

OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

1 September 2020 at 6.00 pm

Extract from the Minutes

170. COVID-19 UPDATE

The Group Head of Policy introduced this item in the absence of the Chief Executive and highlighted to the Committee that next update would be presented to Cabinet at their next meeting on 21 September 2020 and the minutes of this meeting would then be presented to the Overview Select Committee to be scrutinised at its next meeting on 6 October 2020. The reason that the process had seemingly changed was due to the additional Cabinet meetings that have been held and would be held at Members request due to the current and ongoing pandemic response and therefore meant that some meetings were out of sequence.

Cllr Bennett raised a situation that the Parish and Town Councils have found themselves in during this pandemic in that, they seemingly have been forgotten in terms of financial support during the Pandemic and there appears to be very little ongoing support emerging. He said that they were suffering massively with a lost income of £22k due to no government funding.

The Director of Place explained that it was the upper tier authorities that had been encouraged by the Government to provide and make available grants/funding for Parish and Town Councils, he explained there had been an announcement recently regarding supporting these areas also, however, it would need to be checked that this applied to Parish and Town Council's too.

Cllr Bennett advised that he had checked this information and confirmed that Town and Parish Council's had not been included within these regulations. The director of Place then reconfirmed that it was for the upper tier authorities to provide financial support to Parish and Town Councils.

The Chairman then raised his concern regarding the Track and Trace workload that had been handed down to local authorities, he wanted to know if there had been a briefing on this that had included the financial support to complete this work and also what would this additional work impose on staff workload. The Director of Place confirmed that the principal authority for track and trace is the County Council. He further advised that Arun would be working closely with them on this matter, stating that there were a lot of ongoing conversations in relation to operational needs and it should be noted that we are all learning as we go on this matter, there currently is no rule book, we are working in very unusual circumstances currently.

Cllr Tony Dixon asked the Director of Place to clarify if the cost to the Council was being estimated at £5 million pounds and was this a gross or net figure? The Director of Place confirmed that it was a net figure, but he would recommend to all Members to read the financial report being presented to Cabinet on 21 September for a more up to date picture on the financial situation for the Council.

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Cllr Mrs Cooper asked if there was an ongoing piece of work on the Council's emergency plans in terms of the pandemic and was it being updated with what had been learnt so far? And could it be confirmed who and where this work was being completed? It was vital for Town and Parish Councils to be able to feed off, of Arun's Emergency Plan.

The Director of Place explained that the Council was very much focused on reacting to the current needs of the pandemic as well as planning for any possible second peak during the winter months and or possible local lockdowns. He suggested that maybe the time to scrutinise is not yet, and that it might be worth waiting until after we are through the winter months that we are fast approaching. It was then advised by the Committee Manager that the Environment and Leisure Working Group were meeting on Thursday 3 September 2020 and the agenda for that meeting contained an emergency planning update.

Cllr Dixon was invited by the Chairman to ask the final question on this item and he wanted to understand what the footfall of the high-street was, since the high-street had been reopened. The Director of Place advised that whilst he did not have specific figures, he could only speak from his own experience and felt that the footfall figures were quite mixed, in that some pockets of people were only going out once or twice a week and completing bigger shops, whereas there had also been reports from traders that other pockets of people had returned to a more normal way of shopping like we had seen prior to the pandemic.