Cabinet Report

Report of Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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Wards affected: N/A

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To: CABINET

Date: South: 10 March 2022, Vale: 8 March 2022

Covid response update and next steps

Recommendations

(a) That Cabinet note the councils Covid-19 community support response activity to date and the agreed staff structure to continue the response and progress the recovery programmes.

(b) That Cabinet supports the principles outlined within the attached Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Framework.

Purpose of Report

1. To update Cabinet on the councils Covid-19 community and business support response activity to date, and on the agreed staff structure to continue the councils' response and to progress the recovery programmes.

2. That Cabinet supports the principles outlined within the attached Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Framework.

Corporate Plan Measures

3. This work supports delivery of a large number of corporate plan measures contained in the following themes; for South 'improved economic and community wellbeing' and Vale 'working in partnership' and 'building healthy communities'. In addition, the

councils along with many other public sector bodies were given considerable additional responsibilities to support communities under the public sector duty to support the national effort through the pandemic.

Background

4. The councils' response to supporting residents and businesses through the pandemic, involved establishing a South and Vale Community Support Hub in June 2020, and the refocussing of council services to ensure that support could be effectively provided to residents and businesses throughout the pandemic.

5. Initially support for residents was very practical around contact, the collection of prescriptions and delivery of food parcels to members of the community who in the main were classed as clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) and had been advised to shield to limit their exposure to the Covid-19 virus by government. Grants to businesses were also issued at pace, to assist them to operate under Covid-19 restrictions. As the pandemic has progressed, the councils' response has widened to a number of support activities.

6. A summary of the support activities undertaken is below, with more detail presented in **Appendix One, Two and Three.** These activities were delivered by South and Vale staff in co-ordination with partners across the Oxfordshire system.

   - **Grant schemes:** researching, designing, establishing and administering the following grant schemes for individuals, families, Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and businesses:

     o Emergency Assistance Grants (EAG)

     o Winter Support Grant (WSG)

     o Covid Support Grant (CSG)

     o Household Support Grant (HSG)

     o Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG)

     o Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG)

     o Omicron Hospitality, Leisure & accommodation Grant (OHLG)

     o Test and Trace Support Payments (TTSP)

     o Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF)

     o Covid-19 emergency councillor grant (South and Vale)

     o Covid-19 councillor grants (South only)

     o Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Transportation Grant

     o Co-ordination of Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) budget and bids

   - **Voucher support** - distributing supermarket vouchers for test and trace support payments (TTSP) recipients.

- **Welfare check calls** - undertaking outbound calls to TTSP recipients and welfare check calls to those self- isolating and dealing with inbound referrals needing further support - calls, emails, webform.

- **Community site visits** – to support the national and local approach for the test and trace system and to check that CEV residents who had not responded to previous telephone contacts to offer support were ok.

- **Food parcel provision** - proving food parcels to support vulnerable residents.

- **System co-ordination** – organising mutual aid staffing requests to support health partners in the delivery of the vaccination programme.

- **Quarantine Hotels** - transporting PCR tests to/from quarantine hotels.

- **Research and development** – leading for Oxfordshire to support the system wide CEV recovery programme.

- **Community food network** - liaison with network partners and input into strategy work.

- **Proactive communications** - campaigns ran throughout the year supporting the practical response work of teams and engaged residents with Covid safety and support messages.

Current and future working arrangements

7. The councils' role has evolved over time and currently the community support hub mainly provides direct support via a range of grant funded schemes to those struggling financially to afford food and basic supplies such as heating and power. Also, staff provide signposting advice and guidance to anyone in the community who asks for it regarding a wide range of issues such as wellbeing, mental health and financial support.

8. To support the national test and trace initiative Environmental Health staff undertake visits to those who have tested positive to encourage compliance with quarantine obligations and request the individuals make contact with the Oxfordshire test and trace team (OxLOCT). They have also conducted proactive district town reviews to check for general compliance levels and have provided guidance to businesses for the county wide ventilation project. Support for businesses is currently in place through the provision of advice and guidance, the discretionary Winter Support Grant and Covid safe networking events. Additional support for small businesses using COMF funding to provide an e-commerce platform is planned shortly.

9. Initially the South and Vale community hub was established up to the end of March 2021, then this was extended to the end of March 2022. However, given the ongoing nature of the pandemic and negative impacts on vulnerable residents, the structure as set out in **Appendix Four** has been extended to the end of March 2023 using COMF funding. Support capacity for other teams will be met by a combination of existing resources and additional staff funded through COMF.

