

Notice of Non-key Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Return of Covid19 Contact Operations to Business as Usual
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Persaud
SLT Lead:	Jane West
Report Author and contact details:	Gareth Nicholson/Susie Faulkner
Policy context:	Recovery and resilience planning for contact operations, post the immediate humanitarian crisis response for vulnerable residents, providing on-going support for Shielded groups, Test & Trace response, or further peaks of the virus.
Financial summary:	<p>Potential, for investment to ceiling of £297,450*, to be drawn down if provide sustainable, flexible contact operations from LBH, for Havering residents.</p> <p>(*current request is for £189,418 but commitment sought for authorisation to scale up investment if demand rises)</p> <p>Should sufficient resources be able to be redeployed from service areas the commitment would reduce to £4,950 for license costs.</p>
Relevant OSC:	TBC
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	No

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The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	x
Places making Havering	[]
Opportunities making Havering	x
Connections making Havering	x

Place an X in the [] as appropriate

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approval of investment and transition of emergency response contact operations into a sustainable business as usual function, under the leadership of the Head of Customer Services, reporting to the Assistant Director of Customer, Communications and Culture

Decisions required:

1. Agreement of proposals for staffing:
 - a. Redeployment of all those staff who are eligible for (and have management consent for) redeployment, for a period of 6-9 months.
 - b. Associated costs to be retained by the redeploying department.
 - c. Agreement of commitment to additional agency costs, should sufficient staff not be available to support the resourcing required for the same period.
 - i. **Maximum of £292,500, assuming full deployment of 10 staff, plus team leadership capacity**, to the end of the current financial year.
 - ii. **Current expectation is immediate commitment of £189,418 which is based on 6 staff and one senior** for the same period.
2. Agreement to the retention of a volunteer bank, to support peaks in demand, to be managed through Human Resources.
3. Agreement of costs for additional 8x8 telephony licenses: **£4,950/9 months**
4. Agreement of arrangements for Visiting Teams to be supported by existing services – Adults, Children's, Housing.
5. Agreement of the Director of Adult Social Care as the corporate, strategic and policy lead responsible for Covid19, to maintain corporate governance, strategy, changes in policy and service delivery across all sectors
6. Confirmation of proposed 'go-live' date as 1 July, with transition commencing as soon as possible, subject to all of the above.
7. Retention of existing cohorts of volunteer staff during transition, to secure seamless handover.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Background

At the start of the first peak of the pandemic, food supply chains were badly impacted as a result of panic buying. This particularly put vulnerable people at risk of going hungry or without vital basic household supplies. Government stepped in to address the humanitarian need via the creation of lists of vulnerable people who were required to 'shield' themselves (ie placed under self-isolation rules) to whom food supplies were needed.

The Council stepped in to provide emergency support for food, medication and social support through a Distribution Hub and a combination of Outbound calling to NHS Shielding lists of residents, provided to them by the NHS, provision of an emergency Inbound call number and an emergency email inbox, to facilitate an effective and rapid response to needs.

At the time the outbound and inbound calling was set up, it was not feasible for the contact centre to assume responsibility without a deleterious impact on customer services around business as usual services.

