

COVID 19 – EMERGENCY POWERS GROUP

In attendance: Councillor D Jones (in the Chair)
Councillor N Jones
Councillor T Pickstone
Councillor J Mason
Councillor R Caserta
Councillor S Smith
Dr J Schryer (CCG representative)

Officers: G Little – Chief Executive
L Ridsdale - Deputy Chief Executive
J Witkowski – Head of Legal Services
J Gallagher – Democratic Services Manager

**Apologies for
Absence** Councillor A Simpson and T Tariq

1. MEETING BRIEFING PAPER

Members discussed the contents of a briefing note the purpose of which was to highlight the impact on council decision making in light of COVID-19 and suggests a way forward to ensure good governance and transparency during this period. The proposed revised governance will include the establishment of the COVID 19 Emergency Powers Group; cancellation of non business critical meetings and the use of special urgency powers in accordance with the Constitution.

It was agreed:

- Note, business critical decisions, scheduled to be considered at the March meeting of Cabinet will now be taken in accordance with the Council Constitutions special urgency provision.
- Scheduled Meetings of Cabinet and Regulatory Committees due to be held in April will be reviewed once the Council has been informed of the outcome of the government’s emergency legislation.
- In accordance with the Constitution it is proposed that a COVID 19 – Emergency Powers Group be established.
- Note the Officer Delegation Scheme, as agreed by Full Council on 18 March authorises that the Chief Executive and Executive Directors are able to take any necessary action, including the incurring of expenditure in connection with an emergency or disaster in the Borough. If it is necessary for the Chief Executive/Executive Directors to exercise this power under the delegation all decisions will be reported into the Covid 19 Emergency Powers Group as soon as is practicable
- Note the Cancellation of all mayoral engagements, to be reviewed again at the end of April.

2 UPDATE ON COVID 19

Geoff Little, Chief Executive Officer, provide members with an update with regards to the Borough-Wide response to the pandemic and included details of the robust Council plan as well as the six key objectives:

- To support the NHS and social care to cope with the demands on their services.
- To keep providing the essential services the Council provides to the people and businesses of Bury.
- To help to reduce transmission of the coronavirus
- To support our workforce in all parts of the Council and the CCG
- To support volunteers and community action to help residents who are isolated and in need of help.
- Supporting the economy of Bury and businesses.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

3. SUPPORT FOR THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Geoff Little, Chief Executive and Paul Lakin, Executive Director Economic Regeneration presented a paper to update Members of the current and the potential actions that can be triggered locally by the Council to provide critical support to the business community.

Options include, Council Tax Payment Holiday, Commercial Properties Temporary Rent Waiver; Bury Market Rent Waiver; Suspend Debt Chasing; Immediate payment terms for suppliers and a Hardship fund.

It was agreed:

That in accordance with the Council Constitution Special Urgency procedure, the Chair of Scrutiny and the Group Leaders agreed that the Support for the Business Community Report could not reasonably be deferred.

A decision notice will be published on the Council website.

4. COMMUNITY HUBS

Lynne Ridsdale, the Deputy Chief Executive provided members with an update with regards to the establishment of the community Hubs. The report included details of the HUB locations, identification of those most vulnerable; the HUB teams; outcomes and key performance indicators; engagement with HUBS

It was agreed:

Lynne Ridsdale be thanked for the work her and other Council staff have undertaken in establishing the Community Hubs.

5. HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE UPDATE

Geoff Little provided an Health and Social Care update. An accompanying paper outlined key work that Health and Care system in Bury have planned and are doing in response to COVID19. The three key areas are:

- 1) How are we supporting the hospitals (Fairfield) to cope with the extra demand for critical care services?
- 2) How are we all doing our part in reducing the risk of transmission – delaying pressure on the hospitals
- 3) How are we co-ordinating social care/primary care/community health services?

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

6. BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Lynne Ridsdale Deputy Chief Executive provided members with an overview of the work that has been undertaken in respect of Business Continuity. All services have reviewed and updated their Business Continuity Plans taking account of the 6 key principle areas: Staff, Accommodation, Information, Technology, Stakeholders and Suppliers. A COVID-19 review has been undertaken by OCO Gold of Priority 1 Services (Critical Services) that are required to remain operational.

The increasing impact upon staffing levels and service provision from COVID-19 has meant that services not only invoking their individual continuity plans against increasing staff absence but also having to respond to a much wider strategic challenge. This will be led through the OCO Gold Team by reducing less essential services / functions within Priority 2/3 Services in order to free up available staff/resources to support more critical Priority 1 Services.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

7. SUPPORT TO WORKFORCE AND COUNCILLORS

Lynne Ridsdale, Deputy Chief Executive, provided Members with an overview of the workforce policy and support offer to Council staff in the context of the current emergency response. The proposed workforce policy, drafted in consultation with the Trade Unions addresses:

- the requirement to work from home where practicable
- risk assessment arrangements for those who cannot work from home
- arrangements in the case of workplace closure, including schools
- redeployment arrangements to move staff between priority areas of work where necessary
- staff absence reporting arrangements
- the staff support offer
- a temporary extended carer's leave offer

A comprehensive Employee Assistance Programme has also been sourced

It was agreed:

It is recommended that the workforce policy and Employee Assistance Programme be approved for implementation

8. SPECIAL URGENCY PROVISION

It was agreed:

That in accordance with the Council Constitution's Special Urgency procedure, the Chair of Scrutiny and the Group Leaders agreed that the following decisions: Support for Bury FC and Progression of the Five Council Owned Sites for Housing Development could not be reasonably be deferred.

A decision notice will be published on the Council website.

COUNCILLOR D JONES
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 4pm and ended at 5.30pm.)