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HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

Joint Scrutiny Board

22 June 2020

**Response to coronavirus / COVID-19 Pandemic
Report by Head of Legal**

FOR DECISION

Cabinet Lead: Leader of the Council, Cllr Michael Wilson

Key Decision: No

Report No:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 Cabinet has requested that the Governance, Audit and Finance Board consider the Council's response to the coronavirus / COVID-19 pandemic and the role of Scrutiny in contributing to the longer-term approach to 'recovery'

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the Governance, Audit and Finance Board note the council's response to the coronavirus / COVID-19 pandemic and submit its comments on the draft report to Cabinet meeting scheduled for 1 July 2020.

2.2 To create a task and finish group to include members and non-members of the Board and to invite the other Scrutiny Boards to consider their approach on how to undertake a review of the Council's response to the pandemic and submit their recommendations to be co-ordinated via to the Governance, Audit and Finance Board by the end of August 2020 for onward submission to Cabinet.

3.0 Summary

3.1 The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK has presented an unprecedented challenge requiring an immediate and fast-paced response from the Council and its partners in tackling the one of the most significant challenges faced by society in living memory.

3.2 This attached draft Cabinet report seeks to precis this response and highlight some of the main activities and issues. The Cabinet is keen to ensure the Council's COVID-19 response was effective and timely hence the recommendation to this Board to review the Council's response to date and a request that the Board consider how scrutiny can contribute to a longer-term approach to recovery.

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4.0 Summary of the Council's Response to the Pandemic

4.1 The Covid-19 response is co-ordinated by five workstreams, directed and overseen by the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team:

- (a) Community Support;
- (b) Business Support;
- (c) Staffing;
- (d) Communications; and
- (e) Finance

4.2 The strategic objectives of the Council's response were:

- (a) to support the most vulnerable in our community;
- (b) to support local businesses and administer support packages as set out by central government;
- (c) to maintain delivery of council services and in particular to protect critical service delivery;
- (d) to move to remote working for those staff who can work from home and to maintain a safe environment for those working at the Plaza or in the community;
- (e) to keep all stakeholders informed and to signpost the support available; and
- (f) to monitor the Council's finances and take the actions required to ensure financial sustainability in the short, medium and long term.

4.3 Full details of the Council's response are set out in the attached draft Cabinet report.

5.0 The Role of Scrutiny

5.1 The Cabinet have invited the Governance, Audit and Finance Board to provide a critical friend challenge to Council's response to date and in doing so voice the concerns of constituents. Any comments made by the Governance, Audit and Finance Board will be reported to Cabinet when it meets on 1 July 2020 to consider the final report.

5.2 One of the main principles of good scrutiny is to drive improvements. The Cabinet has therefore requested that the Governance, Audit and Finance Board undertake a more thorough review of the Council's actions with a view of improving the Council's response in the long term. The review to include a review of the economic recovery plan. The options available to the Board are:

Option 1: Do Nothing. This option is the simplest and requires little resource.

Option 2: A review be undertaken by the Board alone.

Option 3: The Council's three scrutiny boards undertake separate reviews of the Council's response in relation to the services within their remit and submit recommendations to Cabinet.

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Option 4: The Council's three scrutiny boards undertake separate reviews of the Council's response in relation to the services within their remit and submit their findings to the Governance, Audit and Finance Board, who will then submit the final recommendations to Cabinet.

Option 5: The Governance Audit and Finance Board establish a task and finish panel to undertake separate reviews on topics it wishes to focus on. This panel to submit their findings to the Governance, Audit and Finance Board, which will then submit the final recommendations to Cabinet.

OPTION	FOR	AGAINST
1	Simple and requires little resource.	Does not acknowledge the need to seek improvements to the Council's response. Could be perceived as a missed opportunity for the Council to take advantage of the experience and knowledge of all members of the Council when designing its response to a long- term recovery. There may be a higher risk of any existing inefficiencies remaining.
2	This will provide a complete and coordinated review of the Council's response, remove errors and omissions, inconsistencies and statutory shortfalls.	This option limits the process to a smaller group of members, potentially losing out on some expertise. A smaller group of members may take longer to complete the work, as would the need to comply with the provisions of Local Government Act 1972 when summoning meetings of the Boards.
3	This will provide a complete review of the Council's response, remove errors and omissions, inconsistencies and statutory shortfalls	There is a risk of some duplication of work and lack of coordination. This option may be costly, time consuming for officers and less timely due to the requirement for the Council to comply with the provisions of the Council to comply with the provisions of Local Government Act 1972 when summoning meetings of the

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		Boards.
4	This will provide a complete and coordinated review of the Council's response, remove errors and omissions, inconsistencies and statutory shortfalls	High risk of a duplication of work. This option will be costly, time consuming for officers and slow requiring the Council to comply with the provisions of the Council to comply with the provisions of Local Government Act 1972 when summoning meetings of the Boards.
5	This will provide a complete and coordinated review of the Council's response, remove errors and omissions, inconsistencies and statutory shortfalls. This option will be less costly and time consuming for officers. Such a review will be more flexible and faster than using formal Boards as there will be no need to comply with the access to information provisions when summoning meetings of the panels.	There will be a cost and resource impact

6.0 Implications

6.1 Resources:

A review will inevitably have a cost and resource impact on the Council. The scale of the impact will be dependent upon the type of review chosen by the Board (see 5.0 above). It is envisaged these additional costs can be met within the existing budget.

6.2 Legal:

The Council is a 1st tier emergency responder in a civil emergency. The emergency response is coordinated through the local resilience forum (LRF). The County, District and Borough Councils have agreements in place which help us to set out the relevant roles and responsibilities of each Council in an emergency. This reflects the different obligations such as social care provision, or housing that fall to each Council. The statutory obligations remain, and they are overlaid with additional obligations such as administering grants and assisting in the coordination of volunteers. All these obligations create potential additional legal implications for the Council.

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6.3 Strategy:

The Council's response to Covid 19 should contribute towards the Council's five Priorities:

- Economic growth
- Public service excellence
- Financial sustainability
- Environmental sustainability
- Creativity and Innovation

6.4 Risks:

The Council is maintaining a dedicated risk register for Covid-19 which is updated on a regular basis and which details risk and mitigations taken in managing the emerging risks. This is in addition to the normal risk management procedures in place. The Covid Risk Register can be found at *Appendix 15 of the draft Cabinet report*

6.5 Communications:

The communications strategy is set out in Appendix 11 of the draft Cabinet Report.

6.6 For the Community:

The pandemic and the lockdown introduced to control the spread of the virus has had profound impacts on Council operations as well as the way local enterprises function and residents and community groups behave. The Council's response should aim to ease this impact.

6.7 **The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been completed and is set out in Appendix 16 of the draft Cabinet Report**

7.0 Consultation

N/A

Appendices:

Appendix A – Draft Cabinet Report

Background Papers: *None*

Agreed and signed off by:

Head of Legal Services: 12 June 2020

Contact Officer: David Brown
Job Title: Head of Legal
Telephone: 02392 446524
E-Mail: David.brown@easthants.gov.uk