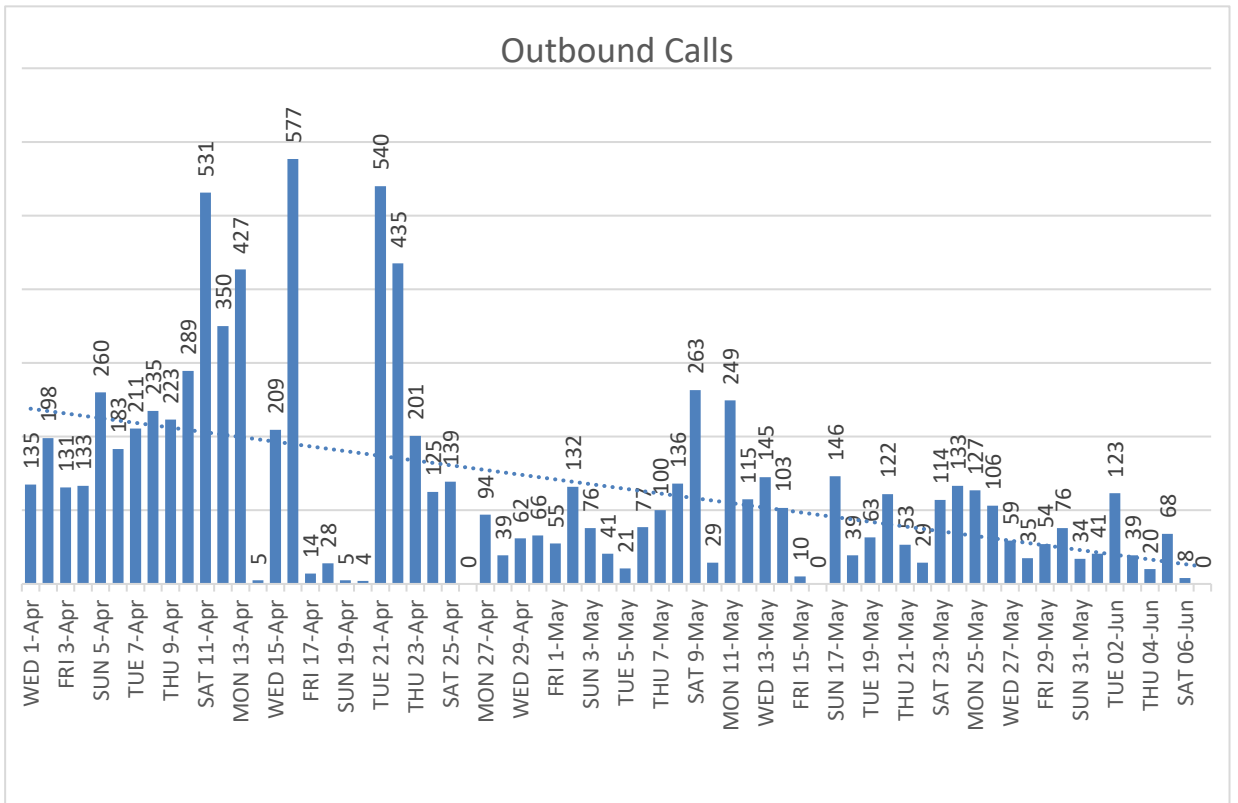
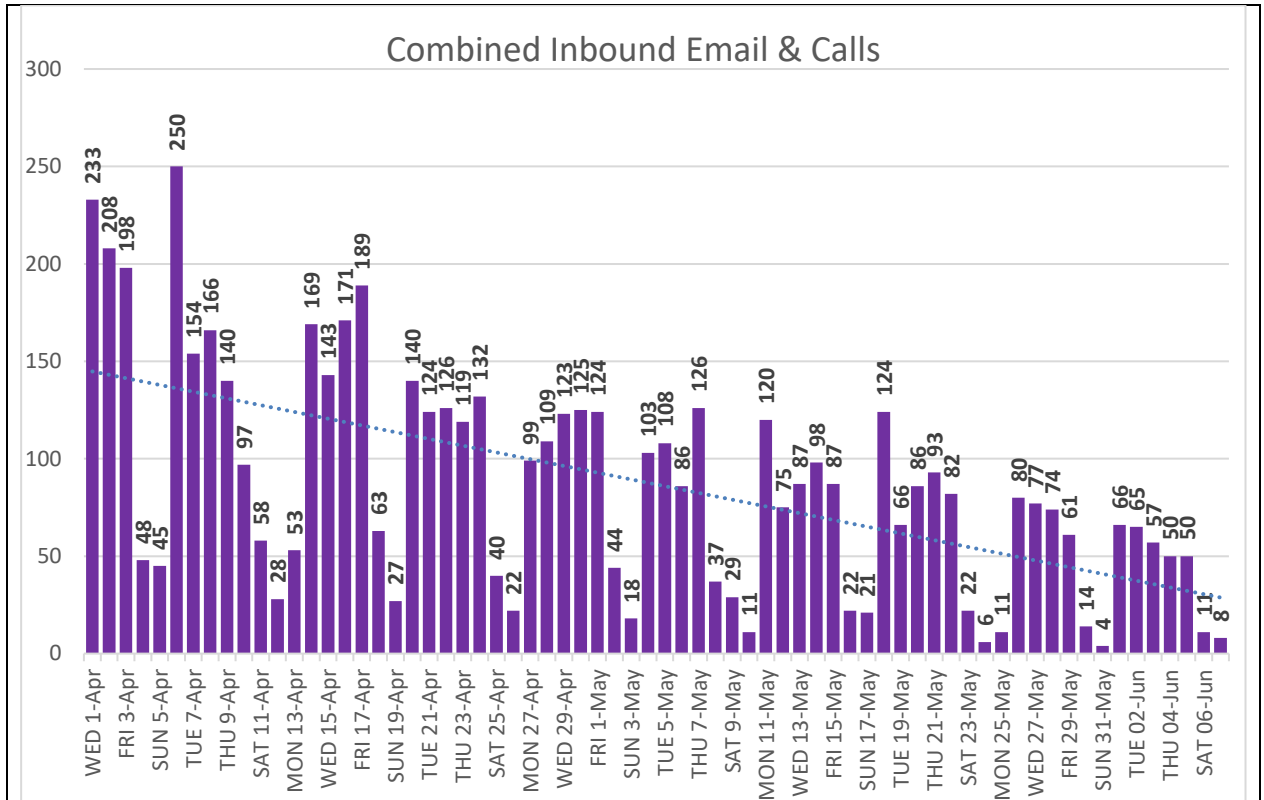
The Contact points have generated service needs to support our residents and provided food lists to our Hub, which has provided both procured and redistributed food (the latter being a no-cost offering) to vulnerable people and to food banks. As the situation normalises, our residents are mostly returning to independently managing their needs and our thoughts are turning to exit strategies, while mindful that a second (and possibly third) peak of the pandemic are likely – with similar challenges to food supplies, shielding, etc to be managed.

