

Questions from Councillors

Questions from Councillors Requiring a Written Response

WQ1

Written question asked by Councillor Andrew Rule of the Leader of the Council at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

The Leader of the Council will be aware that literature has recently been circulated encouraging public gatherings to take place at the Forest Recreation Ground and Wollaton Park to protest against lockdown measures in place to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. Will the Leader of the Council take the opportunity to unequivocally advise residents not to take part in such gatherings and outline what measures the Council will employ to ensure such gatherings do not take place on Council owned land?

Response from Councillor David Mellen:

Firstly I would like to thank the people of Nottingham for their overwhelmingly positive response to the difficult restrictions that we have all been living under. I am grateful for the patience and perseverance of everyone in Nottingham at this time, and to the incredible Council, NHS and emergency services staff working to keep us safe. Last Saturday a small number of people gathered in Wollaton Park and the Forest Recreation Ground to protest against lockdown restrictions. I am grateful for the good liaison with Nottinghamshire Police and Nottingham City Council and for the tactful method of dealing with the situation. I would encourage everybody to stick to Government's advice to keep us all safe.

WQ2

Written question asked by Councillor Andrew Rule of the Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Democratic Services at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

The Portfolio Holder will be aware that garden waste collection will restart from 26 May 2020 following its earlier suspension. As Monday 25 May is a Bank Holiday this means that for those areas of the City with a Monday collection, including large parts of Clifton, Wilford and Silverdale, the first collection will not in fact take place until 8 June. She will appreciate that for a number of residents, particularly the elderly, who have no other means of disposing of garden waste this means another three weeks of waste build up. Will she therefore give consideration to residents being able to utilise the bulky waste service as a means of disposing of garden waste in the interim until 8 June?

Response from Councillor Sally Longford:

The decision to resume garden waste and indeed bulky waste services recognises the importance of these services to our citizens. In the Covid-19 environment, Waste Operations has had to reassess the risks and ensure safe operating procedures are

in place for our workforce. This has required additional staffing resources being diverted to waste collection, and the decision to recommence garden waste collections after the Bank Holiday weekend was taken to ensure we could fully resource the residual and recycling collections during that peak period.

The bulky waste service resumed on 18 May, albeit with some conditions and limitations on what can be presented. Green garden waste is not suitable for a bulky waste collection as the disposal of such waste is handled differently.

Green garden waste as part of bulky waste would potentially also create 'over demand' at a time we are seeking to help our residents dispose of items which cannot be safely stored.

Wards receiving the 'Monday' collection for green garden waste will conclude on 28 September 2020; this supports a total of 9 garden waste collections during the bi-weekly cycle that most of the City Wards will obtain, consequently every year a Ward has to start first or last given we operate a 10 day bi-weekly collection methodology.

WQ3

Written question asked by Councillor Andrew Rule of the Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Local Transport at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

The Portfolio Holder will be aware that the Council has a number of contracts with taxi operators across the City, including those based in the Clifton area, to assist in the transportation of vulnerable children and adults to day care centres and schools. In line with national guidance these firms have retained drivers and staff who chaperoned vulnerable service users to and from their destination. Can the Portfolio Holder therefore confirm that the Council will follow Government procurement guidance ("Supplier relief due to Covid-19" – PPN 02/20) issued in March and honour payments due to these firms up to June (in line with the guidance) to avoid the risk of job losses?

Response from Councillor Adele Williams:

The City Council makes arrangements with local taxi firms to support our work with very vulnerable children, young people and adults. They provide an important lifeline to many of these individuals and their families. Lockdown has affected this service like everything else the Council delivers. We have appraised the Government guidance, and confirmed to each taxi firm that support will continue and payments will be made. These taxi firms are really important in ensuring our most vulnerable children, young people and adults can participate in activities and schooling. We are keen to ensure this vital service is in a position to safely resume as Government lockdown restrictions are eased. The Council is supporting a wide range of businesses in the City, administering Government grant schemes and helping to provide advice and guidance to businesses affected by the current crisis.

Written question asked by Councillor Andrew Rule of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Growth and the City Centre at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

I'm sure the Portfolio Holder will join me in commending the efforts of those colleagues who have been involved in the processing of business grants and who have now processed over 62% (as at 10 May) of applications received by the Council. However, can he urgently look into the processes involved in physically paying out grants to businesses once an application has been approved, as I am aware of a number of businesses who, despite being approved for a grant payment a number of weeks ago, are still waiting to receive the funding itself?

