening of non-essential businesses in Ashton and Hyde Indoor Market as set out in the report at paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3. 2. Delayed re-opening of Ashton and Hyde Outdoor Market as set out in the report at paragraph 2.4. 3. A phased re-opening of Library Buildings and re-introduction of Home Library Service as detailed in paragraphs 3.7, 3.11. 4. No unaccompanied children under 12 years of age allowed in the Libraries. 5. To continue the suspension of Library fines until 31 August 2020. 6. To continue the suspension of events and closure of cultural venues until 1 October 2020 or until review of guidance permits. 7. To note the continuation of virtual or digital customer interaction for Cultural and Customer Services 8. To recommence parking enforcement from 1 July 2020. 9. To continue the suspension of monthly parking deductions for all staff contract car park passes until 1 October 2020. 10. The Licensing Counter remains permanently closed. 11. The adjustments to Licensing payments and procedures are agreed detailed in paragraphs 4.3-4.13 12. To continue to defer proactive inspections of House in multiple Occupation (HMO) and Inspections required under the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR Regs) until 1 July 2020 unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so to protect life and limb. 13. To recommence charging for skips and scaffolding permits remaining on the highway from the 1 July 2020. 14. To recommence issuing invoices under the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR

Regs) and the Private Water Supply (England) Regulations 2016 (amended 2018) (PWS Regs)

15. It is proposed to recommence the Buy with Confidence Membership scheme from the 1 October 2020.
16. A review of the services changes and a updated report will be brought to Members in September

Corporate Plan:

The proposals are aimed a supporting economic growth and providing a safe environment for the general public.

Policy Implications:

The proposals support the Council's response to and recovery from Covid-19 ad support policies to develop economic growth and deliver a thriving retail offer..

Financial Implications:

**(Authorised by the statutory
Section 151 Officer & Chief
Finance Officer)**

Any costs or loss of income that have been incurred as a result of COVID-19 have been reported within the revenue monitoring.

As a result of this report and the proposed changes to the services that are currently being provided, the levels of expenditure and more importantly the levels of income received will change and this will be reported in the revenue monitoring report. The financial impact of the proposals can be summarised as follows:

Markets

Invoices for the rent and service charges due from indoor market traders have been raised for 20/21 financial year, along with invoices for rent due from the Kiosks on Ashton Outdoor market. The service is working closely with traders and the income section to collect the charges due. There is no financial impact associated with the revised re-opening of non-essential businesses in Ashton and Hyde indoor markets or in the Kiosks.

Ashton and Hyde outdoor markets (excluding the Kiosks) usually generate an average of £4k income per week, which would be lost for each week the re-opening is delayed.

Cultural Services

The continued suspension of Library fines until 31 August 2020 would result in a loss of income of approximately £2.5k over a 2 month period. There are no other direct financial implications associated with the proposals for the library service.

The suspension of events has resulted in an expected saving of £120k. This has been reported in in the revenue monitoring report and will continue to be reviewed.

If the museum and art gallery remain closed until 1 October 2020, an expected loss of income of £6k would be incurred (£2k per month). This is made up of donations, educational sessions delivered to school groups, charges for activity sessions available to families and takings in the museum shop.

Whilst there have been costs incurred in the delivery of virtual or digital customer interaction across the service, this is offset by savings on the costs that would normally be incurred on face to face delivery.

Parking

Based on information available from 19/20 financial year, parking

services collected an average of £44.5k in parking fines, including both on and off street, per month. The re-instatement of parking enforcement could therefore be expected to result in similar income levels. It should be noted that payment has continued to be made for the enforcement service in accordance with government directives; however those involved have been redeployed to other priority areas.

On average, parking services generate £4.5k per month from staff car park passes. The continued suspension for a further three months would result in an additional £13.5k loss of income. However, the spaces remain available for others to use as council staff on the whole will remain at home so are not using the spaces and their alternative is to cancel the pass and not renew.

Licensing

There are currently no financial implications of the licensing counter remaining closed. The service is investigating the possibility of a new IT system to improve processing efficiency but this cost implications of this will be assessed as part of the associated decision.

