

## Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held remotely on Thursday, 30 April 2020

Commenced 11.05 am  
Concluded 12.55 pm

### Members of the Executive – Councillors

<b>LABOUR</b>
Hinchcliffe (Chair)
I Khan
Ross-Shaw
Ferriby
Farley

Observers: Councillors Kyle Green, Pennington, Poulsen and J Sunderland.

Apologies: Councillor Jabar

### 119. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency Cllr 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***

### 120. 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)*

### 121. THE RESPONSE TO COVID 19 AND THE FORECAST FINANCIAL IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL INCLUDING DECISIONS TAKEN USING EMERGENCY POWERS

The report of the Chief Executive (**Document “BO”**) provided Members with an overview of the response to Covid 19, and the financial impacts of both government decisions, and the decisions taken locally using emergency powers.

The Leader expressed her immense gratitude to the people of the district for following the Government's advice to stay at home, in order to save lives and protect the NHS. The Leader expressed her deepest condolences on behalf of the Council, to all those in the district who had lost loved ones to the virus, and she stressed that the Council was here to support all its residents during these difficult times.

The Chief Executive gave an overview of the activities the Council was undertaking to support residents and businesses in the district. She highlighted that the Councils' primary role was to manage and lead on the response to Covid 19. To this end the Council was working tirelessly with partners and with the businesses, as well as with the community and voluntary sectors to ensure essential services are kept running and that we supported the most vulnerable and offer businesses the help they needed during these unprecedented times.

She added that as a Council we had made 5 pledges at the outset of the pandemic, namely to:

- Ensuring vulnerable people get the health and care that they need.
- Supporting our communities
- Helping business and workforces to stay resilient
- Maintaining essential services
- Keeping people informed.

To this end a new command structure had been established in order to oversee decision making and to shape and respond to key issues across Council services and across the Bradford District

As a consequence of the pandemic, there had been a huge financial cost to the Council in terms of its ability to generate income and collect revenues and we were now projecting a deficit in the Council's finances for 2020/21.

Strategic Directors gave a brief overview of the activities they were undertaking in their respective service areas during the Pandemic.

The Strategic Director Health and Wellbeing stated that the Service had taken a very proactive approach to contact vulnerable people and offer appropriate help and support where required. 33 rough sleepers had been taken off the street and provided with suitable accommodation. Most aspects of Adult Social Care were

functioning as normal and services enhanced where possible, alluding to the number of people who had passed away in a care setting, she stressed that the Service was determined to offer support and help to ensure there was adequate infection control measures in place in those settings.

In the area of Place the Strategic Director highlighted the community response to the pandemic and how support was being offered to communities via five area based community hubs, with a particular ward level focus. To date the voluntary effort had been excellent particularly in terms of food distribution and home shopping services for the most vulnerable. A number of hardship payments had also been made. The contribution of the community and voluntary sectors was particularly commended and that their support had been vital.

In Children's Services, Children social care and safeguarding arrangements continued to function as normal and a network of teams were in place to deal with cases. Within the schools sector the Service was working closely with schools to ensure the offer was there for the children who still needed to attend and good participation rates had been reported, where vulnerable children were not attending this was being followed up. As and when schools reopen, the improvement work will continue in earnest and forward planning measures were in place.

The Leader stressed that the Ofsted improvement journey should continue in earnest.

In the area of Corporate Services, the Strategic Director alluded to the governance arrangements that had been put in place during the pandemic to ensure there was a robust response as well as measures in place to safeguard staff. To this end a number of service changes had been made in terms of redeployment and homeworking. An important aspect of the work was ensuring that there were adequate supply of PPE equipment and that they were deployed to staff who required them. Testing Centres for Covid 19 were now up and running in the district. There was an impetus to move the democratic process and decision making to a virtual meetings platform and work was in hand to ensure that training and equipment were in place to facilitate this. 7,600 businesses had been supported through the business support grants with £82.5m of financial help provided to date.

The leader paid tribute to all Council staff who had gone above and beyond the call of duty to provide continuity and support the vulnerable.

The Director of Finance expanded on the support that was being offered to businesses in the district. The current situation was also having a profound impact on the Council's revenue stream as a consequence of the lockdown measures. As had been alluded to, the Council was looking at posting a deficit and despite the financial assistance from Government, there would still be a shortfall.

In response the Leader stressed that we awaited the Governments decision on how much money would be provided to the Council in the 2<sup>nd</sup> tranche, however this amount had to be adequate and that the Council should not have to suffer financially.

A number of Councillors were present at the virtual meeting to ask specific questions about the pandemic, the Councils response and issues affecting their wards. Their questions together with the responses are set out below:

Councillor Poulsen was present and she asked the following questions:

She thanked Council staff and all other key workers who have been working so hard over the last few weeks. Many were working in unfamiliar roles and with new procedures to follow and were doing an amazing job.

