

**COMMUNITY, CUSTOMER AND ORGANISATIONAL SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, 2nd July, 2020**

Present:-

Councillor P Innes (Chair)

Councillors	Borrell	Councillors	Dyke
	Blakemore		Fordham
	L Collins		Kellman

Councillor Blank, Cabinet Member for Governance +  
Councillor J Innes, Cabinet Member for Business Transformation &  
Customers +

Councillor Mannion-Brunt, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing +  
Councillor Sarvent, Cabinet Member for Town Centres & Visitor  
Economy +

Karen Brown, Transformation Programme Manager +  
Christine Durrant, Executive Director +  
Neil Johnson, Assistant Director – Economic Growth +  
Ade McCormick, Executive Director +  
Anthony Radford, Arts & Venues Manager +  
Brian Offiler, Democratic and Scrutiny Officer +

+ Attended for Minute No. 42

**39 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS  
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.**

No declarations of interest were received.

**40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

**41** **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee held on 30 January, 2020 were presented.

**RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**42** **CABINET MEMBERS FOR GOVERNANCE, BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION & CUSTOMERS, HEALTH & WELLBEING AND TOWN CENTRES & VISITOR ECONOMY - COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND RECOVERY**

Ade McCormick, Executive Director, delivered a presentation on the work of the Council's Resources task and finish group which was producing risk assessments and guidance at corporate, service and individual (where required) levels and developing plans for returning staff safely into the workplace and opening facilities and venues to the public. The group included Human Resources officers and trades union and safety representatives.

The presentation provided details of arrangements to ensure Council buildings were Covid-19 secure, including maintenance of social distancing, and a phased approach was being adopted to reopening of buildings and services.

Arising from Members' questions and discussion, the following points were raised:

- The risk assessments were being undertaken to take account of service specific issues, including particular risks arising in areas and services open to the public and of risks for vulnerable categories (although this was not related solely to age);
- The working arrangements for the town hall and other buildings were based on maintaining a social distance of 2m as far as possible;
- The importance of enabling staff to return to work and to deliver services in a safe manner;

- The positive way in which staff had worked together, including trades union and safety representatives.

Christine Durrant, Executive Director, delivered a presentation on the work in respect of community support and recovery, including:

- Safeguarding - support for vulnerable adults and children, including domestic abuse victims and those requiring mental health support – being addressed through multi-agency working at Derby and Derbyshire Board level;
- Support for individuals ‘shielding’ and other vulnerable people – coordinating the work of local volunteers through Derbyshire Voluntary Action with the Derbyshire Community Support Hub to deliver shopping and medicines and check on people’s welfare;
- The national ‘Everyone In’ priority to house rough sleepers;
- The national proposals for the early release of prisoners.

The presentation identified some of the challenges of widening inequalities resulting from the impact of Covid-19, such as higher death rates from Covid-19, anticipated increases in unemployment, increased number of people claiming Universal Credit, the negative impact of school closures and cancelled exams, uncertainty for young people entering an unstable labour market and increased risk of food poverty, homelessness, poor mental health and loneliness.

A Chesterfield Covid-19 Strategic Health and Wellbeing Board had been established, to include the Place Alliance, the Health and Wellbeing Partnership, the Children’s Locality Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership, to build on the cooperative working and delivery of services that had emerged through the pandemic. This would work to seek to harness the massive groundswell of volunteering and community activity and to respond to the Derby and Derbyshire Local Outbreak Management Plan, which was being prepared in parallel with the Test, Trace and Isolate system.

Arising from Members’ questions and discussion, the following points were raised:

- The extent to which lessons could be learned for future actions in respect of dealing with homelessness, accommodating released prisoners, the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and engagement with the care home sector;

- The extent of current and potential engagement with organisations supporting the victims of domestic abuse;
- The positive contribution of Council staff who had been redeployed in supporting the community response;
- The importance of planning for a local lockdown in the event of this being necessary.

The Executive Director and the Arts and Venues Manager outlined the impact of Covid-19 on the Winding Wheel and Pomegranate Theatres, Hasland Village Hall, the Assembly Rooms and Council's rest rooms, with all venues having been closed in mid-March. All shows and films had been rescheduled or cancelled and venue bookings cancelled, with all customers and venue hirers being contacted. Whilst many had retained tickets for rescheduled shows, there had been a significant reduction in net income, and it was estimated that there would be an additional operational deficit of at least £360,000 in the current year.

A phased reopening of venues was planned over the coming months, supported by an Arts Council grant of £35,000 towards marketing, starting with the Pomegranate Theatre opening as a cinema later in July, based on risk assessments to ensure a safe environment with reduced capacity and social distancing. It was then hoped to enable regular venue hirers to return to the Winding Wheel and some live shows to the Pomegranate and Winding Wheel from the autumn, subject to the completion of suitable risk assessments in accordance with national guidance as this evolved, although it was not expected that a full programme would be resumed before the Spring of 2021.

Arising from Members' questions and discussion, the following points were clarified:

- Other cinemas locally were aiming to open during July, following guidance received from the UK Cinema Association the previous week;
- The important role for the Council to support the local management committees of the community rest rooms in conducting risk assessments and developing Covid secure arrangements for their volunteers and visitors.

Ade McCormick, Executive Director, delivered a presentation on the work of the Council's Economy task and finish group.

