

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 A Simpson
Councillor T Tariq

Officers: G Little – Chief Executive
L Ridsdale – Deputy Chief Executive
J Witkowski – Head of Legal Services
L Kitto – Interim Deputy Finance Officer
J Gallagher – Democratic Services Manager

**Apologies for
Absence** Dr J Schryer (CCG representative)

1. UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF THE EMERGENCY

Geoff Little provided an overview of work being undertaken across the Council and Health and social care sectors to address the Covid 19 emergency. The update including information in relation to testing, personal protective equipment, enforcement and peak infection data. Colleagues in health and social care would continue work up stress testing plans to try and predict and plan for maybe several peaks in infection, as well as the lockdown being lifted and re-imposed. A proportion of the Council's workforce have been redeployed to support the Community HUBS and the contact centre.

Members sought assurances that there was sufficient PPE equipment for the Boroughs Care Homes.

The Interim Finance Officer reported that 450 grants totalling £17 million have been made available to business within the Borough.

It was agreed:

The verbal update be noted.

2. RECOVERY REPORT

Geoff Little provided Members with an overview of the Covid 19 recovery report which provided details of work being undertaken in the short, medium and long term to address the impact across the Borough of this emergency.

The report contains details of specific areas of work in respect of the local economy, the environment, housing and a revised Bury 2030 strategy. Geoff Little reported that the response to the pandemic had been led locally by Local government and this would be an opportunity to re-state the leadership role for local government going forward.

Members sought assurances that the Council would provide support to the Boroughs town centres following the pandemic.

It was agreed:

The verbal update be noted.

3. VOLUNTARY SECTOR REPORT

Lynne Ridsdale provided an overview of the role of the voluntary sector during the pandemic and as well as providing details of a proposal to make available additional monies to support the Boroughs food banks.

It was agreed:

- Recognises the extensive contribution of local organised and informal community groups and all volunteers to the Covid 19 response. All volunteers are thanked sincerely for their civic contribution;
- Notes the process for accessing Standing together monies through the CSP and note the criteria against which applications will be assessed;
- Notes the carry forward of the £42,000 underspend on members discretionary budgets and that these will be used to support hardship in the current financial year and that any additional funding requirements will be a 'first call' on the 2020/21 discretionary budgets;
- Notes the financial position of the VCFA and that further work will be undertaken by the council to consider options for long term financial sustainability.

4. VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Janet Witkowski, Deputy Monitoring Officer provided members with an update following the publication of Regulations in respect of virtual meetings and in particular the change in the requirements that members do not need to be physically present at a Local Authority meeting.

It was agreed;

The Deputy Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Chief Information Officer will produce a written report providing options for consideration at the next meeting of the Emergency Powers Group.

5. SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS (EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS)

Members considered the following Urgent Council Decisions:

- Contractor relief
- Sexual health contract
- ASC Provider report
- Council Investment
- Rough Sleepers

Members discussed the decision to house homeless people at Fairways Lodge, members received assurances from the Cabinet member that as well as dedicated security staff onsite, there is also staff in attendance from the local Authority as well as regularly visits from police officers within GMP.

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 decisions detailed above could not be reasonably be deferred.

A decision notice will be published on the Council website.

6. SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS (COUNCIL FUNCTIONS)

Members considered the following urgent Executive Decisions:

- Planning Report

Members discussed the different options and agreed that option three was the preferred option.

It was agreed:

That in accordance with the Council Constitution Special Urgency procedure, the Chair of the relevant Council Committees and the Group Leaders agreed that the reports detailed above could not reasonably be deferred

A decision notice will be published on the Council website.

7. FOR INFORMATION - LIST OF COVID 19 RELATED OPERATIONAL DECISIONS

8. FOR INFORMATION - NOTES FROM THE LAST MEETING

TO NOTE

UPDATE FROM THE LAST MEETING:

Lynne Ridsdale reported that the current number of staff absent from work was 350 – 100 of which are Covid 19 related.

COUNCILLOR D JONES
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 4pm and ended at 5.25pm.)