

Notes of a remote meeting of the Covid-19 Working Party held on
Wednesday, 30 September 2020 at 5.00pm.

PRESENT

Cllr Ian Bovingdon
Cllr Charlotte Cane
Cllr Lis Every
Cllr Jo Webber

OFFICERS

Jo Brooks – Director Operations
Tracy Couper – Democratic Services Manager

IN ATTENDANCE

Cllr Anna Bailey

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sue Austen and Matthew Downey.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

As a Briefing Paper from VCAEC on community, voluntary sector support services as a result of Covid had been circulated to Working Party Members subsequent to the agenda despatch, Councillor Every declared an interest as Chair of Trustees for VCAEC.

3. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was agreed:

That the Notes of the meeting held on 26 August 2020 be received.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman highlighted that the majority of the items raised at the last meeting had been addressed in Agenda Item 5 and only two items remained outstanding on the Work Programme. The Working Party had been established as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown from the end of March 2020 and things had changed significantly both locally and nationally since this period. There was a lot of ongoing activity by officers of the Council in conjunction with key local stakeholders and this was detailed in Agenda Item 5. The Chairman thanked officers for their proactive work and expressed the view that, unless there was substantial changes nationally, he believed that

this Working Party was reaching its natural conclusion and only one more meeting of the Working Party would be required. The Working Party then could be wound-up and any issues that arose subsequently could be directed to the relevant officers and responses circulated more widely, for the information of Members, as necessary.

The Chairman asked that the thanks of the Working Party be formally recorded and conveyed to Officers for all their work and informative updates on the actions requested by the Working Party.

5. WORK PROGRAMME – UPDATE ON ITEMS RAISED AT PREVIOUS MEETING

Members receive a report providing an update on the actions completed and work being carried out relating to the items on the Work Programme and actions requested at the previous meeting.

Attention also was drawn to the following information circulated after the Agenda despatch:

Infrastructure and Strategy Manager update on the bus, cycle and footpath consultation results evaluation;

VCAEC Briefing Note on community, voluntary sector support services;

Briefing Notes and presentation from Landlords' Forum held on 24 September 2020.

Comments/questions were raised by Members on the report and supporting papers and responses given as follows:

VCAEC expressed concerns for future regarding recruiting volunteers and funding, how could ECDC assist with this? – Director Operations reported that ECDC Officer Recovery Group met weekly and working with VCAEC to assess what support and funding required. Officer Group signposting organisations to funding available from different areas such as Cambridgeshire County Council, Health Bodies, Central Government. Officer Group provides guidance and support to relevant stakeholders on an ongoing basis. Direct contact made with all Parish Councils, as detailed in Appendix 1(ii). The Council hope to encourage Parishes to produce a Covid Emergency Response Plan by drafting a template that all Parishes then can tailor to their local area/needs.

Landlords Forum Briefing Notes and presentation – should be encouraging landlords to contact Council at an early stage, if considering eviction. Right to Rent section of presentation: focus on paper copies of documents, but many documents now only in electronic format – issue will be referred to relevant officers.

Supporting Village Pubs – awaiting Central Government guidance on support over winter months.

Digital Connectivity - £400K funding available within the NHS as part of Sustainability and Transformation Partnership. County also looking at funding.

Transport Issues – need to consider issues relating to rural transport and ability of students and elderly to access Ely and other towns from villages. Missed opportunity to capture effects of reduction in vehicle traffic during lockdown. Need to consider how to encourage active travel and use of public transport for longer journeys. The Chairman stated that these issues now would be more appropriate for the Bus Services WP to consider at its meeting to take place in early October 2020 followed by a Member Seminar in late October and recommendations be made to Finance and Assets Committee in November.

Market Towns Masterplans work – timetable for submission to Combined Authority? Littleport Plan based on infrastructure, highways and marina bid likely to go to CA Board in November. Soham Plan based on E-space style facility bid likely to go to CA Board in December. Ely Plan with a focus on digital connectivity aiming for January 2021 CA Board. Consultation with key stakeholders taking place for all Masterplans.

Tourism Website – improvements completed or in progress, as requested by Working Party.

Housing – reported increase in house prices by 5% nationally. How will this impact on delivery of affordable housing locally? Swaffham CLT – issue that CLT not allowed to take on a unit of affordable housing, as not a RSL. How can this Council address the issue?

What action was being taken to provide training and development for Parish Councils, identified as a need in the feedback from contacting individual Parishes? The Director Operations reported that Parish Council ‘awaydays’ and one-to-one sessions were being organised by the Community & Partnerships Team.

Reference was made to the County Council’s Community Support Hub and a question raised as to how this Council engaged with this. The Director Operations explained the structure of the county-wide Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG) which she was a member of. This had multiple thematic sub-groups reporting to the main group and ECDC had representation on all of the sub-groups. In addition, the Director Operations had weekly meetings with the dedicated County Council Officer. A Recovery Plan for East Cambridgeshire was in the process of being finalised, which would detail the role of the RCG and the sub-groups and how their work would be put into practice in East Cambridgeshire. This Recovery Plan was due to be circulated to all Councillors this Friday.

The Chairman stated that many of the above issues could have been raised directly with the relevant Officers and responses circulated to the Working Party Members. However, a Member commented that raising and discussing them at the Working Party could give a shared understanding of the relevant issues.

It was AGREED:

- (i) That the updates provided to the Working Party be noted.
- (ii) That the revised Work Programme set out in Appendix 2 be progressed.

6. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the revised Work Programme for the Working Party set out in Appendix 2. The Chairman highlighted that, if the active transport initiatives now were being transferred to the Bus Services WP to progress, there were 2 items still to be directly actioned by this Working Party relating to understanding the needs of the Business Community and the report on the impact of Covid-19 on the BAME community. The Chairman suggested that these could be dealt with at a final meeting of the Working Party in November 2020. In response to a question from the Chairman, the Democratic Services Manager reported that, as the next meeting of the Finance and Assets (F&A) Committee was scheduled for late November 2020 meaning that the Agenda for the meeting would be despatched in mid-November, it was unlikely that the necessary work on these two areas could be completed and considered by the Working Party in order for recommendations from the Working Party to be submitted to the November F&A Committee. Therefore, any recommendations would be submitted to the January 2021 F&A Committee.

Therefore, it was proposed by the Chairman that a final Working Party meeting be held in late November to deal with these two outstanding areas. A Member disagreed that the Working Party would have completed its work at this stage.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Working Party would be held on Wednesday, 25 November at 5.00pm.

The meeting closed at 6.17pm