The adjustments to licensing payments and procedures relating to taxis, licensed premises, Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 and Private Water Supply (England) Regulations 2016 (amended 2018), along with the charges for Buy With Confidence members, may have financial implications. Although it is proposed that a deferral in payment continues to be offered, the period of time covered will still remain the same as it would do if the payments were made at the point at which they became due. However the risk of non-payment or potentially invoices being left unpaid should insolvency arise increases.

The charges relating to overstay of skips and scaffolds on the highways usually equate to an average of £216 per month which will begin to be recovered again once the charging recommences.

The deferral of inspections outlined in recommendation 12 has no direct financial implications. The staff members that carry out these inspections do so as part of a broader role with a wide range of demands.

Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

This report updates the proposals in relation to the delivery of various services within the Operations and Neighbourhoods Service as a continuing response to the Covid Pandemic taking into account the relevant government guidance with particular regard to social distancing requirements.

As set out in the main body of the report some of the council's legal duties for example in relation to Regulatory Services are currently reduced and therefore it is advisable that the situation continues to be kept under regular review to ensure that the Council's response remain a reasonable and proportionate response balancing the risks of the reduction in services against the risks posed by the pandemic.

Risk Management:

These are set out in the report

Background Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Emma Varnam, Assistant Director (Operations and Neighbourhoods)



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1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, Tameside has been working closely with partners and employees to continue to deliver vital services.
- 1.2 The Council has developed and followed a Business Continuity Plan which has identified the key services that are essential to our residents and businesses. The Council must comply with the advice and legislation enacted by the Government.
- 1.3 To comply with government advice and the requirements of social distancing, service adjustments were required and many services have been delivered differently or more creatively to especially support residents who are social distancing and self-isolating.
- 1.4 During the COVID-19 outbreak, staff roles and responsibilities have been adjusted in order to support the front-line key services. Staff will be redeployed into roles to ensure that business critical activity is delivered throughout the borough. In some cases council business activity will be ceased either following a determination that it would be detrimental to public health, or that the function is not critical to service delivery during this exceptional time.
- 1.5 A Council-wide report detailing the effect of the COVID-19 virus and the steps Tameside Council is taking in response of this threat was discussed at Board on the 1st April 2020. Following that service changes across the Operations and Neighbourhoods directorate have been approved and documented in a number of Executive Decisions. A number of these measures now require to be reviewed.
- 1.6 In light of evolving national guidance and the relaxation of certain lockdown measures, this report will outline proposed service change decisions across the Operations and Neighbourhoods directorate. The timing of easing the restrictions of lockdown is being reviewed based on whether the 5 tests set out by the Government are being met locally and ensuring there is an aligned approach across the Council.

2 SERVICE CHANGES - MARKETS

Markets

- 2.1 Ashton Indoor Market has continued to operate throughout this pandemic by supporting the essential businesses that have been allowed to continue their trade.
- 2.2 As per the Government's updated guidance most non-essential businesses can reopen from 15 June 2020 with the exception of the hospitality sector. Ashton Indoor Market will therefore open for these businesses from 15 June 2020 with operating times of 9am to 4pm Monday through to Saturday. All businesses will only be granted permission to open once they have provided written confirmation that they have put in place all the necessary measures to ensure that the business is COVID-19 safe.
- 2.3 Due to the increase in the R number for the North West now being above the critical value of 1. As at 5 June 2020 this is at 1.01. The re-opening of the outdoor markets in Ashton and Hyde will be delayed. This position will be reviewed regularly in line with the critical 5 tests set out by the Government.
- 2.4 In addition to the increase in the R number outdoor markets have the potential to attract large crowds with potentially little regard to social distancing and no means for controlling access and numbers of visitors. Whereas the control measures currently in place for indoor markets, like supermarkets can be strictly managed with restricted access that is monitored and the controls over the number of customers in the building at any one time.