10. The attached Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Framework as set out in **Appendix Five** sets out an approach for efficiently and effectively co-ordinating resources as appropriate, for recovery and renewal activities across the county. The framework for recovery and renewal is arranged around three key aims:

- **Consolidating recovery and building resilience**: Protecting key services and keeping social life and the economy open by sustaining our system response to COVID-19 and working together on addressing new pressures. This includes changes to service delivery as well as ways of working e.g. engagement with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), businesses and key partners.

- **Addressing the unequal impact of COVID-19:** Proactively using qualitative and quantitative data and insight to identify the groups most impacted across a range of cross-cutting issues, beyond the immediate impact on health, and tackling impact with a focus on the total strengths and needs of individuals and families

- **Supporting renewal:** Identifying new approaches and activities underpinned by the lessons we have learnt to date, building Oxfordshire's resilience, not only against future waves of the pandemic but also in terms of economic and community resilience to wider societal challenges including climate change and ecological impacts.

11. Across the three themes, two cross cutting priorities are recognised as needing to inform recovery and renewal thinking across the county:

- **Climate change action**
  Championing climate action across the County as we work together to address climate change, build climate resilience and support nature recovery.

- **Tackling inequality**
  Driving equal access and delivery of support across all local communities, narrowing health, social and educational inequalities and tackling poverty.

12. By supporting the Oxfordshire framework, system partners are committing to collaborate and co-ordinate where it is beneficial to do so, and therefore drive delivery through partnership working:

- Support for the framework will ensure continued system partnership working, established during Covid-19 and extending to recovery and renewal initiatives.

- Through partnership working, it has and will further enable aligned allocation and delivery of grant funding as quickly and efficiently as possible.

- System oversight will facilitate collaboration and wherever possible reduce duplication of delivery efforts and initiatives.

- It will enable Oxfordshire partners to work together to recover from the impacts of COVID and implement changes in the light of what we have learnt for our communities, organisations and partnerships.

13. The framework has been scripted by Oxfordshire County Council, but developed in partnership through the Silver system group, which includes representatives from public sector partners across Oxfordshire, and has been endorsed by the Oxfordshire system chiefs group.

14. In response to the framework being supported by Cabinets, officers will review existing corporate plan activities, and will assess how they align to the Oxfordshire recovery themes identified.

15. To ensure efficient use of resources and avoid duplication it is proposed to report progress on the councils' recovery and renewal actions, by expanding the current Covid-19 Response and Recovery theme in the established quarterly corporate plan reporting.

Options

16. There is no legal obligation to support the principles of the Oxfordshire Recovery and Renewal Framework, however doing so is a positive action demonstrating the councils' commitment to working with other public sector partners and the voluntary sector to support residents and businesses as they continue to adapt and live with Covid.

Climate and ecological impact implications

17. All activities included in the existing corporate plan delivery plans have been assessed for their climate and ecological impact, and there are not considered to be any additional adverse impacts by supporting the principles within the Oxfordshire Recovery and Renewal Framework.

Financial Implications

18. Any additional activities undertaken as a result of support for the principles of the recovery and renewal framework will be fully grant funded or covered by existing resources as set out in the Corporate Plan delivery plans. Where resources are not available, activities will not be undertaken. Therefore, it is considered that there are no additional financial implications by supporting the principles of this framework.

Equalities and Diversity implications

19. The Recovery and Renewal framework outlines the unequal impact of COVID and notes the need for additional analysis to fully understand the direct and indirect impacts. Activity already underway through the Oxfordshire system, for example on health inequality, vaccine outreach and support to homeless individuals, is directly addressing equality and inclusion as it relates to COVID-19. In the development and delivery of the themes set out within the framework and the progression of partnership planning and delivery activity, the assessment of the equality impact will be required.

Legal Implications

20. Supporting the principles of the Oxfordshire Recovery and Renewal Framework neither imposes nor infers any additional obligations on the council and it is therefore considered that there are no legal implications.

Risks

21. The only risk considered pertinent to supporting the principles or otherwise of this framework would be a possible reputational one amongst partner organisations were the councils not to support the framework and not take advantage of the opportunities and synergies that a partnership approach provides.

Other implications

22. There are not considered to be any other implications.

Conclusion

23. That Cabinet note the councils Covid-19 community support response activity to date and the agreed staff structure to continue the response and progress the recovery programmes, and that Cabinet supports the principles outlined within the attached Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Framework.