Response from Councillor Sam Webster:

Of those businesses that have applied and been eligible for the grant 94.71% have been paid. The examples of where cases may be delayed could be due to the following:

- where the bank details are incorrect;
- further information requests are required from the claimant;
- the business is not registered as a small business or a retail, leisure or hospitality business and more investigatory work is required.

Each case is approved independently and can have different and unique issues that need resolving and we have in place a process to resolve anomalies as soon as practicable. We have drawn together a team from across the Council, to ensure that we have sufficient resources in place both to manage the process and communicate effectively with businesses.

If there are no anomalies with an application, the high level process is set out below:

- Day 1:
 - Grant application assessed - if assessed before 1pm it will be included on that day's payment file.
 - Payment file converted and loaded into the Business Rates administration system overnight.
- Day 2:
 - A bulk refund for the banking process is ran and taken from Business Rates administration system.
 - This is approved and a Creditors report is created by a specialist team.
- Day 3:
 - Creditors list passed to East Midlands Shared Service to put through the Banks Clearing System (BACS)
- Day 4:
 - External Banking systems processing day

Thank you for recognising the efforts of staff in the business rates and economic development teams who have pulled out all the stops to ensure that financial help gets to those businesses that qualify for this particular scheme.

Our focus now is to reach those businesses who may be eligible, but have not yet applied for the grant. I was sorry to see your criticism of council staff in the press earlier in the process when it was based on out of date information.

WQ5

Written question asked by councillor Maria Watson of the Leader of the Council at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

As of the time of writing this question (14 May) and despite Government advice to be that it is now possible to do so, construction work on the Broadmarsh Shopping Centre development has yet to restart. While we understand that Intu's public statements have indicated construction will only recommence when it is safe to do so, and that with the current Covid-19 situation these concerns are absolutely legitimate, there is obviously also speculation that the delays have as much to do with Intu's very public financial issues as they do with social distancing. Can the Leader of the Council provide us any updated information they have received from Intu regarding the future of the Broadmarsh development and reassure us that it remains, understandable delays notwithstanding, on track for completion?

Response from Councillor David Mellen:

The development of the Intu Broadmarsh is an important part of the Southside regeneration programme. The programme also includes the new Nottingham college, which is nearing completion; the Broadmarsh car park, bus station and new library development, which will be completed next year and the road layout changes and new public realm which will transform the public spaces in the Broadmarsh area.

Intu has informed the Council that the Intu Broadmarsh development has been paused due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has caused a massive shock to economies around the world having a major impact on construction projects with the retail sector and high streets particularly badly hit.

The redevelopment of the shopping centre is Intu's project – they operate the centre and have contracted Sir Robert McAlpine to carry out the work. As Nottingham City Council has a freehold and financial interest, a comprehensive development agreement is in place for the project with clear contractual obligations. This is obviously a focus for discussions at the current time.

The City Council is strongly committed to the Southside regeneration programme because it brings investment to the city, creating thousands of jobs and opportunities for local people.

WQ6

Written question asked by Councillor Kirsty Jones of the Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Local Transport at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

Could the Portfolio Holder provide us with an update about the progression of repair works to the A52, and how the current crisis has impacted the expected timeframe?

Response from Councillor Adele Williams:

Work by Highways England to repair Clifton Bridge continues to progress in line with the timeframe they announced in February, which is to have all lanes safely re-opened by the end of this year. Highways England have told us that the Covid-19 crisis is not expected to impact on these timescales.

Clifton Bridge is currently operating with three lanes northbound, and one lane southbound across the bridge and the repair process involves strengthening the steel work inside the bridge, which is badly corroded. Before the physical repairs get under way, structural investigations, calculations and detailed design work have been carried out to ensure the correct engineering solution is arrived at. Following the detailed design work, Highways England appointed a specialist contractor to undertake the permanent repairs, which are expected to start by early June. During the construction of the permanent repairs Highways England are hoping to have an additional lane re-opened by October with all lanes open to traffic by the end of December.