She ascertained if an update could be provided on how many businesses had received business support grants and how many applications were still outstanding. Could you reassure local businesses who were struggling for funds how long it will be until they receive support.

In response it was stated there was a recognition of how distressing the coronavirus situation was for everyone including the local businesses community. However the Council was doing everything it could to support local businesses and getting the money out as quickly as was practicable.

All businesses that had not responded to have been written to, to ask for them to complete the online form.

Officers were working flat out to get these grants to businesses as quickly as possible and have been working long days, through weekends and bank holidays. The Council would continue to do this until all those that are entitled and have provided their details are paid.

That there was anecdotal evidence that an increasing number of drivers of cars, quad bikes and motorbikes that were using the quieter roads as race tracks. This was a big issue on country roads with no pavements where people were taking their daily exercise. What was the council doing with the police to tackle this anti-social driving.

In response it was stated that officers were hastily considering a package of measures that accelerated the programmes delivering speed limit reductions across Bradford. The Council was also working with the police both at a local and West Yorkshire level to support our partners in this time of strained delivery due to the national crisis.

Can you provide an update over the re-opening of the waste recycling centres? Like other councillors I am receiving daily reports of large scale fly tipping. How are the enforcement teams working to track down offenders?"

In response it was stated that the Council was working with the other West Yorkshire Waste Authorities, in preparation for re-opening our HWRC when Government guidance is received that enables us to do so. It is hoped that further guidance will be issued this week and we will be in a position to react quickly if and when this happens.

In addition the Environmental Enforcement Team were continuing to investigate cases of fly tipping where evidence was available. In addition we were continuing

to work with our CCTV provider to identify and place cameras at emerging fly tipping locations.

Councillor Kyle Green was present and he asked the following questions:

The executive will be aware that Ilkley Lido is a recreational facility that (in part) operates seasonally. Can the executive advise what support will be given to the Lido regarding outstanding loans and any other financial implications that arise due to loss of revenue because of the current coronavirus pandemic.

In response it was stated that the work at Ilkley Lido was partly funded by Corporate borrowing with repayments from the service, as the work is not yet complete there is no payment due in financial year 2020/2021.

That those in the library services would be keen to see residents continue to make use of the online facilities provided by the libraries, so can the Executive advise what has been done to promote these services?

In response it was stated that online services have been promoted in our Libraries Newsletter, which goes out to c18,000 customers. They have also been included in wider Council Newsletters to the public. In addition they have also been promoted via our Social Media channels, mainly Facebook and Twitter.

Fly tipping is never acceptable, however, some people are using the closure of council waste sites to try and justify fly tipping. Can the council advise whether Golden Butts will be among the first sites to re open given the fact it serves Addingham, Ilkley, Burley and a number of other towns and villages in the north of the district.

In response it was stated that the Council has carefully considering which HWRC can be opened safely to protect staff, residents using the site and residents not using the site. To that end the only sites that will be opened initially are sites where we know we can effectively manage any traffic management issues. We are currently assessing sites and, when Government guidance is released, will produce a plan for phased re-opening of HWRCs.

Teachers and others involved in the provision of education have been performing amazing work in difficult circumstances. Can the Executive advise what plans are being considered to help children who are starting school for the first time or moving to secondary school do this as seamlessly as possible given the potential difficulty schools face in supporting this transition? This question is particularly pertinent to SEND children who often need additional support in doing this.

In response it was stated that in this current climate, we do not know when schools are likely to re-open, either partially or fully. The Local Authority has been involved, this week, in a national information gathering exercise which is looking at pulling together evidence and information on the safest and best way to re-open schools. Part of this work involved a discussion on the transition of children from pre-school to reception, primary to secondary and secondary to post-16. It is clear that there are no easy answers or solutions to this, as each option has knock on implications which need to be considered, assessed and managed.

In the meantime, schools were continuing to engage with all children to support their education. For those that are due to transition to a secondary school, work is being undertaken in many schools to try to support children to be ready by doing exercises that explore feelings around changing schools, looking at what children are excited about, what they may be worried about and then talking through worries. However, it is widely acknowledged that it is important for children to have opportunities to become physically familiar with their new school, which can only be done when they are able to attend. This has been fed into the national information gathering exercise and it is hoped that this will be given due consideration when a decision is made on the re-opening of schools for these age groups.

Councillor Sunderland was also present and she asked the following questions:

Will the Executive consider changes to the Council Tax policy such as withdrawing the right to pay by instalments if residents don't pay their Council Tax on time, or suspending the processes of issuing a summons for payments which add additional costs onto the amounts outstanding.

In response it was stated that the action to withdraw the right to pay by instalments is part of the statutory legislation used to enforce non payment of Council Tax. As such, this cannot be changed as it is not a policy decision.