3 SERVICE CHANGES - CULTURAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

Libraries

- 3.1 The Government has indicated in their Covid 19 Recovery Strategy that libraries would be included in step three of the roadmap to recovery. This means that some form of opening could take place at the earliest from 4 July 2020. Any form of re-opening will be contingent on whether this aligns with the easing of restrictions in other Council Services.
- 3.2 Presuming that both steps one and two are implemented on the dates set out in the roadmap, work has begun to determine how the public library service can operate safely following easing of restrictions to allow step three of the plan to be implemented.
- 3.3 Safety of staff and customers is paramount when considering how the service could operate and therefore the offer will be limited to what is feasible with social distancing measures in place at all times.
- 3.4 An initial assessment has been undertaken of all 8 library venues to determine what is possible within the space available and with the required restrictions. In some cases where the venue is small it may not be feasible to offer a service initially, although it may be possible to offer a much reduced library service from these sites at a later date.
- 3.5 All services offered at each library have also been considered to determine what level of service can be offered. For example no activities and events such as Time for A Rhyme, Lively Library Clubs etc will be able to be offered due to social distancing measures.
- 3.6 Thorough Covid 19 Risk Assessments are currently being undertaken for each venue which will determine what can be delivered.

Initial Service available

- 3.7 A phased return to re-opening libraries will be implemented and subject to all safety measures being in place this will commence on Monday 6 July 2020. It is envisaged that the offer will include the following:
- Return of outstanding items
 - Utilising one way systems where appropriate and social distancing.
 - Using self-service machines as much as possible
 - An order and collect service for those not wishing to browse
 - Pre-booked use of PCs for 1 hour only (or walk in if there is capacity)
 - Printing
- 3.8 In order to allow the above services safety measures will need to be implemented. These include:
- Hand sanitisers upon entry and exit from the library
 - Additional cleaning
 - Specified maximum number of people in each section of the library at any one time
 - Invigilated queuing system to enter/exit the library
 - Perspex screens round the library counter
 - Directional floor markings to guide people round one way systems, signage to remind people to social distance, markings on the floor to indicate where people should queue and wait to be served, floor markings to denote 2 metre distance
 - Quarantining books for 72 hours upon return before putting back on the shelves and the same after packing them into bags for the click and collect service
 - Removal of all furniture which encourages people to stay longer in the library
 - Removal from use specified PCs to ensure 2 metre distance between users
 - Sanitising of PCs between users

- 3.9 In order to ensure social distancing measures are adhered to it is recommended that no unaccompanied children under 12 years of age are allowed into the library at this time.
- 3.10 Dependent upon risk assessments it is envisaged that the offer could be available at 4 of the larger libraries initially with others possibly coming on stream in a phased approach. This will allow additional resource at libraries to deal with any issues arising and also implement and manage the click and collect service. The Libraries identified as the initial buildings to be opened with the suggested opening hours are in **Appendix 1**.

	Ashton Library	Stalybridge Library	Droylsden Library	Dukinfield
Day	Opening Hours	Opening Hours	Opening Hours	Opening Hours
Monday:	8.30am - 5pm	9am - 1pm	9am - 1pm	9am - 1pm
Tuesday:	8.30am - 8pm	9am - 1pm		9am - 1pm
Wednesday:	8.30am - 5pm	1pm - 5pm		
Thursday:	8.30am - 8pm		9am - 1pm	1pm - 5pm
Friday:	8.30am - 5pm		1pm - 5pm	
Saturday:	10am - 3pm	10am - 3pm	10am - 3pm	9am - 1pm

Home Library Service

- 3.11 The Home Library Service will also be resumed on a contactless basis for those that wish to take advantage of it and the service will be extended to include shielded people and those who are very vulnerable for health and wellbeing reasons.

Click and Collect Service

- 3.12 It is proposed to offer a new service for those who do not feel they wish to enter the main body of the library and browse stock but would still wish to have reading material. This service will be similar to the home library service in that customers can advise of the genre of reading material they prefer and staff will make a selection from the shelves. These items will be placed in a paper bag, quarantined for 72 hours and the customer can then collect them. Staff will sanitise their hands before handing the bag to the customer to ensure hygiene measures are in place. If this service proves popular appointment times will be provided to customers to help alleviate long queues.

