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Rt Hon Boris Johnson, MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
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Our Ref: SB/SAD

13 November 2020

Dear Prime Minister

COVID-19 Health Emergency in Hull

I am writing to express my grave concerns about the consequences of the current COVID-19 health emergency in Hull and the absence of central Government support to assist us in overcoming it. As I am sure you are aware, our infection rate is now one of the highest in the country and, despite the valiant efforts of our residents and businesses, supported by Hull City Council and our many partners and stakeholders, the infection rates in our City have increased at a, frankly, astonishing and terrifying rate over the last few weeks. As I write, it is 732 per 100,000.

Hull and our people have dealt with some huge challenges in the past, and we have always overcome them but, on this occasion, as has too frequently been the case in the past, we seem, once again, to be the forgotten city. We saw, quite rightly, the focus and support that your Government has given to the great cities of Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds when their infection rates were high but, in some instances, less than half the levels we are now experiencing in Hull - and yet neither I nor the wider Council have received any contact from national Government, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government or the Department for Health and Social Care to offer the support or engagement that we need and was quickly extended to other parts of the country.

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I know that I do not need to remind you that Hull is the 4th most deprived city in the country, nor that many of our residents and businesses were already struggling before the full weight of the COVID crisis hit us. Hull is also home to strategic industries, essential to combatting the pandemic, and, as a port, provides infrastructure fundamental to the movement of medical and food supplies, which will be even more critical as we rapidly approach our exit from the European Union. The impact of what we are experiencing will, quite honestly, be devastating to our economy and to a vast number of our hard working people. Our Council has done its level best to support our people during these exceptionally challenging times but we are a council that has faced nearly 60% budget cuts over the last 10 years and, as a consequence, our resources and resilience are greatly depleted. The same can be said of many of our public sector partners. We are now in the 'white heat' at the peak of this crisis, striving to support areas with some of the highest demands for essential services in the country with some of the lowest resources.

When you made your key manifesto pledge of "levelling up", it was not done with the foresight of the massive challenges we are now facing but the crisis we are in makes that commitment more crucial ever. As a city pretty much forgotten by national Government for many years, I am asking you to recognise our significance and to stand beside us as we fight to overcome the terrible impacts of this virus that is now ravaging our communities more than anywhere else in our Country.

Reflecting this, I am, in the first instance, asking for your urgent assistance in relation to the following requests:

- Urgently needed additional support with logistics and technical advice for the proposed wider Lateral Flow Tests and University of Hull 'Christmas' tests - our local Public Health team welcome local leadership of this but we need understanding and acceptance nationally that we do not have enough 'feet on the ground' to manage this all at once and we need much more support. Liverpool were provided with the Army to support them, we have been offered nothing;
- Additional support from Public Health England and the Joint Biosecurity Centre to support our local Directors of Public Health and Consultants leading the pandemic analysis and response – our local team's commitment is extraordinarily high, but resilience is stretched and our people have been working round the clock and continuously. This is just not sustainable;
- More local freedom and flexibility in terms of restrictions, for example we have done extremely well working with our schools to keep them open and keep children at school but we need national support to flex the approach we are taking, in line with Tier 3 regional lockdown flexibilities;

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- It is essential that we start having discussions with Government now about where Hull will be after the national lockdown ends on 2nd December. With our rates increasing, our businesses and workers must know what the situation will be and our residents need to understand what the implications will be for them and their families over the Christmas and New Year holidays. If Hull is facing an extended period in lockdown, we believe the discretionary support for businesses in our city needs to be revisited and request the opportunity to discuss what additional support can be offered to them, in the same way that has already been offered to other areas facing Tier 3 restrictions.
- The pressure facing our hospitals is critical, and these serve both Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire and, for some services, North and North East Lincolnshire too. They are desperately in need of additional resources and support.

In closing, I would request that my concerns and these requests are given you urgent attention, so that we can work together with Government to support our people as a matter of utmost priority. I look forward to your response at your earliest opportunity

Yours sincerely



Councillor Stephen Brady, OBE
Leader, Hull City Council

c.c. Dame Diana Johnson MP – Hull North
Karl Turner MP – Hull East
Emma Hardy MP – Hull West & Hessle
Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP - Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and
Local Government
Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP - Secretary of State for Health and Social Care