

**SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT FOR  
SHAREHOLDER SUB COMMITTEE  
Thursday 18 February 2021 at 7.30 pm  
Zoom - Online**

The attached document is due to be considered at the meeting listed above and was unavailable for circulation when the agenda for the meeting was published. The agenda item to which the document relates is noted below.

**AGENDA**

6. Emerging from Covid-19 (Lockdown 3) (Pages 2 - 5)

Report of:		Title:	
Neil Rowland		Commercial Director	
Name of Update	Date of Report		Status:
Recovery Plan	5 February 2021	Shareholders Sub-Committee	Information

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## **Introduction**

During the pandemic, HTS has taken government advice into account and in conjunction with Harlow Council's SMB, have reviewed the services we can safely deliver and limit the risk of spreading the Coronavirus to our staff and the residents we deliver services too.

## **Summary of Lockdown 3 from 5 January 2021 and ongoing**

Following the ending of the second National lockdown on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 the government announced a 3<sup>rd</sup> lockdown commencing on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021. This is still ongoing and is under review by the government. No date for lifting of the lockdown has yet been announced, although a review is planned for week commencing 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021.

The spread and infection rate of the Coronavirus continued to increase in Harlow with it escalating to 1356 infections per 100K people on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021

As a result, a number of service changes were agreed with Harlow Council to protect the welfare and wellbeing of employees, council tenants, residents and visitors to Harlow and help minimise contact and the transmission of the virus:

Responsive Repairs - Only undertaking emergency and urgent repairs.

Voids Repairs Service - Voids works have continued throughout the lockdown, with additional operatives drafted in where they can't work in occupied premises. Productivity has been reduced due to lone working and one trade at a time in a property.

Capital works - All capital works programmes suspended apart from emergency and health and safety works.

Gas and electricity compliance - All gas and electrical inspections are aligned to their renewal dates. Priority was given to those that are due to expire only.

Environmental Services - Services including litter picking, street cleaning, building cleaning and waste management continued to be provided and schedules for building cleaning were realigned to ensure the full programme of works were delivered. However, other services had to be scaled back. There was a reduction of the WAVE due to social distancing and work was slowed up by access issues on some estates due to the number of parked cars. Tree works and climbing were minimised for health and safety reasons. Maintenance of shrub beds was significantly scaled back and hedge maintenance continued where possible. The number of abandoned vehicles has increased and HTS has not been able to remove them due to issues with DVLA and establishing ownership of the vehicles.. Only Emergency works on Pest Control have been carried out.

The actions agreed above, jointly by HTS and HDC, will continue until restrictions are eased by the government.

As has been the case throughout the escalating pandemic, HTS, as other businesses, must ensure that:

- 1) Legal requirements are followed (including the requirement for risk assessment)

- 2) Best practice is followed
  - a. Guidance from Government
  - b. Guidance from WHO / NHS
- 3) Industry best practice is followed

The above will be taken into consideration as we continue to increase levels of productivity.

### **Recovery Planning**

The next scheduled review by the Government is scheduled for week commencing 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 and HTS is currently in process of jointly planning the transition from Lockdown to the gradual introduction of more services.

A number of factors need to be considered in determining the safest and most productive approach to our recovery plans:

- The rate of infection must be under control and significantly lower than lockdown levels
- Assuming the government reinstates the Tier Levels, we need to understand what restrictions this may impose on working practices
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the vaccine programme generally and amongst HTS staff
- The continued requirement to avoid or limit contact, promoting lone working and home working

Taking the above into consideration, the fact the infection levels are reducing week on week in Harlow and the vaccine roll out is going well we anticipate service delivery can be increased when the government next eases restrictions.

To assist with this, HTS will need to carry out a thorough review of each of the services it delivers to assess the following:

- Establish a list of affected services
- Establish the extent of any backlog that may have been built up over time
- Prioritise actions to get services back on track
- Establish a timescale to reduce backlogs
- Review resources available
- Analyse cost of recovery plan and establish funding sources

Operative productivity and flexible working are going to be key in recovery and we must consider what opportunities are available to us such as:

- Extended working hours during the week and weekends
- Employing additional resources
- Use of additional subcontractors
- Use of multi-trade operatives

There would be a need to consult with Unite Union to agree any potential changes to contracts. Also, we must consider that working restrictions maybe in force for many months and this will have an ongoing effect on productivity.

### **Responsive Repairs**

When restrictions are reviewed we will not only undertake Emergency and Urgent repairs, as we have been doing through lockdown, but we can start to accept and carry out Standard repairs that are of an external nature or limit exposure with residents and the public, such as roofing, fencing and communal areas.

Working in occupied premises will be reviewed on an ongoing basis when it is safe to do so, but any works of an emergency nature will still continue.

The call centre has been in full operation (working remotely) during this phase and new orders are still being raised although not being booked or carried out in accordance with their priority.

This will result in an increased WIP at the end of the lockdown period that will need to be managed and programmed effectively.

Gas and Electrical Compliance inspections and servicing will be aligned to their renewal dates. priority will be given to those that are due to expire to ensure compliance levels are maintained.

HTS normally carries out gas servicing 2 months ahead of the expiry date and we will be looking to regain this buffer as soon as practically possible.

## **Capital Works**

The government has always stated that Construction activities can continue as long as precautions are adhered to.

On this basis, and to align with government advice, we expect to be able to recommence External Capital works programmes when restrictions are initially lifted, but Internal works in occupied properties will remain suspended.

Urgent internal works that only take one day to complete i.e. Boiler replacements will continue as they did before, and Health and Safety issues will of course be covered. See summary below:

- The Internals Programme – will remain on hold apart from boiler replacements and health and safety issues
- Externals Programme – we anticipate starting the roofing programme
- Aids and Adaptations – Internal works suspended unless H& S related – External adaptations will recommence
- Garage Programme - Works to recommence
- Compliance – All inspections now complete now moving into Communal testing that can continue safely
- Sumners Farm Close – Works can recommence when restrictions are eased

From when restrictions are eased a mobilisation period will be required before commencing these workstreams.

## **Environment**

We anticipate being able to recommence all Grounds Maintenance activities when restrictions are lifted.

## **Summary**

Reinstatement of any services will be based on a risk assessed approach and must encapsulate the government advice on social distancing and self-isolation in order to work as safely as possible.

These services are currently being reviewed by our SHEC team, but the key safety measures would need to be employed:

- Avoidance where not essential
- Social distancing of at least 2 metres
- Frequent hand washing
- Use of PPE where appropriate

- Travelling with one person per vehicle
- Regular lateral flow testing of front-line operatives

HTS is keeping track of any backlogs that have been created during lockdown and where service failures are identified through performance reporting, individual Action Improvement Plans will be developed to provide more information the extent of the delay and timescales to reduce them.

Following submission of a Relief Event Notice on the 19 March 2020, requesting relief on the performance against its KPI's and subsequent service delivery, the Council granted HTS Relief on performance on the 15 June 2020 against all KPI's that govern the contract:

- Majors
- Minors
- Measurements

The Relief was provided up to the end March 2021.

A further Relief Event Extension has been submitted to take into account the more recent lockdowns and restricted working practices.

Each service has been affected to a varying degree and the Relief Event will need to take into account the differing circumstances of each service before it is finalised.

Progress will continue to be reported monthly and quarterly through performance reporting and monitored by SOPM.