

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
12 AUGUST 2020
6.30 - 8.30 PM**



Present:

Councillors Virgo (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Brossard, Gbadebo, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Porter, Temperton and Tullett
Parent Governor Representatives: Mark Glanville and Tracey Wright

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Angell and Mrs McKenzie-Boyle

Executive Member:

Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance

Also Present:

Councillors Atkinson, Brown, Ms Gaw, Kirke and Leake
Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery
Andrew Hunter, Director: Place, Planning and Regeneration
Stuart McKellar, Director: Resources

17. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 9 July 2020 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

18. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Tullett declared a pecuniary interest in item 5 in relation to the discretionary grant scheme as he had received support on behalf of his business, Risk and Safety Plus Limited.

There were no indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

19. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

20. Public Participation

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

The Vice-Chairman announced that he intended to work towards improving public participation in the Commission's activities using digital tools such as Microsoft Teams and email to improve partnership with residents. A press release would be circulated to encourage further engagement for upcoming meetings.

21. Council's response to Covid-19 pandemic

The Commission had asked for further information about the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance had been invited to attend. Stuart McKellar, Director: Resources attended the meeting to discuss the severe pressures and risks on the Council's budget. Andrew Hunter, Director: Planning, Place and Regeneration attended to discuss the Council's proposed Renewal Strategy.

Following the financial presentation it was discussed that:

- there was a high level of uncertainty around the ongoing support being provided by central government
- existing pressures were exacerbated by the pandemic
- Bracknell Forest Council had closely followed central government guidance and support
- planned changes to the local government funding system had been pushed back to 2022
- budget monitoring was a constant process
- although it was a challenging future financial position, this had been predicted and prepared for, over a number of years
- the funding from Government related to income losses was intended to cover 75% of lost income against budget, after a 5% threshold. The detailed arrangements for the calculation were not yet clear
- all costs incurred on the Covid-19 response had to be accounted for and it was expected that any unspent Government funding would need to be returned
- further funding would be available for establishing local test and trace procedures, but it was unclear whether this would cover the whole cost
- there were no voids currently in the Council's commercial investment properties
- the largest financial impact to date had been within contract services i.e. leisure and car park incomes followed by adult social care, then children's social care and education
- the work of transforming services was ongoing as the Council recovered and reviewed its priorities and how services were delivered
- a detailed financial report was being finalised for consideration by the Executive on 25 August
- the report would contain answers to many of the details being requested by Overview and Scrutiny Members and they would be able to discuss further at the next Commission meeting on 15 September

Regarding the Renewal Strategy it was discussed that:

- Renewal was the final stage in the Pandemic response and outbreak management would become business as usual in the medium term
- the Council was looking to integrate services, using opportunities from the Covid-19 response, involve community and voluntary services
- a reassignment pool of staff was created to support the Covid-19 response for example diverting staff to the community response, Forest Care and Crematorium and PPE distribution
- as new pressures arose in different areas it may be necessary to redeploy others to cover emerging pressures
- there had been a continual learning process to pick up opportunities and assess performance, resolving and checking throughout. There would be an

opportunity to review and understand lessons learnt but generally action to improve responses was taken when identified.

- management teams were identifying transformational opportunities and what new ways of working should continue within their services
- services had quickly identified remote working solutions such as how to undertake site visits remotely
- Partnership working had been enhanced for example within Health, working with Berkshire colleagues and within the Local Resilience Forum which also brought opportunities for further joint working
- a residents' survey had been undertaken and work by the Community Engagement team to reach people requiring support, this meant that people requiring support were being identified through social care, welfare claims, data as well as the survey
- the wellbeing of all residents including children was a priority within the renewal strategy
- work was ongoing with staff to monitor satisfaction rates with the new working arrangements, anecdotally teams had been socially distancing in local parks Microsoft Teams was delivering focused meetings with no time lost to travel
- the covid-19 risk within the Council's risk register had been reviewed every few weeks as the pandemic progressed
- work to develop the Deck within the Lexicon had not commenced but although it would be understandable for financial investors to be cautious, they were still committed to the Lexicon
- the legislation currently in place precluded formal meetings being held and there was a clear differentiation between workplace Covid-19 secure provisions which would enable small numbers of officers to work at Time Square and those for digital meetings. These appropriate controls were to stop community transmission and remote meetings were the safest way for discussions to be held.

The Vice-Chairman thanked Councillor Heydon, the Director of Resources and Director: Place, Planning and Regeneration for attending the meeting.

CHAIRMAN