

## **COVID-19 SUB COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

Of a virtual/remote meeting held on Tuesday 21 July 2020 at 7.00 pm to 8.35pm.

Councillors present:

Matthew Bedford (Chair)  
Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Vice Chair)  
Chris Lloyd  
Paula Hiscocks  
Roger Seabourne  
Sarah Nelmes  
Alison Wall  
Andrew Scarth

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Officers Present: Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive  
Geof Muggeridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services  
Alison Scott, Interim Director of Finance  
Gordon Glenn, Performance and Projects Manager  
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

#### **CRSC01/20 APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

Councillor Stephen Giles Medhurst proposed, duly seconded, that Councillor Matthew Bedford be appointed Chair of the sub-committee.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Matthew Bedford be appointed Chair of the sub-committee for the Local Government year 2020/21.

#### **COUNCILLOR MATTHEW BEDFORD IN THE CHAIR**

#### **CRSC02/20 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

Councillor Sarah Nelmes proposed, seconded by Councillor Matthew Bedford, that Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst be appointed Vice Chair of the sub-committee.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst be appointed Vice-Chair of the sub-committee for the Local Government year 2020/21.

#### **CRSC03/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Stephen Cox.

#### **CRSC04/20 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair advised that agenda Items 8 (Service Restoration) and Item 9 (Timeline for Service Restoration) had not been available 5 working days before the meeting.

It was agreed to take the items as late business in order that Officers could progress the Covid 19 recovery work.

Members pointed out that with an extensive Policy and Resources Committee agenda and late papers for the sub-committee there was a lot of reading to cover. The Chair agreed but said there had been no alternative.

## **CRSC05/20 TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The sub-committee noted the Terms of Reference had been agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting the previous night with one amendment to the last bullet point with the word “agree” changed to “recommend”.

A Member asked that Councillors be updated on the Grants available to the Council and that officer clarification be provided on eligibility so Councillors can advise residents. The Chair said it was not the job of officers to keep Councillors updated about Grants being offered by other organisations.

The Chief Executive said that the Council had been working with the Chamber of Commerce and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to notify businesses of grants which are available and details provided on the website. These organisation were where local businesses would normally make contact. Good feedback had been received from the Chamber of Commerce and Members had been notified of details on the grants.

A Member said the regular updates on the website regarding small businesses grants and discretionary grants and our work with organisations such as Herts Sports Partnership who were supporting sports clubs had been very informative.

A Member asked that bullet point “Act as a link with the county wide recovery structure” have Parish Councils added. The Chief Executive said that Parish Councils could be added.

On being put to the sub-committee the Terms of Reference with the amendment were declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous by general assent.

### **RECOMMEND:**

That the Terms of Reference be amended and the bullet point read “Act as a link with the county wide recovery structure to include Parish Councils”; and

That the Policy and Resources Committee be asked to approve the amendment.

## **CRSC06/20 COVID-19 RECOVERY WORK – SCOPING AND GOVERNANCE**

The Chief Executive made a presentation on the Scoping and Governance and outlined the objectives as follows:

- To restore existing services and review resources to redirect to priority areas;
- To communicate, engage with and reassure the public whilst supporting Members in their community leadership role;

- To facilitate improved capacity in the voluntary sector and support the most vulnerable;
- To support the local economy and housing market in achieving restoration and growth and support new businesses;
- To establish the new way of working that will offer a choice of working arrangements;
- To ensure a sustainable financial position with particular emphasis on closing the MTFP gap. (Medium Term Financial Plan)
- To engage Members in the 3R's to establish policy direction and a set of priority objectives (Reset, Reassure and Renew);
- To establish and appropriately resources policy, risk and response function.

On the recovery work being undertaken, Members wanted to know who would be leading on this work and whether volunteers could support this work. The Chief Executive replied that an officer recovery meeting was being held each week with herself, Director of Community and Environmental Services, Interim Director of Finance and Head of Community Partnerships. The two Directors and Head of Service were responsible for one block each (as per the diagram) and they had established teams to help deliver these blocks of work.