On-going support for Shielding, as currently devolved to local level, needs to be resolved in a way that supports the Borough as a whole and allows the Council to return to a business as usual footing, as far as possible. It is likely that Government will make some announcements about either lifting of more restrictions on shielded residents or removing shielding completely in coming weeks, meaning that our service may be a short-term solution.

The Council is indebted to the support given by our staff, who have volunteered tirelessly in responding to the recent emergency, but increasingly the bulk of these staff are required to return to their substantive roles.

With demand for inbound calls and requirements around outbound calls related to Covid19 both falling, it is time to move contact operations into our professional contact team. To do so requires a number of decisions and this paper sets out the key opportunities, options and decisions required.

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Proposals to move Covid19 Hotline (Inbound, Emails & Outbound) to Customer Services Contact Centre

This document sets out the resources required for the Covid19 Hotline in order for it to integrate within the existing Customer Services Contact Centre.

Given current call demands on business as usual council services within the contact centre, it is not feasible to absorb the Covid calls within current resourcing. The team is working with a number of vacancies caused by bereavement and given resumption of many council services the team will be running close to capacity. Similarly given the level of risk associated with some of the Covid calls it would not be desirable to have those calls in a stack waiting to be answered.

Retaining a team specifically focused on Covid calls will preserve a quality of service and maintain ability to react quickly and effectively to emergencies.

In bringing this into Customer Services the following considerations / assumptions have been made:

- The “Covid19 team” will use the Contact Centre 8x8 Telephony solution. Additional licences will be required to facilitate this costing circa £5,000, but will ensure:
 - Up to date management information can be provided maintaining the quality of the service (number of calls handled, wait times, abandon rates, call duration, utilisation of agents in terms of their call availability, listening in on calls to aid officers and improve quality of response)
 - Interactive Voice Recognition “IVR” messaging utilised to route customers to the correct contact points, opening times and useful information
- The Covid 19 Contact Centre team to be responsible for inbound calls, e-mails and outbound calls ensuring:
 - An holistic approach i.e. staff understanding all processes, creating economies of scale / flexibility
- Opening hours 9 to 5pm Monday – Friday, with weekend and out of hours emergency support to inbound calls provided through the “Pinnacle” out of hours service and, where necessary, the Emergency Duty Team. This is a slight reduction in opening hours for the Covid line but weekend demand has reduced to minimal levels and any emergencies will be picked up via Pinnacle.
- In the medium-term, it is proposed that a Covid 19 team established from staff who are currently not able to return to their substantive posts, due to specific vulnerabilities or caring commitments. The assumption is that the service areas will meet the budget costs of these staff (since they would have to do this anyway), or that costs are coded to the Covid19 reserve. Staff will need to be formally redeployed and trained.
- If this is not possible, agency staff will be recruited and trained and costs allocated to the Covid19 reserve. It is not feasible for this demand to be “soaked up” within the current contact centre given anticipated increased

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workloads as more council services resume and as Council contact over council tax and rent arrears begins.

