

Cabinet

Minutes of extraordinary meeting held remotely on 7 May 2020 at 3.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Zoe Nicholson (Chair)

Councillors James MacCleary (Vice-Chair), Matthew Bird, Julie Carr, Chris Collier, Johnny Denis, William Meyer, Emily O'Brien and Ruth O'Keeffe

Officers in attendance:

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Homira Javadi (Chief Finance Officer), Philip Evans (Director of Tourism & Enterprise), Ian Fitzpatrick (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning), Tim Whelan (Director of Service Delivery), Becky Cooke (Assistant Director for Human Resources and Transformation), Peter Finnis (Assistant Director for Corporate Governance), Catherine Knight (Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services), Lee Banner (Transformation Programme Manager), Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Jane McCarthy-Penman (Lead on Commercial Business Activities/Projects), Rachel Read (Project Co-ordinator) and Simon Russell (Committee and Civic Services Manager)

Also in attendance:

Councillor Isabelle Linington (Leader of the Opposition), Councillor Joe Miller (Chair of Scrutiny Committee) and Councillor Julian Peterson (Chair of Audit and Standards Committee)

66 Welcome

The Chair, Councillor Nicholson welcomed all to the first virtual meeting of the Cabinet, held remotely in accordance with Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and section 13 of the related regulations. Thanks were conveyed to officers for their work in implementing remote meetings.

67 Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020 were submitted and approved and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

68 Apologies for absence

None were reported.

69 Declarations of interest

None were declared.

70 Council response to Covid-19

The Cabinet considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning, updating them on the establishment and operation of a Community Hub and other changes in business operation to respond to community needs as a result of the Covid-10 pandemic.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Nicholson and Cabinet members, Councillors Carr, Collier, Denis, MacCleary, Meyer and O'Brien presented the report covering the various areas of the Council's response. This included creation of the Community Hub to distribute food parcels to vulnerable people, the Business Grants Portal going live and response from council services including IT, human resources, customer contact, housing benefit, Homes First and Environment First.

The Cabinet and visiting members praised the community across the District and officer response to the pandemic.

Since publication of the report, the Director of Service Delivery, clarified that 1,568 business had now taken advantage of the business grants scheme, equating to the payment of £19.2 million in grants. 43 charities in the District with retail outlets had been identified as being eligible for the grants and their details had been forwarded to 3VA. The Director of Service Delivery also provided an update on the Rough Sleeper Initiative and confirmed that 35 individuals in Lewes District were currently in emergency accommodation.

Resolved (Non-key decision):

To note the contents of the report.

Reason for decision:

The Community Hub has been an important part of the council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic locally and this report updates the Cabinet on progress, performance and next steps in this work. The report also provides a summary of the impact of the pandemic across the council's business, focusing on the support provided to staff and on those areas most affected by current circumstances.

71 Initial financial assessment of Covid-19

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer, updating them on the initial financial impact of Covid-19, summary of the local government funding announced to date and associated budgetary implications.

The report detailed that it was estimated that additional costs, including delayed savings programmes, arising from Covid-19 could be as high as

£380,000 per week should the lockdown continue and result in a long-term economic downturn.

It is forecasted that the council could see a reduction of £11.57 million in fees and income this year, whilst its costs could increase by £8.254 million.

Financial updates would be provided to the Cabinet, Audit and Standards Committee and Policy Performance and Advisory Committee on an ongoing basis.

Resolved (Non-key decision):

(1) To note the initial financial impact of Covid-19 and associated vulnerability of the authority's budget.

(2) To note the assumptions being made about the ongoing financial impact of Covid-19

Reason for decision:

The Council's response to Covid-19 has been and continues to be fast paced. Budgetary assumptions are liable to change and are only given as an indication. This report provides a position statement at this time to keep Cabinet informed.

The meeting ended at 4.21 pm

Councillor Zoe Nicholson (Chair)