

COUNCIL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16th June, 2020

Present:-

Andrew Fowler (Chair)

Councillor Blank	Councillor K Falconer
Councillor Barr	Councillor J Innes
Councillor Brittain	Ade McCormick Exec Director
Councillor Caulfield	Donna Reddish Policy & Comms.
Ian Waller Health & Wellbeing	Neil Johnson Economic Dev.
Dean Epton Commercial Services	Liz Cook Housing
Anthony Radford Arts & Venues	Kate Harley HR
Marc Jasinski Health & Safety	Karen Brown Business Trans.
Liam Rich Unite	Paula Stephens Unite
Karen Knight UNISON	Paul Longley UNISON
	Rachel O'Neil Customers, Comm & Change

38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Niblock, Councillor Mann and Tony Devereux.

39 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY, 2020

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council Health and Safety Committee held on 12 February, 2020 were agreed as a true record.

40 COVID-19 EASE OF LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS

The Executive Director introduced a presentation to the committee on the health and safety measures put in place in order to facilitate the ease of lockdown restrictions. A link had been shared with the committee in advance of the meeting to all the risk assessments. It was explained that the risk assessments had been signed off by relevant managers, checked by the unions and approved by the appropriate working group.

The Transformation Programme Manager guided the committee through the measures that had been put in place to create safe working spaces and highlighted the following points;

- All council buildings had been assessed, maximum capacities for rooms had been calculated and the flow of people evaluated.
- Facilities for agile working already existed within the council, making those adaptations more straightforward.
- Signage had been developed to indicate maximum occupancies and colour coded floor markers indicated the flow and encouraged social distancing
- At the customer service centre, mirrors had been installed in a narrow staff corridor to enable colleagues to maintain social distancing. The centre will have a member of staff positioned outside to triage members of the public and direct them to the appropriate queue. Numbers inside the building would be limited. Everyone would be asked to sanitise their hands on entry. It was clarified that members of the public would be directed to the Market Hall toilets unless in case of an emergency.
- Access guides were under development for each building for both staff and visitors detailing what to expect, to make their experience less daunting.

The Assistant Director for Commercial Services outlined the changes that had been made in the department as follows;

- A one man, one van policy had been quickly adopted to comply with social distancing requirements and some vehicles had screens fitted
- The barriers on Council car parks had been removed to reduce the amount of cash handling taking place
- 390 staff members had been identified as vulnerable or doing non-emergency work and had been sent home or in some instances redeployed to other essential services
- Colleagues from the Commercial Services team had undertaken community work since the start of lockdown such as delivering pharmacy supplies. Over 700 deliveries had been undertaken so far.
- Thanks to the ICT team, staff were mobilised incredibly quickly, and this had caused a positive shift in culture across the department.
- Garage services had become mobile to reduce the number of people visiting the Stonegravels depot.
- The supply of PPE had been maintained throughout lockdown enabling essential works to continue.

- An outline schedule of the ease of lockdown measures was now available.
- Additional work would commence as materials became more readily available, and if safe to do so, dates may be brought forward.

The committee was advised that the agile working had been embraced and it was hoped that it would continue.

The Assistant Director for Customers, Commissioning and Change gave an overview of the service, highlighting the following points;

- All services in the directorate had continued throughout lockdown
- 170 pieces of ICT equipment had been issued and a new telephony system had been implemented which allowed the call centre to be operated remotely. Venture House was being used as a training centre for call centre staff.
- A one-way system had been put in place in the ICT Service Desk office to support the increasing number of staff returning to the Town Hall
- The Human Resources team continued to work remotely with case work and recruitment carried out using online systems
- Support services had continued to provide a post service throughout the period but were on the whole working from home
- The Business Transformation Team had carried out an incredible amount of work on the recovery plans and special mention was made of Karen Brown and Mick Blythe for their contributions
- The Museum and Visitors Information Centre had been closed since the start of lockdown. The staff were working from home providing virtual tours and although there were no immediate plans to open all the necessary risk assessments were in place in anticipation.
- Kier staff were working from home and would continue to do so
- The Customer Service Centre was ready for official reopening with reduced hours aligned to the bank opening times. The public toilets there had been closed unless for emergency use and residents would be directed to the Market Hall toilets.