In conjunction with this, a temporary solution is also being explored which would enable the additional lane to be safely reopened a little earlier in September. The temporary solution involves a high strength propping system underneath the bridge to support its weight. It is technically challenging however and involves constructing large concrete foundations in the flood plain requiring Environmental Agency approval. A decision on whether this temporary solution is deliverable is expected shortly. If it is not, assurances have been sought from Highways England that other temporary solutions will be pursued.

In terms of Covid-19, we have been assured by Highways England that good progress has been maintained while adhering to social distancing guidelines. Much of the technical design work indeed involves engineers working and sharing information remotely. The site itself operates strict safeguarding measures to prevent the spread of the virus and none of the work areas are open to the public. The situation is kept under constant review. The contractor working on the repairs is expected to adapt its method of working to comply with government guidance on social distancing measures. Following discussions with their contractor, Highways England remain confident that the permanent works will still be completed within the expected timeframe.

The priority is to complete this work as soon and as safely as possible and to keep disruption to a minimum. The City Council has been in regular contact with Highways England from the start and sought assurances to this effect.

The package of measures requested by the City Council to support greater use of public transport are currently on hold given the conflict this creates with government social distancing guidance to avoid public transport at this time. Highways England have given assurances that this will be kept under review as government advice changes.

In the meantime, the City Council is undertaking regular monitoring of traffic levels across the City, which saw a drop of about 70% on normal levels when the lockdown restrictions were first introduced. As traffic levels start to build up again we will continue to take proactive measures to keep disruption caused by Highway England's works to a minimum.

WQ7

Written question asked by Councillor Kevin Clarke of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Growth and the City Centre at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

Considering that there were already some public concerns regarding the state of our high streets before the Covid-19 situation arose, which will only be compounded by the long term effects of the crisis, could the Portfolio Holder provide us with any strategies currently being discussed by the leadership group to encourage revitalisation of the high street once retail and hospitality businesses are allowed to reopen?

Response from Councillor Sam Webster:

Even before Covid-19, supporting Nottingham's city centre and district centres were a priority for the Council. In addition to long-running programmes to support Bulwell and Clifton centres, a draft City Centre Strategy has been in development, and was getting to a final stage, before the temporary closure of much of the retail and hospitality sector. The original strategy will now need to be reviewed, but there were elements of that strategy which will still hold – encouraging more tourism and visitors as well as more city centre living, more green spaces, more cycle and pedestrian areas and other public realm improvements. There remain some active plans for re-inventing the high street, including a Transforming Cities grant that will see a very significant investment in a better transport network including pedestrian, cycling and technology improvements and a Future High Street bid, which will be submitted in May/early June for a redevelopment in the West End Point/Chapel Bar area of the City Centre.

This is in addition to the existing capital investment programme and heritage-building restoration that was already underway. Examples include the transformation of Nottingham Castle into a world class visitor attraction, building the new Broadmarsh bus station, car park and library, the new Nottingham College City Hub campus and heritage regeneration on Carrington Street.

As the Government sets out its strategy for a phased exit from lockdown, we will clearly be working hard to ensure that this is done in a safe, managed way which protects our citizens and our economy.

We have a Council-wide working group which meets regularly to help address practical issues around re-opening up the city centre, including licensing, cleansing, events, markets etc. The City Council regularly engages with businesses, retailers, and partners across the city to support opening up safely, and consistent with government and Public Health England advice.

We will shortly be launching the Nottingham Economic Recovery Unit to give focus to our work and to bring forward more short and medium term measures to support Nottingham's economy. Retail and the 'high street' in general is clearly an important sector for Nottingham, it's the most visible part of our economy and employs many of our residents, but Nottingham's economy is much more diverse with many key sectors. Our main focus will be protecting jobs and working to create new employment opportunities and supporting our existing businesses through this difficult period.

Further, there is work to ensure the cultural sector and events programme in the City, can help play a role in re-vitalising the City, to help the retail and hospitality sectors bounce back.

We continue to work with the Nottingham BID (Business Improvement District) including helping them achieve their renewal for 2020-2025, with specific targets important for Nottingham City Council.

The City is also working with Invest in Nottingham, the City's inward investment agency, to secure additional businesses into the City, in key sectors such as tech, life science and low carbon.

