

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **Minutes of the Executive**

**(to be confirmed at the next meeting)**

**Date:** Monday, 6 July 2020

**Venue:** Teams - Virtual Meeting

**Present:**

S D T Woodward, Policy and Resources (Executive Leader)  
T M Cartwright, MBE, Health and Public Protection (Deputy  
Executive Leader)  
F Birkett, Housing  
Miss S M Bell, Leisure and Community  
K D Evans, Planning and Development  
S D Martin, Streetscene

**Also in attendance:**



## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence given for this meeting.

## **2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 02 March 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## **3. EXECUTIVE LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Executive Leader announced that he would like to start by welcoming everyone back. This is the first meeting of the Executive since 3<sup>rd</sup> March and, although some Executive Members have taken individual decisions since then, it is good to see that we are now able to return to something of a new normal.

The Executive Leader stated that as the Country went into lockdown in late March, the workload of the Council increased dramatically. He paid tribute to all officers who have worked so hard over the last few months and felt that he was speaking on behalf of all Members when he wholeheartedly thanked Officers for their contribution.

The Executive Leader went on to say that the Council still had to provide essential services during the crisis, and the most visible were the waste collection crews who were dealing with a massive increase in tonnage. Whilst they fully deserved the plaudits from the media, others such as the street cleaners and grass cutters were also working hard to keep the Borough clean and tidy. The building maintenance team were responding to emergency repairs to the Council housing stock daily, whilst planners and building control officers continued to deal with building developments.

The Executive Leader was sure that it would come as no surprise to Members that the work of the Environmental Health Officers dramatically increased as one of their main roles is to deal with infection control. As well as providing advice to businesses across the Borough they also needed to increase the level of enforcement amongst those people who were less inclined to follow the Government's rules. The uniformed enforcement team were also out and about across the Borough, giving people advice on social distancing and supporting the Police. Amidst all of this, the Council still managed to continue building much needed new Council Housing at Bridge Road and Highlands Road.

The Executive Leader reported on the impact of the pandemic on the Council's local businesses and stated that the income of so many households should not be underestimated. Benefits officers have been inundated with new claims from those people who have seen a dramatic fall in family income. Similarly, the Council Tax team has received many requests for a deferral of Council Tax payments. Local businesses have received approximately £20million in grants and our team of officers have literally been working night and day to get the payments out to the community. The Executive Leader thanked the team dealing with the grants who had to deal with some difficult conversations with

disappointed business owners. A thankless task which they carried out with tact and diplomacy.

The Executive Leader stated that at a time of crisis, it is important that people receive reliable information, and the Communications Team worked tirelessly to provide messages to our local population. Not only was this important in disseminating accurate information, but it was also helpful in providing reassurance that the Council was in control at a difficult time for so many people.

The Executive Leader reported that with both Leisure Centres closed, Officers have been supporting the operator (SLM) in responding to the damage caused to their business. Leisure officers have also been busy coordinating the efforts of voluntary organisations such as Acts of Kindness, Waypoint Church, One Community and CAB who have provided support to hundreds of vulnerable people over the last few months. The Council is incredibly lucky to have such organisations operating in the Borough and the volunteers have made a massive contribution to keeping the people of Fareham safe and well throughout the pandemic. The Mayor and the Executive Leader are keen to write to all volunteers to express their gratitude and over 250 letters have been sent so far. A link has been set up on the Council's website to encourage people to let us know of anyone who has provided help and support throughout these difficult times.

The Executive Leader advised Members that the Council's income streams have been seriously affected. Car parking revenue helps to pay for essential Council services and over £300,000 has been lost in just three months. That figure continues to grow. Estates Officers have been working all hours to discuss leases with commercial tenants who are struggling to pay their rent. All of this, plus the loss of income from the Leisure Centre contract has had a major impact on Council finances and an Emergency Budget will be considered in September. Direct costs have been £250,000 as we responded to the crisis and then planned for recovery. Demand for services such as trade waste and pitches has reduced significantly and charges for other services such as car parking and markets were suspended. Services are now starting to resume but we anticipate that income could be over £1m below expected levels. We have taken steps to support businesses and commercial tenants by offering things like payment holidays, paying invoices on immediate terms, suspending arrears recovery and re-gearing rent to give vital breathing space in these exceptional times. These arrangements have impacted the Council revenues by around £500,000. This is in addition to providing £18m in grants to small businesses and those in the retail, leisure and hospitality sector. We are also working hard to put arrangements in place so that community and leisure facilities can open at the earliest opportunity and to support businesses and the high street to open to the public. This could require millions of pounds in financial support so options are being reviewed to see how this can be done. Government support of over £1m has been welcomed but we will need more than this. It is therefore likely that we will need to call upon our own reserves during this financial year in order to balance the budget. We will be updating the Medium-Term Finance Strategy in the autumn to reflect what needs to be done.

The Executive Leader further announced that it is important to recognise that this crisis is not yet over and that there is a long way to go. With this in mind,

several Recovery plans will be considered over the next two meetings. These will look at how positive action can be taken to improve the local economy, community facilities, public spaces and Council finances. We are determined to do the very best for the people and businesses of the Borough providing guidance, financial support and reassurance as we plan our way forward.

In preparing this statement, and in discussion with the Chief Executive Officer, the Executive Leader felt it important that the efforts of officers are recognised during this difficult period. He therefore recommended that the Executive support the idea that all Council employees receive an additional two days annual leave in the current year for their outstanding contribution in an unprecedented situation. All Members of the Executive were delighted to support the recommendation, and all passed on their thanks for the hard work of all Fareham Borough Council staff.

#### **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

#### **5. PETITIONS**

There were no petitions submitted at this meeting.

#### **6. DEPUTATIONS**

There were no deputations submitted at this meeting.

#### **7. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

There were no references from other committees made at this meeting.

#### **8. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

(1) Hook Lake Coastal Management Study

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- (a) approves commencement of the Hook Lake Coastal Management Study; and
- (b) agrees that the Director of Planning and Regeneration, is given delegated authority to procure and deliver the works, subject to the award of contract being made through an Individual Decision by the Executive Member for Planning and Development.

#### **9. POLICY AND RESOURCES**

(1) General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Outturn 2019/20

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- (a) approves the carry forward of £100,600 to fund the completion of the committed General Fund expenditure programmes in 2020/21, as contained in this report;
- (b) approves the carry forward of £1,663,000 for the HRA Capital Programme to re-align budget and expenditure phasing and to support the forthcoming programme for 2020/21; and
- (c) notes the contents of the report.

(2) Local Authority Discretionary Grant Awards

In considering this item the Executive noted the contents of the tabled item presented at the Policy and Resources Individual Executive Member decision meeting held on 06 July 2020. The tabled item outlined some minor changes to the confidential Appendices A to D of the report which the Executive Member had taken into account when approving the recommendations.

RESOLVED that the Executive notes:-

- (a) the grants of up to £5,000, paid under delegated authority to 43 businesses, totalling £145,000, as set out in Appendix A;
- (b) the schedule of grants exceeding £5,000, totalling £552,500, that has been considered by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources, as set out in Appendix B;
- (c) the schedule of grants which are subject to satisfactory evidence or explanations being received, totalling £70,000, that has been considered by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources, as set out in Appendix C;
- (d) the proposal considered by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources that the regular traders at the Portchester and/or Fareham markets, as listed in Appendix D, are paid a total grant of £2,500 each in instalments; and.
- (e) the proposal considered by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources that the balance of funding to be used to award grants of up to £5,000, using the existing scheme details, until the funds are fully utilised.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm  
and ended at 6.32 pm).