

Leader of the Council

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Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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Please ask for	Cllr Tricia Gilby
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Our Ref	TG/SB

20 April 2020

Dear Prime Minister

Financial Impact of COVID-19 on Chesterfield Borough Council

I trust that you are making a good recovery and that you will soon have the strength to return to full duties. I also wish you and your partner well with the rapidly approaching birth of your child.

Yesterday's announcement of a further £1.6 billion of funding for local government was very welcome news as was the Secretary of State's recognition of our critical role in supporting our communities during the coronavirus pandemic.

However, I await with interest the value of the government's specific additional allocation to Chesterfield Borough Council. Of the first £1.6 billion, Chesterfield Borough Council received £59,000, which we immediately allocated to tackling homelessness and ensuring that everyone had an offer of suitable shelter and support at this difficult time.

The return that the council's s151 officer made to MHCLG last Wednesday will have evidenced that the financial cost to our council already stands at £3.781 million comprising £1.042 million in additional expenditure and £2.739 million in lost income; figures that will increase month on month for the foreseeable future.

I am nonetheless very pleased and proud to report that Chesterfield Borough Council is playing its part to the full in support of the government's response:

- We are working hard to maintain a full waste collection service, to keep the borough's streets safe and clean, and our parks and open spaces open to enable our residents to exercise
- We have re-deployed staff to ensure that our 24/7 careline service continues to offer daily telephone and falls recovery support to over 2,500 elderly and vulnerable residents
- We have worked with our neighbouring district councils to provide secure accommodation and support services for all rough sleepers
- Our business rates team worked through the bank holiday weekend to process small business grants and our revenues and benefits team are dealing with unprecedented numbers of applications for universal credit, council tax support and other benefits
- Council staff have been re-deployed to local pharmacies to help them with medicine deliveries, to support the running of NHS testing facilities and to deliver food packages for the shielded within our population
- We have established a Chesterfield co-ordination hub to support Derbyshire County Council's community response unit to link vulnerable residents to volunteers and voluntary organisations
- We have also made sensitive and respectful arrangements as the sole provider of crematorium services for north eastern Derbyshire; the numbers of cremations are now sadly two and a half times more than the numbers we would routinely be dealing with

I have no issue with Chesterfield Borough Council making these and other investments; it is what we are here to do. However, it was always on the understanding that the government would recompense us for the additional direct costs of responding to the coronavirus pandemic; and also help us with the income that we will inevitably lose through the period of the crisis.

Whilst yesterday's announcement has provided a degree of comfort, I remain deeply concerned at the reports that emerged earlier in the week in relation to recompensing councils for the money spent and income lost as a result of the coronavirus crisis. In a matter of days, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government appeared to have backtracked from his earlier clear position that councils should spend whatever it takes and expect reimbursement, to one where he no longer intends to fulfil his earlier pledge.

Chesterfield Borough Council has worked incredibly hard through what has been a decade of austerity to make savings and generate new income streams to ensure that the borough continues to thrive and that our residents have a good quality of life; and so for the Secretary of State to raise the notion that local government should 'share the financial burden' is frankly unbelievable and wholly unacceptable.

Such a U-turn would mean immediate cuts to council services, rough-sleepers returning to our streets, our ability to help vulnerable children and adults curtailed with inevitable consequences for community cohesion, no ability to finance new

capital investments to re-stimulate the borough's economy, and sadly job losses among the very staff who are currently giving of their all in keeping essential services running through this difficult time.

I am therefore writing to seek your urgent assurance and that of your government that you will develop an appropriate mechanism to properly compensate Chesterfield Borough Council for the full losses that we will have incurred in supporting our communities through this unprecedented public health crisis, and to also enable us to play a full and active role in helping our borough and the country to recover from the economic crisis that is to come.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Your sincerely



Cllr Tricia Gilby
Leader of the Council

cc

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer

Cllr James Jamieson, Chairman, LGA

Cllr John Fuller, Chairman, District Councils' Network

Cllr Nick Forbes, Leader of LGA Labour Group

Sir Keir Starmer MP, Leader of the Opposition

Steve Reed MP, shadow Communities and Local Government secretary

LGA Labour Group

Toby Perkins MP

Lee Rowley MP