The Assistant Director for Housing advised the committee of the current position including the following points;

- A high number of staff were working from home and support networks had been put in place, especially for those that deal with challenging customers, to safeguard their wellbeing
- The department had worked closely with its external contractors to ensure that safe systems of work were in place throughout

- Fountain House (On the Move) had been classified as unsafe to use, due to lack of access, narrow spaces etc and so no staff had returned there
- Face to face interviews were being avoided, with a preference to carry out appointments over the telephone but emergency interviews would be carried out at the Customer Service Centre.
- General lettings recommenced on 22nd June and the backlog of pre-allocated homes was expected to be cleared within four weeks
- Homelessness had presented a huge challenge and therefore additional staff had been allocated to that area to support the service
- Neighbourhood Rangers had continued their work throughout
- Tenancy Management Services were being delivered remotely. There had been an increased demand on the service to due to a rise in anti-social behaviour complaints.
- The Careline Services had continued to provide an excellent service and thanks to all the staff there were noted, as well as to Jon Campbell, who had provided essential PPE throughout the pandemic.

The Assistant Director for Economic Growth summarised the changes that had taken place within the service, with reference to the following points;

- Most teams were working remotely
- Management services at the Innovation Centres had been suspended but there had been no businesses withdrawing so far
- The planning committee was being conducted virtually
- The department had been providing advice to local businesses in terms of recovery and had been developing recovery plans
- The major regeneration projects were ongoing, and the Northern Gateway site had been brought back online. The external contractor had given significant reassurances regarding management of the site. The Assistant Director for Economic Growth assured the committee that the contractor was being closely monitored and all information was recorded on the contractor management register accordingly.
- Building control had continued throughout the lockdown, working from home and were under increased pressure due to the number of “jobbing builders” in operation.

It was acknowledged that members of staff had worked well beyond expectations despite being based at home. Therefore, the significant

pressures and the resulting impact on staff of the lockdown period were highlighted as an ongoing concern.

The Assistant Director of Policy and Communications led the committee through the changes made in the service highlighting the following points;

- Staff were working exclusively from home
- The Communications team moved into a crisis communications cell early in the pandemic in order to reduce stress and pressure on staff.
- Additional equipment was provided to the graphic design team.
- Members were working remotely thanks to a huge amount of support from ICT, Gerard Rogers and the Democratic Services team.
- A virtual Full Council meeting was due to be held in July
- Councillors' ward activities had been limited to telephone and email only.
- All civic activities had been either cancelled or postponed
- Local Democracy activities were likely to be delayed until 2021 earliest.
- A report would be presented to cabinet on the civic arrangements suggesting an extension of the current mayoralty until October 2020.

The Assistant Director of Health & Wellbeing reported to the committee the changes made in the service as follows;

- Members of staff had been redeployed to support food parcel and prescription deliveries in addition colleagues from leisure had undertaken volunteering to support Covid-19 testing at Chesterfield FC.
- Licensing, Environmental Health, Private Sector Housing and Community Safety had continued their work throughout in an agile way with support from ICT
- The Leisure centres closed in March. Preparations for re-opening were being made, guided by the Chesterfield Borough Council corporate approach, industry guidance, advice from an external health and safety partner and national governing bodies for each sport/activity. The situation was complex and fast moving but the team are working hard to ensure we are able to react as soon as we are advised of a re-opening date.

- Additional risk assessments and training would be required prior to an opening and therefore as a minimum a seven-day lead in would be necessary. A very detailed action plan had been compiled.
- Engagement with all staff and management teams had been very positive.

The committee heard that the service were seeking to offer as many opportunities for people to be as active as possible within the guidance issued. There was a need to ensure that the right balance was achieved to ensure the safety of staff and customers against the desire to get back to a sense of normality as the impact on people's physical and mental wellbeing had been recognised.

The Arts and Venues Manager highlighted changes to the venues as follows;

- The venues were formally closed 16th March and had been checked and operational throughout the lockdown period
- Most staff members were now on furlough
- A potential reopening of the Pomegranate Theatre as a cinema was anticipated for July/August. Imposing the 2-metre social distancing room, this would allow 15-20% capacity which was financially sustainable.
- There was a need to ensure that customers would be confident about using the venues and therefore various measures would be put in place in order to build momentum for the autumn season.
- National bodies were developing guidance on how it might be possible to stage live performances, but it was acknowledged that it would be necessary to ensure that any productions would be financially viable.
- Work was currently ongoing investigating how it would be possible to enable small meetings, events and religious services.

Thanks were recorded to the Chair and the Health and Safety Advisor for their support. The Chair also mentioned the good work carried out by the Premises Manager in order to facilitate blood donations.

The Executive Director informed the committee that the Town Centres Team had worked long and hard to put measures in place allowing the markets and shops to reopen safely. The feedback had so far been positive.

The next steps were outlined to the committee including

- The sign off of all risk assessments
- Completion of all service specific plans
- Completion of the building access guides
- Regular trade union consultation
- A Senior Leadership Team review

The committee recognised the hard work that had gone into these plans by staff across the council. The impact on staff and their mental health was acknowledged and gratitude was expressed to all staff and union colleagues.

41 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 12 August, 2020 at 9.30am.