WQ8

Written question asked by Councillor Kevin Clarke of the Leader of the Council at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

While we of course understand the crucial need for social distancing at this time, we were disappointed that no members of the Opposition were invited to take part in the recent wreath-laying at Nottingham War Memorial Gardens, on VE day. As a former serving soldier and holder of the General Service Medal for active service myself, it is well recognised throughout the forces that these events should not be politicised and a cross-party invitation should have been put in place. Can the Leader of the Council explain to us why, despite four members of the Labour Group being in attendance, no Opposition Members were invited? Can the Leader reassure us that for future such events, members of the Opposition will be included?

Response from Councillor David Mellen:

On Friday 8 May, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe, marking the end of the Second World War on the continent. It is right that we reflect on the efforts and sacrifices made on our behalf by soldiers and citizens at the time and although social distancing measures led to the unfortunate cancellation of all the planned gatherings and parties, we encouraged the people of Nottingham to celebrate at home with a range of online resources. Through our online 'HOME front' resource, people of Nottingham were able to celebrate in the safety of their own homes with a range of downloadable content, whilst we lit both the Council House and Wollaton Hall red, white and blue in celebration.

In different circumstances, we would have wanted to celebrate and pay tribute with our friends, our families and our neighbours, but I enjoyed seeing and hearing reports of Nottingham citizens sharing socially distanced celebrations in different parts of the city and holding their own minutes' silence in the safety of their homes.

A wreath was also laid at the War Memorial in the Embankment to mark the occasion and to pay tribute as a city, in what was clearly a scaled back event in light of the current restrictions imposed by the Government. Those in attendance to mark the occasion were there in official capacity, for example the Lord Mayor who is the civic lead of the Council, Councillor Langton, who is the Council's Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Trimble the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture, and finally myself as Leader of the Council. I do not believe in gesture politics and I take a dim view of suggestions that marking this anniversary in this way was anything other than respectful and appropriate in the current circumstances. Of course, I look forward to welcoming a greater number of councillors to events in the near future, particularly when we can be joined by people from the across the City to join in our celebrations next year.

WQ9

Written question asked by Councillor Angharad Roberts of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Growth and the City Centre at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

Can the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Growth and the City Centre tell me how Nottingham City Council has financially supported residents and businesses during the Coronavirus lock down?

Response from Councillor Sam Webster:

Thank you for your written question Councillor Roberts.

For residents: Nottingham Jobs has continued to support people who have become unemployed as a result of Coronavirus, or can take on additional work while furloughed. In summary we have:

- received over 2500 enquiries from local residents, linking them into employment support where needed;
- offered over 250 people roles in care homes and adult social care that are in high demand;
- engaged with 140 employers offering recruitment and redundancy support;
- worked with HMRC to support recruitment into 200 roles;
- continued to deliver support for residents looking for employment in other sectors still open including distribution, logistics, food production;
- worked with construction sector employers support employees made redundant off construction sites; and
- allocated £3.036m from the Hardship Grant to 20,262 citizens of working age who are currently in receipt of Council Tax Support.

For businesses:

- The Nottingham Growth Hub has been on the front line providing support to any Nottingham business to understand the various new government support packages available – loan schemes, furlough, and grant schemes. Total enquiries since lockdown are 976, with 314 direct to the Growth Hub, 317 via the property team and 306 enquires via the rates team. The team of 3 has been increased, with 5 members from Economic Development to support general business enquiries.
- Grant Scheme – a grant scheme administered by the Business Rates Team has been set up to support small and retail/leisure/hospitality businesses. This has given 100% rate holiday for 2020/21 to all retail/leisure and hospitality and nursery businesses in the City, and has so far distributed 3651 grants to businesses worth £43.9m. To support this, 10 extra staff have been re-deployed to the Rates Team to process the grants, and 20 staff from across the Council have been redeployed to provide call centre and enquiry handling for businesses. We are still in the process of contacting businesses that have not yet applied. We believe we are down to about 1000 businesses who have not applied. We have written to all businesses, emailed and phoned where we have numbers. We have also used intermediary networks to target those businesses. In order to ensure all sections of the business community can access the grant, we have specifically targeted BAME businesses across the City, using community network groups, local Asian radio networks, and faith groups. The grant scheme is funded by UK Government.
- We are in the process of setting up another grant scheme – designed for small businesses, with discretionary control by Nottingham City Council. We expect first payments on this new scheme from early June. The total fund worth ca £3m (exact amount to be confirmed by UK Government).