The presentation included details of support provided to businesses through Business Rates Relief (for over 680 businesses to a total value of over £18 million), grants for small businesses (over 1,900 businesses to a total value of over £19 million), grants for retail, hospitality & leisure businesses (240 grants to a total value of £6 million) and discretionary grants for businesses such as in shared business space, bed and breakfast providers, market traders and charities (over 170 businesses to a total value of over £1.25 million). The Council had also provided support to its commercial tenants by offering a rent holiday or deferment scheme, which over 70 tenants had taken up.

Following the easing of lockdown restrictions nationally, plans for restoring the operation of the town centre were being progressed, including:

- The outdoor market restarting from 1 June, the flea market from 11 June and non-essential retail shops from 15 June, with arrangements developed with traders and retailers to support social distancing by use of physical barriers and Council staff acting as ‘ambassadors’;
- Cafes, bars and restaurants being due to reopen from 4 July, with the Police, Safer Neighbourhood Team and Licensing staff working together with operators to enable safe arrangements to be in place. It was expected that the granting and regulation of pavement licences would be devolved to District Councils by legislation later in July, and further national guidance was expected on live music venues and nightclubs later in July;
- Using ‘Reopening the High Street’ funding of over £90,000 to support communications and temporary public realm changes;
- Working with the County Council in the short term to encourage safe queueing on the highway and active travel, such as cycling, and to develop a strategic approach in the longer term.

The presentation also referred to:

- Work having started on site for the building of the Northern Gateway Enterprise Centre, due for completion in May, 2021, and work being due to start on the public realm improvements for Elder Way and Packers Row in late August, 2020;
- The ‘Revitalising the Heart of Chesterfield’ scheme comprising the reconfiguration of the outdoor market to make it a more attractive proposition for both traders and shoppers;

- The Visitor Economy Action Plan to identify measures to support the recovery and growth phase, including supporting the successful delivery of key developments, such as Peak Resort.

The Assistant Director – Economic Growth advised that Cabinet would be considering a report at its next meeting on the economic recovery plan, including addressing some of the challenges for recovery in the longer term.

Arising from Members' questions and discussion, the following points were clarified:

- Two restaurants were preparing to move in to the new units on Elder Way as lockdown restrictions were lifted;
- The possibility of developing initiatives (such as tours or apps) to attract people to explore the town centre was being considered;
- There was significant interest from potential tenants in the Northern Gateway Enterprise Centre as well as the existing innovation centres;
- The business case for the 'Revitalising the Heart of Chesterfield' scheme had taken account of the motions passed by Council in respect of tourism and climate change;
- Work was continuing on the Staveley Town Deal to support the town centre in Staveley.

Members of the Committee expressed concerns that the presentations had not been distributed in advance, as they included a lot of detailed information. It was agreed that they would be distributed to Members following the meeting and that an additional meeting could be arranged if required. It was suggested that the arrangements for emergency planning and business continuity could be an issue for further consideration.

Members expressed their appreciation of the immense amount of work undertaken by officers, working with other partners and volunteers, to respond to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Chesterfield. The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members for Business Transformation & Customers, Governance, Health & Wellbeing and Town Centres & Visitor Economy, the Executive Directors, the Transformation Programme Manager, the Arts & Venues Manager and the Assistant Director – Economic Growth for their contribution to the meeting.

**RESOLVED -**

- (1) That the work of the Council in responding to the impact of Covid-19 and supporting the recovery from it, as outlined in the presentations, be endorsed and supported.
- (2) That copies of the presentations be distributed to Members of the Committee following the meeting to enable identification of issues for an additional meeting of the Committee.

**43 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 August – 30 November, 2020.

It was noted that the Plan included items on the Community Infrastructure Levy Expenditure (scheduled for the Cabinet meeting on 14 July) and the Review of the Code of Corporate Governance and the Annual Governance Statement (scheduled for the Cabinet meeting on 14 July and the Standards & Audit Committee meeting on 22 July) and that representations on those reports could be submitted to the relevant portfolio holders and officers before those meetings.

**RESOLVED –**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

**44 SCRUTINY MONITORING**

The Committee considered the Scrutiny recommendations implementation monitoring schedule.

It was noted that monitoring of the implementation of some recommendations had been delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, but that this would be resumed and rescheduled.

**RESOLVED –**

That the Scrutiny monitoring schedule be noted.

**45**     **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2020/21**

The Committee noted that the meeting of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum on 25 June, 2020 had confirmed an interim work programme, including the following items for the next scheduled meeting of the Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee on 24 September, 2020:

- Visitor Economy Action Plan – including ‘Heart of Chesterfield’, Market Reconfiguration, Tourism;
- Crime and Disorder items;
- Progress Report on Implementation of Universal Credit.

It was noted that further work was scheduled to finalise the scrutiny work programme for the whole of 2020/21, prior to submission to the scrutiny committees in September, 2020.

It was suggested that Members propose specific issues for further consideration once the presentations from the current meeting had been distributed in order to enable the Chair to consider arrangements for an additional meeting if required.

**RESOLVED -**

- 1) That the Chair consider issues and arrangements for an additional meeting of the Committee, taking account of any specific issues proposed by Members of the Committee.
- 2) That the items from the interim work programme for the Committee’s next scheduled meeting on 24 September, 2020 be approved.