Background Papers

- **Appendix One** – Community Hub activity statistics to December 2021 (see below)
- **Appendix Two** – South business support grant activity statistics to December 2021
- **Appendix Three** – Vale business support grant activity statistics to December 2021
- **Appendix Four –** Proposed Community Support Hub Structure
- **Appendix Five** – Oxfordshire Recovery and Renewal Framework **(separately attached)**

Appendix One – Communications, Community and CSV support activity statistics to December 2021

Activity	Dates	South Volumes	South Amounts	Vale Volumes	Vale Amounts
Emergency Assistance Grant – VCS* organisations	October 2020 - March 2021	12	£49,343	12	£48,709
Emergency Assistance Grant - individuals	September 2020 - March 2021	111	£26,280	148	£23,330
Winter Support Grant	January - April 2021	496 households	£146,221	473 households	£141,517
Covid Support Grant	May - June 2021	59 households	£15,780	65 households	£15,245
VCS Transportation Grant	April - May 2021	10 VCS	£74,000	7 VCS	£62,363
Household Support Grant	December 2021	106 households	£29,025	322 households	£103,095
Supermarket vouchers for TTSP** recipients	August - December 2021	88	£13,750	142	£22,825
Outbound calls to TTSP recipients	August - December 2021	141	n/a	201	n/a
Total referrals dealt with - number of enquiries needing further support	January - December 2021	936	419	1091	533
Inbound enquiries - calls, emails, webform	January - December 2021	139	n/a	161	n/a
Food parcels to support vulnerable residents	January - December 2021	60	n/a	92	n/a
Test and Trace support payment	August 2021 – January 2022	1193 applications 635 valid claims	£317,500	1422 applications 721 claims	£360,500
Restart Grants	April 2021 - January 2022	671 claims	£5,629,365	472 claims	£4,002,021
Outbound self-isolation calls made	March - December 2021	4,441 calls made			
Staffing support for health partners	May 2021	14 staffing positions filled over 4 days			
Holding hotels PCR** tests collected / delivered to test site	September - December 2021	26 journeys to collect tests from holding hotels and deliver to test site			
Test and Trace – Local contract tracing door knocks	20 Oct 2020 – 19 Jan 2022	1427 individual visits completed to address across the districts			
Inspections of businesses regarding compliance with Covid-19 restrictions.	Mar 2020-Dec 2021	South - 104	n/a	Vale- 83	n/a
Covid-19 Outbreak investigations (with OCC public health).	Mar 2020-Dec 2021	South - 15	n/a	Vale - 27	n/a
Investigations into allegations against businesses of non- compliance with Covid-19 restrictions.	Mar 2020-Dec 2021	South - 380	n/a	Vale - 235	n/a
Queries from businesses asking for advice and guidance regarding covid compliance	Mar 2020-Dec 2021	South - 315	n/a	Vale - 211	n/a

Offering free Food hygiene / H&S training to businesses to aid recovery	January 2022 – February 2022	841 course licence logins have been issued and 153 courses completed (South and Vale)			
Completed food safety inspections.	March 2020 – January 2022	1544 (South and Vale)			
Pavement licences implemented as a brand-new system and processed.	March 2020 – January 2022	70 applications in total – 5 refused and 3 withdrawn, 62 issued (South and Vale)			
Premises/street trader inspections to assist with compliance	March 2020 – January 2022	80 (South and Vale)			
Provided face coverings and stickers for inside taxis.	March 2020 – January 2022	n/a			

On 02/03/2020, ED had 483 SVBS newsletter subscribers. As of 31/01/2022, the newsletter has 2,387 subscribers. An increase of 394%.

Over the course of the pandemic, ED have issued more than 90 newsletters, with specific features on availability of business grant programmes in 50 editions. This information is also shared through our Facebook and Twitter social channels, where SVBS hold combined follower numbers of 1,700.

Business engagement with the newsletter remains strong, for the most recent quarterly period of 1 Oct 2022 to 31 December 2022, 13 editions were sent, totalling 29,335 sends, 15,250 opens and 3,301 clickthrough's. The open rate of more than 50% exceeds the industry trend for an average rate of 17-28%.

For the latest quarterly period of 1 Oct 2022 to 31 December 2022, the SVBS website received 11469 visits (please note, the website underwent a refresh in October, this statistic is for Nov / Dec only). Within January, this spiked to 2,151 new users within the month, with 15,826 page views, this coincided with the launch of new covid funding scheme, demonstrating there continues to be strong demand for financial support for businesses.