A Member wanted to know when officers would be back working in the office and not at home, how would the Council look going forward, what would be the implications on officers and how were the Council keeping residents informed?

The Chief Executive said it was too early to say what the service delivery would look like going forward, but most services were operational, with only face to face meetings not taking place at this time. Staff being able to come into the office was being considered. Officers had been keeping the website up to date throughout the Covid 19 pandemic but a decision was taken early on not to send out letters to every household as the information was changing so quickly. The Council were also updating our Council noticeboards on a regular basis.

Members were concerned regarding staff annual leave as they had been working extra hours and Members did not want staff to lose their leave. The Director of Community and Environmental Services said Directors and Heads of Service were going through the PDR's with staff and reminding them to take annual leave. The Directors were looking to take some leave, but making sure services were covered. The Council were considering if staff could carry over more than 5 days of leave next year. But staff were being encouraged to take leave this year.

On being put to the sub-committee the noting of the Covid-19 Recovery Work – Scoping and Governance was declared CARRIED the voting being unanimous by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the Covid-19 Recovery work – scoping and governance be noted.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services went through the Service Restoration document. Some of the service priorities were income generating and others were services which had to be legally undertaken.

The Performance and Projects Manager explained the background to the charts and flow charts which showed the priority 1 to 5 services. He explained the scoring methodology and colour coding and why some services were a priority 1 and others priority 5.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services asked Members if they could agree the priorities 1-5 as listed on Page 13 (Point 7).

Members made the following comments:

- This was clearly a fast moving document;
- There was a lot of information to take on board;
- Would the document come back to this sub-committee?
- The scoring was unclear as only some services had been scored;
- On Tree and Landscapes works this should be changed to Tree strategy;
- The cycling and walking strategy needed target dates;
- The staff celebration – how could this be justified after so many people had lost their lives and was not a good idea to spend public money;
- Essential work on Trees should come above Tree Strategy;
- Needed to be made clear which officer was working on which project;
- It would be helpful to indicate everything the Council do and when services could be expected to be running again;
- Praised officers and their commitment to working from home especially during these difficult times;
- An Executive summary was the way forward;
- Why were officers not doing site visits?

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said it was a complex document and Officers would work on improving the layout and provide an executive summary to explain the scoring and how the priorities were drawn out. The reason some items did not have any scoring was because they do not have KPI's within the Corporate Framework. The staff celebration was very much about getting staff back working together and build up moral nothing had been drawn up HR. The document was compiled for Members to understand the services that had been affected by Covid 19, to give some indication of the work that would be needed to bring the services back and to give some prioritisation. Officers wanted Members sign off of the service restoration document to be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee.

Members asked if the document could include hyperlinks to make it easier to navigate.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said site visits could not be undertaken due to the strict lockdown rules in place up until the end of May. It was only in June that lockdown restrictions were eased but in order for officers to undertake site visits it often involved going into people's houses and coming into close contact with people which was still restricted at this time. The Council were not undertaking any face to face meetings.

Members noted that officers had worked hard on this document.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services referred Members to Page 13 – Point 7 (Services that need to be restored (including aspects of a particular Service) and asked if Members could agree the Priorities 1, 2 and 3. Further work would be completed on the document taking on board Member comments and a second meeting organised in August before the next Policy and Resources Committee meeting. All Members of the sub-committee would be given more time to read the documents for the next meeting.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation that officers be able to progress work on Priorities 1, 2 and 3 was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That Officers progress work on Priorities 1, 2 and 3 as outlined on Page 13 (Point 7 – Services that need to be restored (including aspects of a particular service);

That a second meeting be organised in August; and

That the document be updated to include an executive summary and take on board the Member comments.

**CV08/20 TIMELINE FOR SERVICE RESTORATION**

This item would be brought back to the next sub-committee meeting.

On being put to the sub-committee the recommendation that the timeline for service restoration be brought to the sub-committees next meeting was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the timeline for service restoration be brought back to the next meeting of the sub-committee.

**CHAIR**