
COVID-19 SUB COMMITTEE**DRAFT MINUTES**

From a virtual/remote meeting held on Thursday 3 September 2020 at 7.00 pm to 7.24 pm

Councillors present:

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

Officers Present: Geof Muggeridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services
Alison Scott, Interim Director of Finance
Rebecca Young, Strategic Policy and Partnerships Manager
Gordon Glenn, Performance and Projects Manager
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive, had sent her apologies.

CRSC09/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Andrew Scarth.

CRSC10/20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Covid19 sub-committee meeting held on 21 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair of the sub-committee.

CRSC11/20 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

None received

CRSC12/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

CRSC13/20 SERVICE RESTORATION PRIORITIES

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said that officers had taken on board the comments made at the last Covid 19 sub-committee meeting in order to simplify and improve the reports. The purpose of this document was to identify the Council Services that were not currently running due to Covid-19 (or only part running) and that needed to be restored. Each Service had identified aspects of delivery and allocated a priority rating based

on the 5 priorities which were taken to the sub-committee in July. The document had been summarised and set out Priorities 1, 2 and 3 and included which stages the services were in the restoration process.

Members were advised that within the list of Priorities 1, 2 and 3 it had not included the pantomime at Watersmeet. Sadly it had been decided that this could not go ahead and in order that the Council were not subject to costs and liabilities it had been cancelled for this year.

The Chair of the meeting commented that the format of both the reports were now much clearer and easier for Members to get an overview of what Officers were seeking approval on.

A Member said on page 2 of the report, Objectives, it included "to establish and implement new ways of working over the short, medium and long term." It was asked if each section could be laid out separately and if the priorities could be made clearer, and shown as either short, medium or longer term objectives with target dates so the priorities could be tracked.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said if the priorities were agreed then the layout would be reviewed. With regard to the short, medium or longer term priorities the second report included the timescales for those. The Priorities 4 and 5 would come back to the sub-committee to review at a future meeting.

A Member said they were unclear on when staff would be returning to the office and if it would be on a phased basis. It was important that we set confidence in the local community for staff to return to work.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said that Three Rivers House remained closed to the public at the moment with officers working from home. If staff do need to come into the office they book this via Firmstep but need to state when they would like to come in and what they would be doing. The office was only accessible on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Tuesdays and Thursdays the office was closed. There would be risk assessments on services undertaking face to face meetings coming to the next Covid 19 sub-committee meeting. Council services were continuing to be run by staff working from home, meetings with staff and external partners were taking place virtually along with Council and Committee meetings. There was no need for staff to return to the office at this time.

The Chair of the meeting said staff should only come into the office if there was an operational need to do so.

The Interim Director of Finance said Heads of Service had been working closely with staff regarding returning to the office and had put in place the opportunity for staff who had welfare needs to be able to come into the office. At the moment Heads of Service were trying to minimise staff coming into the office in order that the office remained a safe place to be under the Covid 19 regulations.

On being put to the sub-committee the Service Restoration Priorities was declared CARRIED by the Chair of the meeting the voting being unanimous by general assent.

RECOMMEND:

Agrees and recommends the report and appendix 1 Service Restoration Priorities to Policy and Resources Committee for adoption.

CRSC14/20 SERVICE RESTORATION RESOURCES AND TARGET DATE

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said the report set out the resources that were required for the services that had not been fully restored with target dates. In terms of cost, it was noted that there would be one or two additional costs for example PPE for face to face meetings, but Officers were looking to fund this within existing budgets. This report was setting out how we would like to use existing resources. There would be occasions where services under Priorities 4 and 5 were not making full use of the staff so that meant staff could be seconded into other roles within the Priorities 1, 2 or 3.

Members were happy there was additional staffing for Legal but asked why there was no extra staff for Revenues and Benefits and Homelessness, as more people would start applying for Universal Credit or default on their mortgage and extra staff would be needed to provide assistance to these vulnerable people. The Director of Community and Environmental Services said if the necessity did arise then extra staff could be seconded to those areas.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said in terms of staffing all the Heads of Service had contributed to the document and had made an assessment of the capacity within their teams. It was possible that there would be different demands on services as we go forward and if that was the case then Heads of Service could make bids for funding. There could be staff who are available for secondment to other services. In terms of the Committee meetings an option for hybrid meetings had been put forward if Members would prefer this type of meeting. The report just highlighted what would be required should Members want to hold hybrid meetings.

A Member agreed that staffing for Housing and Revenues and Benefits was important. They sought confirmation that the target dates for the Revenue and Benefits services to be restored was on target. The Interim Director of Finance said other than face to face meetings, Revenues and Benefits are functioning normally. They had made use of some secondments from within the Finance and Fraud teams who knew the systems. Other temporary staff from outside agencies had been brought into the service. The two Finance apprentices would be moving across to Revenues and Benefits to provide extra capacity for the longer term.

Members noted there was no advantage to be gained from having some Councillors in the Council Chamber for meetings. The only meeting where a Member was in the offices was the Chair of Council for Full Council meetings and only for the purposes of being able to control the meeting with officer support but complying with the Covid 19 regulations. It was noted that the number of cases of Covid 19 has increased in the last 2 weeks across the country and the chances of having actual meetings in the Chamber before Christmas were virtually zero. It was advised that we do not spend additional money on having hybrid meetings.

A Member said the report mentioned a walking and cycling strategy but did not mention a Tree and Landscape strategy and asked if some wording could be added. Secondly what was the situation with Rivertech were they working in Basing House and are the Council in communication with them.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said that the Tree and Landscape strategy would be looked into. Rivertech were working in Basing

house but were not occupying all the space. Regular contact was being made through the Facilities Team.

On being put to the sub-committee the Service Restoration Resources and Target Date was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous by general assent.

RECOMMEND:

Recommends the report and appendix 1 Service Restoration - Resources and Target Date to be Fully Restored Document to Policy and Resources Committee for adoption.

CHAIR