High Street and Public Spaces Social Distance Promotion and Covid Safety Campaign #DoYourBit	March - December 2021	Campaign costs split evenly across South and Vale from COMF funding Total COMF spend of £83,701 from March – December 2021			
We worked closely with teams including Business Support, Active Communities and in partnership with eight town councils in our districts to help us during our campaign. They towns were:					
		Didcot Henley Thame Wallingford		Abingdon Botley Faringdon Wantage	
Graphics for #DoYourBit social media posts and banners designed (x8 towns in 3 sizes for Facebook, Instagram and Twitter)	April 2021	12		12	
Social media posts scheduled with #DoYourBit to promote free resources for businesses etc	April - July 2021	20		20	
Town centre banners	March 2021	17		10	
Banners for playgrounds	March	17		18	
Banners for open spaces and parks in towns	April 2021 onwards	19		23	

Posters (A3 and A4) for town centre businesses and districtwide downloadable from website
    o Generic
    o High street
    o Hairdressers
    o Pub
    o Café
    o Shop
    o Town hall or community centre
    o Public toilets
	April 2021	16		16

Beer mats and coasters for cafes and pubs for town centres and given out at food outlets by Covid Marshalls and Food Safety inspectors	April 2021	1,250		1,000
Table wraparound display/signage for cafes and pubs for town centres and given out at food outlets by Covid Marshalls and Food Safety inspectors	April 2021	1,600		2,600
Venue banners for council community and leisure centres	May 2021	8		5
Market day lamppost wraparounds for town centres	April 2021	38		60
Park banners – smaller for parishes Playground banners – smaller for parishes	May 2021	14		5
Posters for venues for guesthouses, hotels and B&Bs – downloadable format	May 2021	1 design		1 design
'it's not over yet' themed billboard large poster sites and bus stops campaign x3 designs	June – September 2021	Didcot Park Way x 11 posters X1 Wallingford at Beechcroft development		X3 Botley bus stops X2 Wantage X1 Faringdon
'it's not over yet' themed adverts in Herald newspaper series over 4 weeks	7, 14, 21, 28 July 2021	Wallingford, Didcot x4 ads		Abingdon, Wantage & Grove x4 ads
Outdoor pools and splashpad promo banners with covid safety messages	July 2021	Abingdon x7		Wallingford x8

* Voluntary and community sector, ** Test and trace support payment, *** Polymerase chain reaction (laboratory) test.

Appendix Two – South business support grant activity statistics to December 2021

South Oxfordshire District Council					
	ALLOCATION	**NO. IN SCOPE**	**VALUE IN SCOPE**	**NO. PAID**	**TOTAL PAID**
SBGF/RHLGF	£27,494,000	2,181	£27,645,000	1,993	£25,630,000
LADGF	£1,157,250			199	£1,070,000
LRSG	£16,223,863			4,287	£10,937,436
CSP	£102,400			57	£57,000
RESTART	£7,500,150			671	£5,629,365
OMICRON	£1,482,084				
		AVAILABLE	**SPENT**		
ARG	£5,868,915	£1,589,996	72.91%	1,254	£4,278,919

Initial	*£2,841,140*
Top Up 1 (Jan 21)	*£1,261,900*
Top Up 2 (May-July 21)	*£1,415,700*
Top Up 3 (Jan 22)	*£350,175*

TOTAL GRANTS	£59,828,662			8,461	£47,602,720

SBGF/RHLGF – Small Business Grant Fund/ Retail Hospitality and leisure Grant Fund
LADGF – Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund
LRSG – Local Restrictions Support Fund
CSP – Covid Support Payment

RESTART – Restart grant
OMICRON - Retail Hospitality and leisure Grant Fund
ARG – Additional Restrictions Grant

Appendix Three – Vale business support grant activity statistics to December 2021

Vale of White Horse District Council

	ALLOCATION	NO. IN SCOPE	VALUE IN SCOPE	NO. PAID	TOTAL PAID
SBGF/RHLGF	£17,810,000	1,468	£18,310,000	1,350	£17,025,000
LADGF	£747,000			98	£545,000
LRSG	£10,998,894			2,951	£7,269,783
CSP	£64,000			40	£40,000
RESTART	£5,202,126			471	£4,002,021
OMICRON	£1,104,075				
		AVAILABLE	**SPENT**		
ARG	£5,271,443	£1,292,045	75.49%	809	£3,979,398

Initial	*£2,720,140*
Top Up 1 (Jan 21)	*£1,208,157*
Top Up 2 (May-July 21)	*£1,081,150*
Top Up 3 (Jan 22)	*£261,996*

	ALLOCATION			NO. PAID	TOTAL PAID
TOTAL GRANTS	£41,197,538			5,719	£32,861,202

SBGF/RHLGF – Small Business Grant Fund/ Retail Hospitality and leisure Grant Fund
LADGF – Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund
LRSG – Local Restrictions Support Fund
CSP – Covid Support Payment

