

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held Remotely on Tuesday, 9 June 2020

Commenced 10.40 am
Concluded 12.45 pm

Members of the Executive – Councillors

LABOUR
Hinchcliffe (Chair)
I Khan
Ross-Shaw
Ferriby
Farley

Observers: Councillors Hawkesworth, K Green, M Johnson, Pennington, Poulsen and Winnard

Apologies: Councillor Abdul Jabar

126. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency Councillor Imran Khan stated that he was based at Grange Interlink, one of the 5 Area Hubs that had been set up during the current pandemic.

ACTION: City Solicitor

127. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

LEADER OF COUNCIL & CORPORATE

(Councillor Hinchcliffe)

128. **BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE: LIVING WITH COVID 19 AND LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A BETTER FUTURE**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (**Document “BQ”**) which followed the report to Executive on the 30th April 2020 and outlined the action taken since then to support the district through the COVID 19 pandemic and the next steps the Council intended to take, including action to support a period of time living with the virus and to lay the foundations for a better future.

The Leader stated that she received daily briefings from Public Health on how people in the district were coping with the Covid pandemic, to press 494 people had died in the district as a result of contracting the virus. In the midst of this, the community was effectively in lockdown and many families were having to grieve the loss of a loved one in very challenging circumstances, and to this end preserving life was the main priority. It was therefore important to maintain the restrictions in order to safeguard life.

The Leader added that this was a wide ranging report, with an element of future planning taking a central role as we try and move forward as a district. To this end we were entering a very difficult period, and rethinking our priorities was a crucial element in this, as was planning for the next five years; and therefore a report at the July meeting of the Executive will outline the next steps in more detail.

The Chief Executive echoed the sentiments expressed by the Leader and stated that although it was sober assessment in terms of where we were, foundations needed to be laid in terms of the district's recovery; and as the easing of restrictions continued, we have to acknowledge that the virus has not disappeared and we had to find a new way on how we can live with the virus in our midst.

The Chief Executive added that the investment proposals would be brought before the Executive in July, and to this end the Council was working closely with its partners both at WYCA, the local resilience forum as well as the community and voluntary sectors to support people in the district, and the volume of activities being undertaken were detailed in the report.

In the next 6 months implementing track and trace was a crucial element of the next phase, identifying infection rates and isolating appropriately, so effective implementation of this was crucial for the recovery phase. To this end the Council would be working with its partners, including those in the retail sector, so that the opening up of this and other sectors is safe and seamless.

As a result of the pandemic, the impacts felt locally were real, with an increase in the levels of unemployment, domestic violence cases and the impact on education, as well as the disproportionate impact of the virus on the black and minority ethnic communities.

Financial help had been received from Government, however the Council was projecting an overspend, and it was important that financial assistance from Government was meaningful in order for the Council to effectively deal with the impact of the pandemic and plan going forward.

The Leader stressed the fast changing nature of the situation.

The Education and Skills Portfolio Holder thanked schools, head teachers and staff for the work they had done in order to deliver education to vulnerable children as well as children of key workers. The Strategic Director Children's Services echoed these comments and stated that the safe opening of schools in the foundation stage was continuing, and that his Service was working closely with schools to ensure safety and viability of the offer, as more schools opened their doors again.

The Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder thanked frontline staff and social workers for their work during this difficult time, stating that a rise of referrals was expected as lockdown measures were eased.

The Strategic Director Adult Services in echoing the above comments, thanked staff for the support offered to those who were shielding and for their work in the care homes, and although infection rates in care homes were under control, our continued support in terms of PPE provision and other advice and support was crucial in order to avoid a spike in cases.

The concern over the deaths in care settings and the potential for spread was a real concern and the care home resilience plan was in place to reduce infection and mortality rates and ensure that the sector was fully supported. To this end a rigorous testing regime was in place, as well as supporting people in their homes.

The Regeneration, Transportation and Planning Portfolio Holder expressed his thanks to the highways team on implementing social distancing measures and signage in the district's towns. The Strategic Director Place stressed the huge impact the pandemic had had on the retail sector, in particular for the hospitality sector and for sole traders. He encouraged businesses that were entitled to Government help to avail themselves of that opportunity. He also stated that a safe transport programme was in place to ensure the safety of the travelling public.

The Director of Finance stated that although the Council would be posting a deficit for this financial year, given the financial pressures associated with the pandemic, the report coming to the Executive in July will address this issue as well as measures to be taken in terms of investment and recovery.

The Leader of the opposition was present at the meeting and asked a number of questions around the role of the Care Quality Commission in terms of care home deaths; the potential for fraud for businesses in receipt of grant funding; and why essential services were taking so long to get up and running again.

In response it was stated that the CQC had stopped their inspection regime, but

were still offering practical guidance and support; in terms of any evidence of potential fraud this should be reported to the relevant authority; and that essential services like traffic wardens had been redeployed to support the work of the Area Hubs and as lockdown eased and retail started to open up again they would be assuming their normal responsibilities.

The Deputy Leader of the opposition group was also present at the meeting and questioned how soon the democratic arrangements would be up and running including meetings of Full Council. In response the City Solicitor advised that many Council Committees were now up and running or had a full schedule of meetings planned. In respect of Full Council, work was on going to establish a safe way to meet, including a hybrid model whereby some members could be present in the Chamber and some Members present remotely.

In response to a question on fly-tipping it was stressed that this was still an offence and any incidents of fly tipping should be reported forthwith. Again Waste and Recycling centres although up and running, were seeing an unprecedented level of demand.

In response to a question on the support offered to those areas of the district which traditionally relied on tourism, the Strategic Director Place echoed the concern expressed and stressed that he would be working closely with the sector to counter the impacts of the pandemic, once lockdown measures were eased.

Councillor Kyle Green suggested that parking charges could be relaxed as the lockdown eased to support the retail sector. In response it was stated that a number of measures would be looked at in order to support businesses going forward, however parking charges were being phased back in by most local authorities.

In response to a question on transition for children with special needs and the potential use of portacabins in mainstream schools, the Strategic Director stated that an appropriate package of measures would be in place in respect of SEND children for the start on September as well as ensuring that the transition for these children was seamless. He added that a range of options would be looked in conjunction with the DfE on how schools can open safely again in September, and the use of portacabins could not be ruled out, where it was deemed viable.

In response to a question on why many schools had remained unopened and why attendance amongst vulnerable children had been poor, the Portfolio Holder stated that the Council had been clear and consistent in its messaging, and working closely with Headteachers to ensure the safety of the Children and staff and the wider community.

The Leader stressed the need to plan for the next five years, and that how we supported education and the business sector as well as the community was a crucial element of this, and that the Executive meeting in July will focus on these issues in particular and how the district can recover from the pandemic, and it was therefore :

Resolved –

- (1) That the contents of the report and the wide ranging activity undertaken by the Council and its partners since 30 April to address the crisis, support the district through lockdown and develop action plans for the easing of lockdown measures be noted.
- (2) That the priorities for the next six months as outlined in paragraphs 5.3 to 5.10 and in Appendix C to Document “BQ” be approved.
- (3) That the Chief Executive be instructed to ensure that the Quarter 1 Financial Position Statement to be reported to the July 2020 meeting of the Executive includes a programme of investment proposals that may be necessary to support adaptation to life with COVID 19 and to lay the foundations for a better future.

ACTION: Chief Executive

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Corporate

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Executive

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER