

BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held as a Remote Virtual Meeting on 4 June 2020 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors M. A. Brunt (Leader), T. Schofield (Deputy Leader), T. Archer, R. H. Ashford, R. Biggs, N. J. Bramhall, E. Humphreys, G. J. Knight, V. H. Lewanski, M. S. Blacker, J. C. S. Essex, N. D. Harrison and S. Sinden

Also present: Councillors M. S. Blacker, J. C. S. Essex, N. D. Harrison and S. Sinden.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 27 February 2020 be approved as a correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Horwood.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. TO AGREE A START TIME FOR MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE.

RESOLVED: That the start time for meetings of the Executive be 19:30.

5. COVID-19: OUR RESPONSE TO DATE

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Brunt, presented a summary of the Council's response to the COVID-19 emergency.

The Leader firstly set out the **Community Support** response as follows:

- A Community Support Centre had been established at the Harlequin
- 1,359 emergency food packages, 2,209 hot meals and 291 prescriptions had been delivered to residents
- 19,450 items had been provided to food banks and charities
- The Council had worked with Voluntary Action Reigate and Banstead to co-ordinate 900 new volunteers
- 47 extra households had been housed in temporary accommodation
- 4,162 residents that were shielding had been contacted, 106 befriending calls had been made each week, and 1,299 helpline calls had been answered and callers assisted
- Council tax hardship support had been provided and residents had been helped to access Universal Credit and money support services
- £20.8m of business grants had been distributed to 1,570 businesses
- An additional business discretionary fund had been established.

The Leader then explained how the Council had **responded to the impact of lockdown** as follows:

Around the Borough

- Waste and recycling collections (except for green waste) were ongoing with collection weights up by 30%
- There had been an 80% increase in fly-tipping incidents that had to be cleared
- Parks had remained open
- The Council had strengthened capacity at Redstone Cemetery

Across the Council

- Approximately 250 staff were working remotely
- Over 90% of staff were able to work
- Around 90 staff had been fully or partially redeployed to support the emergency response effort.

The Leader conveyed his sincere thanks to all staff involved in the response, from the IT team to the Greenspaces team, and felt that residents had re-discovered the role of the Council in the community. Councillor Knight expressed his thanks to the Housing team; and Councillor Humphreys thanked the Economic Prosperity and Revenues teams for their support to local businesses.

The Executive Member for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Schofield presented a summary of the impact of the COVID-19 emergency on the Council's finances and income:

- £1.56m of funding had been received from the Government and Surrey County Council
- The estimated COVID-19 response costs were £1.18m
- The estimated loss of income associated with COVID-19 was £2.26m
- The Council had been compensated for income lost due to business rate reliefs
- £0.75m had been received for additional Council Tax hardship relief, however increased demand for relief could amount to £1.46m
- Potential business rate and council tax losses (arrears) were £5.81m (council tax losses would be shared by the precepting authorities).

Councillor Schofield stated his thanks to the Finance team for their work and concluded that the Council was able to demonstrate that it was in a robust financial position.

The Leader invited questions and comments from Visiting Members, which were responded to as follows:

- Councillor Bramhall clarified that the increase in fly-tipping had included waste being left outside closed charity shops and community recycling centres.
- The Leader explained that the local public health response to the Government's *Test and Trace* service would be co-ordinated by Surrey County Council

- In response to an observation about the lack of protective screens at the East Surrey hospital outpatient's department, the Leader explained that he would raise the matter in conversation with the Chief Executive of the Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
- The Leader would liaise with Surrey County Council about the cancellation of the Reigate and Banstead Local Committee meeting, scheduled for June; and
- The Executive were supportive of learning from the crisis and emphasised the positive impact that remote meetings had on mitigating the environmental impact of the Council. It was confirmed that recruitment was ongoing for a role to lead on the Council's approach to addressing climate change.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

6. COVID-19: OUR RECOVERY WORKSTREAMS

The Executive Member for Finance, and Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Schofield introduced the Council's approach to recovery from the COVID-19 emergency.

Councillor Schofield set out five workstreams:

- Community connections, including supporting vulnerable residents
- Supporting local businesses and the local economy to recover
- Council services and project recovery
- Finances and income to fund future services
- New ways of working and models of service delivery

The workstreams would operate through three *indicative* phases:

- Phase one: Transformation (June to July)
- Phase two: Strategic recovery (June to December)
- Phase three: (September to March and beyond)

Councillor Schofield explained that the first phase would not mean a return to business as usual; but would focus on support for vulnerable people, supporting readiness for the lifting of lockdown measures, sustaining the delivery of statutory and high-priority services, and supporting staff to deliver services safely.

The second and third phases of recovery meant that the purpose of the Council would remain the same, but the way it prioritised, targeted and delivered its activities would change. There would be new opportunities and challenges to explore and those would be reflected in service and financial planning for 2021/22.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would consider the Council's response and recovery at its meeting in June, where a recovery Panel would be established to review and make recommendations on the Council's approach. Members would continue to receive weekly briefings by the Leader and a report would be received at the next meeting of the Executive.

In response to a comment from a Visiting Member, the Leader was confident that the Council was agile enough in its approach to recovery to mitigate the impact of any future spike in COVID-19 cases.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

7. STATEMENTS

There were none.

8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

9. EXEMPT BUSINESS

There was no exempt business.

The Meeting closed at 8.22pm