RESTART – Restart grant
OMICRON - Retail Hospitality and leisure Grant Fund
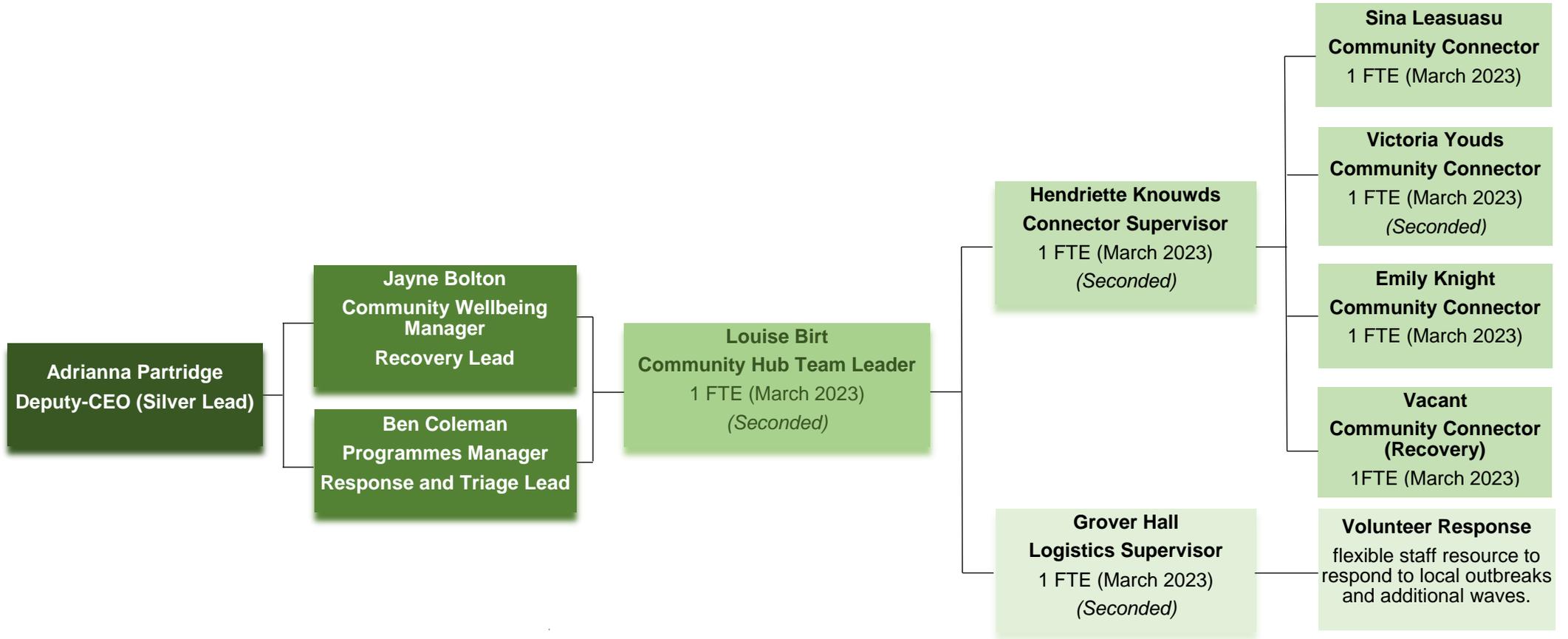ARG – Additional Restrictions Grant

Appendix Four – Proposed Community Support Hub Structure

Adrianna Partridge
Deputy-CEO (Silver Lead)

Jayne Bolton
Community Wellbeing
Manager
Recovery Lead

Ben Coleman
Programmes Manager
Response and Triage Lead

Louise Birt
Community Hub Team Leader
1 FTE (March 2023)
(Seconded)

Hendriette Knouwds
Connector Supervisor
1 FTE (March 2023)
(Seconded)

Grover Hall
Logistics Supervisor
1 FTE (March 2023)
(Seconded)

Sina Leasuasu
Community Connector
1 FTE (March 2023)

Victoria Youds
Community Connector
1 FTE (March 2023)
(Seconded)

Emily Knight
Community Connector
1 FTE (March 2023)

Vacant
Community Connector
(Recovery)
1FTE (March 2023)

Volunteer Response
flexible staff resource to
respond to local outbreaks
and additional waves.

Supporting Teams:
Assurance, Communications, Community Enablement, Customer Service, Environmental Health, HR, IT, Policy & Insight

Note: Community Hub posts up to Team Leader are fully funded via COMF.