

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

2021/22
Decision No.
2310

Record of Decision by Executive

Monday, 11 October 2021

Portfolio	Policy & Resources
Subject:	The Council's Approach to the Pandemic - A Review
Report of:	Chief Executive Officer
Corporate Priority:	Dynamic, prudent and progressive Council

Purpose:

To review the performance of the Council as it responded to the challenges presented by the pandemic and to highlight any lessons learnt which might help to shape our organisation in the future.

The Council provides a wide range of public services and, when a crisis hits, there is an expectation from local businesses and residents that those services will continue to be delivered. Therefore, managers faced the double challenge of continuing with the “day job” in the face of a pandemic whilst also dealing with additional workload caused by the crisis.

Enquiries for advice and assistance increased dramatically across all service areas, putting additional pressure on staffing resources. Volumes of household waste continued to grow as people stayed in their homes, and littering became a major problem in public areas where residents were taking their daily exercise. A serious public health crisis inevitably increased the workload of the environmental health team.

In addition to these challenges, the Government also asked all Councils to take on new burdens such as issuing grants to local businesses, providing Covid Marshals to patrol the Borough, setting up testing centres, delivering food parcels to vulnerable people in the local community and securing emergency accommodation for all rough sleepers in the borough.

In simple terms, workload increased dramatically for all Council employees and the high volume of demand continued for a sustained period.

The pandemic caused a major shock to the Council's finances and there was a need for a significant call on reserves to ensure that services could be provided during the crisis. The financial impact will be evident in the Council's budgets for the next few years.

A structure was put in place to manage the Council during the crisis and individual recovery plans were formulated covering the following areas:

- Workforce Recovery
- Democratic Recovery
- Services Recovery
- Public Spaces Recovery
- Community Recovery
- Economic Recovery
- Financial Recovery

The coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact on the effective operation of the Council over a sustained period and many lessons were learnt from dealing with the crisis. Those lessons are being captured as part of the review of our emergency planning procedures but will also be evident in proposals for new ways of working in the future.

There is no doubt that the success of the Council's response over the last 18 months has been down to the commitment and hard work of a dedicated workforce who were determined to continue to provide critical services in the face of adversity.

Effective partnerships also played a crucial role in the Council's response including such bodies as the Local Resilience Forum, the Police, the voluntary sector, SLM, Fareham Shopping Centre owners, the County Council and neighbouring District Councils.

Options Considered:

The Executive Leader brought this item forward on the agenda to be considered before item 10(2).

At the invitation of the Executive Leader, Councillor R H Price, JP addressed the Executive on this item.

The comments of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel were taken into account in considering this item.

As recommendation.

Decision:

RESOLVED that the Executive agrees that:

(a) the following reviews are undertaken and presented to the Executive for decision:

- future ICT provision for elected Members;
- establishing clear protocols on virtual briefing meetings;
- new ways of working for office-based employees including more flexible home working arrangements and the future requirements of office accommodation and ICT;
- the future of the cash office
- the Council's approach to seasonal planting in the light of the lessons learned from the pandemic period

- future parking need in Fareham Town Centre; and
- service level agreements with One Community and Fareham CAB to reflect the lessons learnt from responding to the pandemic.

(b) an Economic Development Strategy for the Borough be produced;

(c) the proposal that future deputations can also be made in writing, or by a video or audio clip, be approved, subject to the separate deputation scheme for the Planning Committee being kept under review; and

(d) thanks be given for the exemplary work and support shown to Fareham's residents by all officers during the pandemic.

Reason:

To act on the lessons learnt from responding to the pandemic, to ensure resilience and preparedness for dealing with a similar emergency situation in the future.

Confirmed as a true record:

Councillor SDT Woodward (Executive Leader)

Monday, 11 October 2021