- A larger pool of volunteers who have already supported the contact response, drawn from staff, needs to be retained corporately (HR to keep this list), to manage rapid response, should a second (or third) peak of the virus emerge – this will enable the team to scale up quickly to meet increased demand for humanitarian support.
- The management of relevant reports from all supporting systems to be coordinated through Customer Services Digital & Innovation Team, with the following existing support maintained where necessary:
 - The CRM solution “Loti” continues to be supported by Adults’ Business Support Team but the Digital & Innovation Team being able to grant access / permissions to new staff, run reports etc.
 - Transition of arrangements needs to be agreed and managed as part of a the move to ‘business as usual’ but may be on a slightly slower track than contact operations, to ensure quality and accuracy can be managed, particularly while arrangements for Test & Trace are put in place.
 - The Performance Team is still required to run specific reports for the first two months of operation, until alternative arrangements are agreed by all parties and secure transition arranged. e.g:
 - Weekly SITREP to London Resilience
 - Daily extraction from Loti of “calls backs” sent to Covid19 team*
 - Regular download of NHS shielding list “call backs” sent to Covid 19 team*
 - Creating and sending of associated text messages for bulk information**.
- Management of the team including training will be retained within the existing Customer Services Contact Centre management team subject to the PASC remaining closed and demand on other teams being sustainable. (In the short term continued support from existing Team Leaders, not able to return to their substantive roles until at least the end of July is in place. The support from services to sustain this commitment is very welcome.)
- A corporate, strategic and policy lead responsible for Covid19 to maintain corporate governance, strategy, changes in policy and service delivery across all sectors has been agreed. This will be held by the Director of Adult Social Care.
- An effective date for handover, is proposed for 1st July 2020, subject to confirmation arrangements are in place and working effectively.

(*levels are currently low, but the impact of Test & Trace is still being established – this will have implications for management of data and the size of the contact team required.

**alternative arrangements for this need to be developed, but as the system is not currently live, this will have to follow the transition of contact operations.)

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OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

1. Retention of the existing voluntary/temporarily deployed staff group. This has been rejected on the basis that it is informal and, with the recovery of many services already into realisation, the provision is not sustainable.
2. Managing additional operations within the capacity of the current Contact Centre. Rejected on the grounds that the Contact Centre is already under significant pressure and existing capacity cannot accommodate additional workload – and there is a significant risk that Havering would not be able to provide a rapid, effective response to some of our most vulnerable residents.
3. Cessation of Covid19 contact activity. Rejected as inappropriate to the current situation and vulnerabilities of our residents.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

- Relevant interim service arrangement leads across: In-Bound Calling; Out-Bound Calling; Triage Team; Case Management System Leads; Data Management Leads; Business Support Leads for Children, Adults and Neighbourhoods
- The Director of Adult Social Care
- The Bronze Distribution Hub Director; The Distribution Hub Bronze Group
- The Assistant Director of Customer, Communications and Culture and Head of Customer Services

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Gareth Nicholson

Designation: AD Customer, Comms, Culture

Signature: GD Nicholson

Date: 15/06/2020

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There are no specific employment law implications from this decision as it involves a change in management only. Staff are temporarily redeployed by consent and need to be kept informed of changes.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There is a potential cost of some £297, 450 currently identified from the decision outlined in the report. An element of this cost is hopefully to be contained within existing staff budgets for redeployed staff, but this could put pressures on base salary budgets within the year.

There is currently no specific funding identified for the balance of these costs, and this will need to be considered alongside other COVID19 spending pressures as part of the budget refresh and recovery planning process, and be contained within COVID19 funding and the council's own financial resources.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

- The current group of staff that are supporting the Covid19 contact service will be formally deployed (albeit on a temporary basis) to the Covid 19 Team subject to their agreement and managers approval. These staff are currently not able to return to their substantive posts, due to specific vulnerabilities or caring commitments. The staff who are deployed will be fully trained and supported.
- Where it is not possible to deploy sufficient existing staff, agency resources will be recruited and trained and costs allocated to the Covid19 reserve. The Councils normal agency recruitment process will be followed.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

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Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, sexual orientation.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

It is both Council policy and SLT direction/expectation that EqHIAs (Equality and Health Impact Assessments) are carried out when appropriate and in sufficient time to enable informed decision-making. EqHIA's are being undertaken by each Bronze Group and service area as part of our response to Covid-19 and should cover this activity.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Delete as applicable

Proposal NOT agreed because

Details of decision maker

Signed

Name:

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date:

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Democratic Services Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____