However it was stressed that people who are experiencing difficulty in paying their Council Tax in any circumstance are given every opportunity to make alternative arrangements, however those who are unaffected financially at the moment are being encouraged to continue to pay.

It was also stressed that the Council had not taken any enforcement or court action since the beginning of the pandemic and this is under constant monitoring and review.

The Council also introduced a hardship fund, which provides an additional £150 to all those households in receipt of Council Tax Reduction; this includes all existing and new claimants. As a precursor to this being awarded we have contacted all recipients and told them they need not pay until they hear from us.

A decision has been taken to suspend the issuing of invoices towards the cost of care. Is the Council forgoing this income or will charges be back-dated once normal administrative arrangements are resumed? If the decision is to back-date these charges then will the Executive re-consider the decision and waive these charges?

In response it was stated that a decision was taken with the Strategic Director to temporarily cease invoicing for community care services, to ensure we could fully assess the impact of lockdown on the delivery of these services, (day care , home care etc).

What percentage of the total number of business in Bradford does 4600 business represent and how many businesses have been considered to be ineligible? What made those businesses ineligible and will you consider establishing a hardship fund to support those businesses?

In response it was stated that there are around 19,000 business properties in the Bradford District, with around 11,000 possibly being entitled to a grant and rate relief.

The government has also set out those that are eligible in its Grant Funding Scheme – Guidance for Local Authorities document, which officers are working to.

Will the Executive consider restarting the bulky waste collection service so that residents do not accumulate large amounts of waste materials in their homes which is not only unpleasant for people but represents a potential risk to health and safety, particularly from fire?

In response it was stated that there have been negotiations with one of our Contractors to resume this service. Agreement has been reached and the service subject to finalisation of certain details, will resume delivery very soon. The decision not to use our in-house service was taken due to a number of reasons, adjustments required for Covid-19 and staff availability as we need to ensure domestic collections of residual and recycling continue.

In response to a question from the Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder in respect of Covid 19 testing of frontline staff, the Strategic Director Health and Wellbeing stated that testing at the Marley site indicated that of those tested so far, around half were from a care setting and she was hopeful that all frontline staff would have access to the testing.

In response to a question on PPE, it was stated that despite some early setbacks, the Council was managing to deploy PPE to where it was needed.

The Children's and Families Portfolio Holder ascertained what measures were in place to deal with the issue of online grooming at the current time. The Strategic Director Children's Services explained that awareness raising was being undertaken with schools to ensure IT safety at home, however a rise in the number of referrals were expected.

In response to a question on a drop in school attendance for vulnerable children, it was stated that a range of approaches were being adopted to address this issue, including letter drops encouraging children to attend as well as working with individual schools and Children's Social care where appropriate.

In response to a question on the progress being made on the Ofsted improvement journey, the Strategic Director stressed that this improvement work had not stopped and plans were being devised to ensure work continued in earnest, once lockdown measures were eased.

The Leader stressed that the focus in the coming weeks and months would be to think about the future of the district, post lockdown and ensure that the district recovered swiftly and continued on its regeneration journey, but at the same time ensuring safety by good practice of safe distancing measures.

To this end we will continue to lobby Government to ensure that the right financial package of measures were provided to the Council to continue its work, and that this Executive will continue to report on the actions it was taking to deal with the pandemic, and it was therefore :

**Resolved -**

- (1) That all Council staff and everyone involved across all sectors, in the NHS, in statutory services and VCS, in our communities and in our businesses be thanked for their incredible efforts to tackle the emergency.**
- (2) That the contents of Document “BO” and the actions taken to manage the issues highlighted be noted.**
- (3) That the on-going financial and resource implications to the Council of tackling the emergency be recognised, and requests that a monitoring report be brought to each subsequent meeting of the Executive, providing details of on-going costs and approvals sought for necessary expenditure.**
- (4) That a temporary one off payment to support the Care Sector at a cost of £1.3m as outlined in Para 4.14 to Document “BO” be approved, and that decisions regarding the release of further funding be delegated to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Strategic Director of Health & Wellbeing and the Portfolio Holder.**
- (5) That in relation to the to the Food Supply Chain as outlined in Para 5.5 to Document “BO”, decisions regarding the release of further funding be delegated to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Strategic Director of Place and the Portfolio Holder.**
- (6) That an on-going dialogue be maintained between the Council and the Government, in order to make the case to national decision makers for the impact of Covid-19 to be funded nationally with neutral impact on Council budgets.**
- (7) Requests that the Chief Executive prepares a further report to the Executive on 9 June 2020 setting out plans and proposals for the recovery of Bradford District from the impact of Covid-19.**

***ACTION: Chief Executive / Director of Finance and Strategic Directors Place and Health and Wellbeing***

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