On communications, we have dedicated pages on the Nottingham City Council website for both residents and businesses to access information. We have increased the frequency of our email communication to businesses to weekly, with extra email newsletters for major announcements as needed, and we have increased social media marketing to keep businesses informed and promote the various grant schemes.

WQ10

Written question asked by Councillor Audra Wynter of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Growth and the City Centre at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

Can the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Growth and the City Centre tell us whether the Government has stuck to the promise made to fund additional costs incurred due to Coronavirus?

Response from Councillor Sam Webster:

There is a lack of clarity and structure from Government over the financial support to be provided to local government. There was a strong commitment upfront 'to do whatever it takes' but this has now been undermined by more recent statements by

the Secretary of State Robert Jenrick that councils will have to 'share the burden' of Covid-19 related costs.

These were initially made in a mid-April conference call to council leaders and were reiterated in verbal evidence to the House of Commons Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Committee on 4 May:

“We would not want anyone to labour under a false impression that what they are doing is guaranteed to be funded by central Government”

So far the Government has provided £3.2bn of un-ring fenced Covid-19 funding in 2 tranches; £0.5bn in Hardship Fund for council tax support claimants; £0.6bn for infection control in care homes; and £3.2m for rough sleepers.

Nottingham received the 2nd tranche of un-ring fenced Covid-19 funding on 29 April taking the total received from £10.7m to £19.8m. This funding will be insufficient to fund the increased service demand and reduced income due to Covid-19.

These financial impacts were recently reported to Government in a monthly return to MHCLG. By the end of this financial year the overall impact will potentially be very significant and far exceed the currently announced funding for Nottingham.

There are extreme challenges in every locality, but particularly in cities. Our ability to deliver even basic levels of resilience and public services is being undermined.

The additional cost of the pandemic comes on top of 10 years of austerity measures. Nottingham has been required to find £271m cumulative savings in the period from 2010 to 2019 and will continue to have to make difficult decisions about the services it provides.

Without significant additional funding Nottingham will be under severe financial pressure. As is the case for many councils up and down the country if the Government reneges on the clear pledge that Ministers made to “stand shoulder to shoulder” with councils during the Coronavirus outbreak we will have to take drastic measures to balance our budget.

WQ11

Written question asked by Councillor Leslie Ayoola of the Portfolio Holder for Communities at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

Does the Portfolio Holder for Communities share the same concerns I do about the damning reports and data showing that COVID-19 disproportionately impacts on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and is she concerned that not enough has been done by Government to protect them? What further steps does she think the Council needs to take along with its partners, such as conducting its own research and carrying out equality impact assessments?

Response from Councillor Rebecca Langton:

May I start by saying that every death caused by COVID-19 is a tragedy, and I offer my sincere condolences to every family in Nottingham dealing with loss in these challenging and worrying times.

As Portfolio Holder for Communities, I am overly concerned by the data showing that COVID-19 disproportionately impacts BAME communities and I thank Councillor Ayoola for raising this important issue.

National figures released by NHS England show that around 16% of those who have sadly died from coronavirus are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME). Nationally, 11% of the population are BAME, so BAME communities are overrepresented in the national death figures. There is also evidence that BAME individuals who contract coronavirus suffer more severely from the illness than those who are white. Data submitted by UK intensive care units shows that the proportion of patients from BAME backgrounds critically unwell in Intensive Care Units with COVID-19 are higher than would be expected based on the 2011 census.

I do agree with Councillor Ayoola that the Government has not done enough to protect BAME communities in light of these facts. News reports showing the disproportionate impact on BAME communities have caused fear and alarm, but without accompanying advice from Government or Public Health England on what can be done to reduce the risk. Of course, this is a new virus and the Government is having to react and respond as new information becomes apparent. But there is no doubt in my mind that the Government should be doing more to understand the reasons for this inequality and provide BAME communities with information on what the additional risk is, how they can protect themselves and what public bodies like councils, the Government and the NHS should be doing to protect BAME communities.

In Nottingham, the last census carried out in 2011 showed that 35% of Nottingham's population is BAME, but we know that the figure is now much higher. So this evidence is of great concern to me as an individual and to our Council and City as a whole. The NHS figures on the percentage of deaths by ethnicity are not broken down at a local level, and registrars do not record ethnicity. So we do not currently have a breakdown at a Nottingham level of deaths by ethnicity. Our registrars team are involved in national lobbying to ensure that we get accurate data at a local level as we believe this is vital to help understand the situation and inform how we should respond.