Fines/Book Renewal

- 3.13 Currently all items out on loan have had their loan period extended to between the 22 June to the 30 June 2020 to ensure that no fines are attracted when people are unable to return them.
- 3.14 It is proposed to extend all item loans and suspend accrual of fines to the 31 August 2020 to allow sufficient time for people to return their items following opening of libraries. This will ensure there is a continued period of grace for those who reside in areas where the libraries will not re-open in the first phase. Whilst this may mean a reduction in income, this can be offset by the fact that physical newspapers and magazines will not be provided in libraries initially due to the risk of infection.

Open+ (Self-service operating hours)

- 3.15 None of the libraries will be available in Open+ operating hours as it would not be possible to monitor social distancing of users or sanitise PCs between usage.

Museums and Galleries

- 3.16 These front line services have been closed throughout lockdown and this situation will continue for the foreseeable future. Following the opening of some library venues further consideration on these services will be undertaken. Risk Assessments are being prepared and thought on how these services could operate safely going forward.
- 3.17 In the meantime the public can access online resources via the website. Email research enquiries will be responded to during the closure period.

Local Studies Archives

- 3.18 The Tameside Local Studies and Archive Centre has been closed to the public during lockdown and all scheduled events cancelled. Online resources are being made available and updated during the closure and email research enquiries are being responded to.
- 3.19 Similarly to Museums and Galleries, Risk Assessments are being undertaken to determine how this service can open safely in the future. Any opening will be later in the year after the re-opening of libraries and the learning from opening those buildings can be factored into plans.

Arts and Engagement

- 3.20 All public activities and events have had to be cancelled due to Corona pandemic as it is not currently possible to have gatherings of people. On-line resources continue to be provided and as restrictions have been lifted on outdoor activities, a series of family activity trails around parks and greenspaces across the borough are being created and put on-line.
- 3.21 Additionally a John Muir Award has been developed. The John Muir Trust is a charity that believes wild places are essential for the wellbeing of people and wildlife. The award is nationally recognised and designed for children of all ages and abilities to take part in with their family group. There are four elements: Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share, and a council booklet gives lots of ideas of how to complete the challenges, such as creating a map of your wild place, recording the wildlife and plants you find, building birdfeeders and planting wildflowers or designing posters. When participants have finished they received a special certificate.
- 3.22 Future larger scale activities and events will be dependent upon the government's advice on releasing lockdown and people being able to gather together but for the time being are not possible to schedule.
- 3.23 All recommencement for Cultural venues and activities will be reviewed regularly in line with the critical 5 tests set out by the Government and will remain suspended until 1 October 2020 or until Government guidance allows.

Tameside Welfare Rights & Debt Advice

- 3.24 This service remains operational via the telephone, webchat, email and letter but with no face to face appointments.
- 3.25 We continue to support residents in challenging benefit decisions but this has been by telephone hearing and written representation. We are waiting to hear when face to face hearings will resume through the Courts and Tribunal Service. The service has assisted many residents through the advice line and advised on welfare benefits and tax credits, with 349 enquiries being specifically related to Covid-19.
- 3.26 We continue to provide support to residents with debt issues by telephone, webchat and email. Due to the stay on possession proceedings until 23 August 2020 we have not been required to assist with representations through the county court due to rent or mortgage arrears. We are however expecting these to resume after 23 August 2020.

Customer Services and Call Centre

- 3.27 The Customer Services walk in facility continues to be suspended to public access until further notice. Services are being delivered via telephone, dedicated email addresses and webchat. This position will be reviewed regularly in line with the critical 5 tests set out by the Government.

4 SERVICE CHANGES - PUBLIC PROTECTION AND REGULATORY SERVICES

On and off street Parking

- 4.1 Aligned with the lifting of lockdown restrictions for non-essential businesses and the expansion of the high-street retail offer the Council proposes to recommence parking enforcement from 1 July. The necessary controls will be put in place and full Covid risk assessments will be made and implemented before the service recommences. Parking Enforcement will be introduced with a phased approach starting with the issuing of warning notices for the first 2 weeks on both on-street and off-street parking locations..
- 4.2 A number of the contracted NSL Parking Enforcement Officers have been deployed to critical Council service areas that required extra resources during this period. These contracted staff will now return to their parking enforcement role to ensure customer compliance.

