

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 31 March 2021

Present

Councillors Lloyd (Chairman), Briggs, Carpenter, Crellin, Francis (Vice-Chairman), Howard, Jenner, Milne, Robinson, Sceal, Scott and Weeks

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Bains and Kennett.

2 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements.

4 Work Programme

The Committee's Work Programme was noted.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be approved.

5 Review of the Council's Response to the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Committee received five reports completed by Task & Finish groups regarding the Council's response to the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The reviews were carried out in 2020 by the three scrutiny boards: Governance, Audit & Finance, Operations and Place Shaping Board and the Business & Commercial Services Board.

The Chairman introduced the two reports of the Task and Finish groups which she had chaired. These had considered the council's Communications within the first wave of the Covid 19 pandemic and its delivery of Community Support within the first wave. There were no specific recommendations within the first of these reports, as they were included within the community support report. It was noted that recommendations 1,2,3,4,7,8 and 9 of the report had been implemented by the Council during the period that the Review was being undertaken. Recommendation 10 had been superseded by events, and she proposed that it was unnecessary that this recommendation be made. It was agreed that recommendations 1 to 9 within the report be approved and submitted to Cabinet.

Councillor Briggs introduced the report from the Task & Finish Groups on Financial Implications to the Council of the first wave of the Covid 19 pandemic. The Board had looked at all the financial transactions that had been undertaken by the Council, as set out in the report. He asked that paragraph 6.5.3.5 in the report be highlighted to Cabinet. This paragraph suggested that, in the event of more staff continuing to work from home after the pandemic, the Council could seek to maximise potential commercial income by letting out the empty spaces in the Plaza. He went on to say that the second report produced had considered the Council's Service Delivery within the first pandemic wave.

Councillor Patrick presented the report from the Task & Finish panel on staff and wellbeing during the first wave of the pandemic. In reply to a question regarding the percentage of the workforce who had responded to the survey which had taken place as part of this Review, The Chief Finance Officer said that the 61% response rate was both representative of the staff and proportionate. In reply to a further question, she went on to say that all staff were encouraged to talk to their team leaders regarding their home working situation, but that the current Government guidance was that if people could work from home, then they should do so. The council would pilot a new ways of working programme after the current lockdown restrictions were due to be lifted in June. This programme would offer a blended way of working, to include both home and office based options for staff.

RESOLVED: That the following recommendations from the reports be approved and submitted to Cabinet:

- 1) The Council should create a watertight plan of campaign to deal with any future Coronavirus wave or similar emergency, and this plan should then be signed off by the CEO and Senior Management so that they are fully aware of the plans in place and what their roles would be in any future emergency.
- 2) The Capita contract should be overhauled to include any such future event, allowing flexibility to the work contract so that both Capita and the Council are prepared for any further grants that may be given, so that the public know that they can rely on the system in place and have the Council's full support.
- 3) Officers, not Capita, should have the empowerment to make decisions.
- 4) Any future contracts are set up to have more flexibility in them in order to face any unexpected emergencies.
- 5) Contractors should not make statements on behalf of the Council without the Council's permission and approval.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (31.3.21)

- 6) All businesses in the Borough should have a ratings number and that ratings list, which currently is not up to date, should be updated at regular intervals.
- 7) The overall communication of officers/Capita with the public would not have caused so many problems if they had set up extensive internet information so that questions could be provided and answered more easily.
- 8) A register of all community volunteer groups is drawn up - which includes the contact details of each group's coordinator – and is retained and reviewed–quarterly to ensure there is, at all times, a current list of any and all volunteer groups operating in the borough who could provide support to vulnerable residents.
- 9) A 'go to' document that showed best practices to be adopted by volunteers supporting vulnerable residents be produced in readiness for distribution to any and all community groups taking on this role in the borough to avoid piece-meal and late distribution of information.
- 10) Every ward councillor be made aware quarterly and again in the event of any emergency which required support to be given to vulnerable residents, of the information in the document, so they can act as a resource of information for volunteer coordinators.
- 11) During a period of community support, data showing the number of vulnerable residents being supported in each ward, or by each community volunteer group if they are covering more than one ward, is gathered on a weekly basis so that a complete picture of the extent of volunteer activity is known for ongoing and future planning purposes.
- 12) Text for a piece of printed communication material, such as a flyer, be drafted in readiness containing the information residents will need about how to access support if they find themselves requiring assistance during a period of restricted movement in the community.
- 13) The printed communication should be printed and distributed to every household in areas of the borough that become subject to any national or local restrictions of movement in the community, at the earliest possible time to ensure everyone receives the same message, especially those residents who cannot use the internet.
- 14) Communication with councillors be made as soon as is feasible once any restrictions on movement in the community are agreed, giving them the detailed information about how support will be given to their residents.
- 15) Once councillors are given the information about how support in the community will be given in their ward, they should liaise with the relevant group / organisation in order to play their part signposting,

advising and generally helping volunteer groups to support their residents. This should be encouraged by the Leader of the Council.

- 16) Councillors be included in the welfare checks. The Cabinet Lead for 'People' should ensure this happens in the event of any local or national emergency.
- 17) The current arrangements for emergency planning, including business continuity planning, be endorsed.
- 18) That the arrangements put in place to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's health and wellbeing support to staff during the pandemic be endorsed.
- 19) That the current arrangements, including the appointment of a Client Relationship Director and Head of Strategic Commissioning, for ensuring that our commercial partnerships and contracts deliver efficient and cost effective services to residents be endorsed
- 20) That a reasonable balance is struck with staff working safely in the Plaza and that management is not overly cautious by allowing too many staff to work from home.

6 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be 23rd June at 5pm.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 5.35 pm