So whilst we await further information and advice from the Government, we are not just waiting. We know that the threat of COVID-19 is here now and so we are doing what we can to provide support, reassurance and guidance to those most at risk of COVID-19. I am proud to be our communities lead in a diverse city where we have well-established links and have good community networks. Working together, I know Nottingham will come through these difficult times.

Through the Mobilising Civil Society work stream, which I have been proud to lead jointly with Councillors Neghat Khan and Angela Kandola, we have quickly put in place new services to ensure that those self-isolating in Nottingham don't go without food, medication or social interaction. This support is available to anyone, and can be accessed by calling the Council on 0115 915 5555 or going online to www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/coronavirus

Early on in the pandemic, the Government put together a list of individuals in need of 'shielding'. The list includes around 17,000 people in Nottingham, have a range of health conditions that make them most at risk to COVID-19, and they have been asked to stay completely at home for at least 12 weeks. The information provided to

the Council by the Government about those shielding in the City is very limited. It does not include any information about ethnicity, it only gives us basic contact information. This has made it difficult to draw any analysis of that data with regards to whether BAME individuals are overrepresented on the shielding list. We have raised this issue with Government and asked for more information so that we can properly analyse and understand this. Colleagues in Public Health have also committed to raising this with the Local Resilience Forum data cell. But what we do know is that people face the virus from uneven starting points. Existing health inequalities experienced by the UK's BAME communities, such as the increased likelihood of having one or more long-term conditions like heart disease or diabetes, are underlying factors linked to a greater severity of symptoms and likelihood of death. We also know that the wider societal measures introduced to control the spread of the virus and save lives now, are likely to exact a heavier health, social and economic price on those already experiencing hardship, including some of our BAME communities.

Through the Mobilising Civil Society work stream and the commitment of Nottingham City Council colleagues, we have contacted everyone on the Government's shielding list in our City, and following up with visits from Community Protection Officers where we could not make contact over the phone. There was no requirement from Government that we did this. Some councils chose to write to these groups, and not to chase contacts. But recognising the multiple issues facing our diverse communities within the City, we took this extra action without delay.

It feels appropriate at this point to thank every person who has been part of that effort. The collective desire to protect our communities has been inspiring and I am so grateful of the team spirit that has pushed us through, even though we are physically apart.

We are working with a diverse range of volunteers to provide translations and accessible communications on the key issues and service provision, ensuring that these essential services and lifesaving messages are accessible to all communities and appropriate for each audience. We have also translated the Government's guidance on staying home into a range of community languages, helping to ensure that community groups across Nottingham know the steps they can take to protect themselves. This information is available online at <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/coronavirus/translations>

We know, of course, that information online won't reach everyone, however. So we pushed for an additional Arrow – which shared our service information directly with Nottingham residents through delivering this information through every door in the City. And we haven't stopped there. We are using our existing community contacts to ensure that messages about staying safe and how to get help go out across our communities. The City Council's Community Cohesion team are in regular contact with community leaders to provide support and culturally specific information as well as tracking community tensions and risks. This has helped us to provide quick and timely responses on a range of issues from communities. For example we have helped provide clarification on social distancing and supported community groups in crisis. We have worked with Public Health to respond to the additional needs of community groups when we have become aware of them, such as Roma communities through targeted outreach.

We continue to work closely with Nottingham's diverse faith communities in recent weeks. We thank each one for their cooperation in temporarily shutting down

physical places of worship and community meeting spaces early on and supporting worshipers to practice their religion at home. We hope this will have reduced the impact in our City on BAME communities. Our Community Protection teams have had a key role to play in reinforcing the messages and working with businesses and communities to protect people from harm, including asking people not to gather in parks and host parties during lockdown. We know this has been particularly difficult in the context of a number of religious festivals over this period and I would like to say a personal thank you to all of Nottingham's BAME communities for working with us at this difficult time.

We know that culturally appropriate funeral provision is a topical and sensitive issue. In response to concerns about funerals raised particularly by the Muslim community, One Nottingham hosted a broad interfaith funerals meeting around burial and cremation concerns. This group continues to meet regularly, supporting faith groups through the next stage of changing how they work.