Suspension of Staff Parking Payments

- 4.3 It is proposed to continue to suspend monthly parking deductions for all staff who have purchased contract car park passes for a further 3 months until 1 October 2020 because we do not expect or intend that they will come into the office, the suspension should therefore mean that staff will not cancel the passes.

Closed Circuit TV

- 4.4 During lockdown, the CCTV staff shift pattern was proposed to increase to a 12 hour shift, in order to build resilience and maintain public order. This longer shift pattern was not required and will now only be used in an emergency and in response to operational risks.

Licensing

- 4.5 The public access Licensing Counter at Tame Street was closed during lockdown with all applications for licences processed through the website, via telephone and email. The service proposes that this counter remains permanently closed allowing the service to be delivered remotely.
- 4.6 Taxi driver licence renewal applications are processed as usual, however where an applicant is required to submit a medical certificate, the Service is currently allowing applicants to complete a self-certification form. The applicant will be required to submit the medical certificate once GP practices resume normal service.
- 4.7 In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, where taxi drivers were self-isolating, licence holders were offered the opportunity to temporarily suspend their drivers licence. It is proposed that this offer will remain in place until 1 October 2020.
- 4.8 It is proposed that the Service will continue to process the vehicle renewal licence application as usual and require vehicle proprietors to submit renewal application forms and relevant paperwork, including insurance via email, and continue to test vehicles to ensure that they are safe and mechanically sound.
- 4.9 In situations where the vehicle is not being used or the driver is self-isolating, upon request a vehicle licence may be temporarily suspended, it is proposed that vehicle licence holders will be offered this opportunity until 1 October 2020.

- 4.10 All private hire operator licences which are due to expire continue to be processed as usual.
- 4.12 No letters have been sent out to licensed premises to remind licence holders that their annual fee is due to be paid since February 2020. These fees remain payable although many of the premises have been required to close during lockdown. It is proposed that the annual fee letters will be sent out from the 1 July 2020.
- 4.13 The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 for the licensing of persons involved in England in selling animals as pets, providing or arranging for the provision of boarding for cats or dogs, hiring out horses, breeding dogs and keeping or training animals for exhibition.

Regulatory Services

- 4.14 It is proposed that we continue to defer all planned food hygiene, food standards and animal feed interventions - other than those for high risk establishments, or where there are specific legislative requirements on the nature or frequency of controls for 12 weeks from the 18 April 2020. This is in line with the Food Standards Agency Guidelines. This would effectively mean that planned visits would recommence no sooner than the 11 July.
- 4.15 High risk establishments include:
- Category A and B establishments for food hygiene (prescribed intervention frequency of 6 and 12 months respectively)
 - Category A establishments for food standards (prescribed intervention frequency of 12 months)
 - Category A establishments for feed (prescribed intervention frequency of 12 months)
- The Category A and B is the risk category that has been calculated based on the previous inspection and determines the frequency of the next inspection.
- 4.16 Action by local authorities when the intervention is due should initially be undertaken remotely - a telephone discussion and paper-based audit of relevant documentation. If the discussion or documentation provided suggests that there may be a serious public or animal health risk, an onsite visit should be made to assess and address these risks.
- 4.17 It is proposed to recommence proactive inspections of House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and Inspections required under the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR Regs).
- 4.18 Service Requests will focus resources on urgent reactive work to address potentially serious public health or animal health risks.
- 4.19 Now that the building trade are back working it is proposed to recommence enforcement for skips and scaffolding permits that remain on the highway from the 1 July 2020.
- 4.20 It is proposed to recommence the issuing of invoices issued under the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR Regs) and the Private Water Supply (England) Regulations 2016 (amended 2018) (PWS Regs) from 1 July 2020
- 4.21 It is proposed to recommence the Buy with Confidence Membership scheme from 1 July 2020.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 As set out on the front of the report.