The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) has played a vital role in recent weeks. The Neighbourhoods and Engagement, and Community Safety and Cohesion Service have worked with voluntary sector groups to map over 200 offers of VCS support to ensure services are culturally appropriate, socially distant and that social isolation support is available. In the first few weeks we spent a lot of time matching up offers of distribution to offers of food help – so the foodbanks could operate in a socially distant way. This work continues with NCVS matching volunteers and new projects to the Golden Number and other support organisations daily.

The work stream also set up the food box distribution service, at the back of the golden number and increased capacity for hot meals. We know that providing culturally appropriate food and meals is a really important part of this, so we have worked to increase our links with vital community organisations such as ACNA and the Indian Community Centre so that more culturally appropriate hot food is available through this service. We have also recently completed compiling information about food available across the City, including details of culturally specific provision. This information is available online at:

<https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/food-banks-and-community-based-food-projects/>.

More information on meals at home is available at www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/mealstahome

Alongside this our Communities of Identity (Nottingham Equal, NNRF, and the Women's Centre) and Area Based Grant funded partners have been encouraged to flex their funding to meet COVID-19 needs.

Working with NCVS, Active Nottingham, Nottingham City Homes and the Council's funded VCS infrastructure groups we have begun calling groups to help them assess their needs and plans for the future. For the Community Cohesion team, we continue our focus on BAME community groups to understand what risks and issues they face due to COVID-19 and to develop support plans to assist them in accessing funding and support.

I would like to say a huge thank you to the voluntary and community and faith sectors in Nottingham. Your input, community knowledge and commitment have been invaluable and I am proud to work with you, in good times and in bad.

Over the last couple of weeks we have brought together a community reference group – the Nottingham Together Board – of diverse VCS representatives to check and challenge the work we have undertaken and to ensure that as well as putting out information, we are hearing from our diverse communities. At our next meeting on Tuesday 26 May, we have invited a representative from public health to discuss this issue and take advice on what evidence based actions we can take to further mitigate the risk to BAME communities in our City.

Nottingham's Public Health team are currently undertaking analysis on how COVID-19 is affecting BAME communities. This includes a survey of organisations supporting BAME communities across the City to ensure we have the correct information to respond appropriately. I am committed to making sure we understand how COVID-19 impacts our communities and will work with Public Health to ensure we have a proper understanding of this and we learn lessons from it.

Other work streams also have key roles to play and we have worked closely with the Excess Deaths Cell and the Housing Group, particularly around issues of housing asylum seekers and refugees. We continue to support the Complex Needs and Humanitarian Assistance Groups of the Local Recovery Forum in getting out key messages and supporting communities to respond in the City.

So to conclude, I hope that this response demonstrates that we have been proactively working across BAME communities since the beginning of the pandemic. But that doesn't mean there isn't more to do. As a diverse Council, we have elected members representing a range of BAME communities and I welcome all input into ensuring needs are met across our communities. I am proud of the diverse city we are and I will continue to work with all communities to make sure we come through this together.

WQ12

Written question asked by Councillor Toby Neal of the Portfolio Holder for Health, HR and Equalities at the meeting of the City Council held on 18 May 2020

Can the Portfolio Holder for Health, HR and Equalities please tell me what steps the Council has taken to protect its Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff from COVID-19, given the disproportionate impact COVID-19 is having on BAME communities?

Response from Councillor Eunice Campbell-Clark:

The Council has taken all steps to ensure that all its employees are protected from Covid-19. Recent emerging evidence that is being reviewed by Public Health England, shows that BAME communities are disproportionately affected by Covid-19. To support and protect our BAME employees our Chief Executive is writing to all of them reiterating our commitment to their health, safety and wellbeing.

All BAME employees will be risk assessed for increased vulnerability to Covid-19 and appropriate support will be provided according to any assessed needs and vulnerabilities. We have provided guidance to managers to enable the right supportive conversations to happen with all our BAME employees. For BAME employees, we have detailed the support available to them, be this medical support from our Occupational Health Service, general health, resilience and wellbeing advice and support for accessing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where required for the role they do.

It is important that we continue to monitor the advice being provided by Public Health England and update our approach as new and further details emerge.
