

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 November 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Bartlett – Chairman

Cllr T O'Neill – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr M Cox, Cllr M Davies, Cllr B Dion, Cllr M Earl, Cllr J Edwards,
Cllr G Farquhar, Cllr D Farr, Cllr L Fear, Cllr P R A Hall,
Cllr M Howell, Cllr D Kelsey, Cllr C Rigby and Cllr V Slade

Also in attendance: Councillor Richard Burton
Councillor L-J Evans
Councillor Nicola Greene
Councillor May Haines
Councillor Drew Mellor

89. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr P Hall and Cllr D Farr.

90. Substitute Members

None

91. Declarations of Interests

None

92. Public Speaking

There were no public questions, statements or petitions for the meeting.

93. Action Sheet

The Chairman advised that the minutes from the previous meeting were not yet published but referred to the action sheet from the previous meeting. The Chairman confirmed that the recommendations had been reported to Cabinet and partially accepted.

94. Update on BCP Council's Response to the Covid 19 Pandemic

The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Covid Resilience, Schools and skills to provide the meeting with an update on the current situation. The Portfolio Holder advised the Board of the current situation regarding Covid-19 and how the Council were responding to it. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the attendance of the Chairman from the Children's Services and Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees but

acknowledged that although there may be some crossover in some of the issues covered both Committees had their own meetings scheduled over the following few weeks. The Portfolio Holder invited the Director of Public Health to provide the Board with the latest information on Covid-19 prevalence.

The Director of Public Health gave a presentation to the Board which outlined the numbers testing positive for Covid-19 and the age groups of positive cases, which were predominately the younger age groups but this was slowly creeping up in the older age groups where risk was greater, as evidenced in the heatmaps shown to the Board. Over the past 7 days there were 953 cases within BCP. There were currently 138 people in hospital in the local system with Covid-19. The Director advised that he would provide further information to the Board on where outbreaks were occurring. All hospitals in the area were in major incident standby mode.

The Board was advised that most of the current cases would have contracted the illness prior to the national lockdown measures. However, it was noted that according to Google mobility data there appeared to be no reduction in workplace traffic since lockdown measures were put into place. It was noted that outbreaks in high risk setting such as schools and care homes were being managed well.

The Director advised the Board about a number of measures regarding the testing programmes in place and changes to these, including the piloting of rapid antigen testing. Information was also provided on the planning for vaccine provision and development. The Board were advised that post lockdown the aim was for the Council to emerge into tier 1 restrictions, but this was dependent upon whether current case rates fell. The Board considered further information on the planning for post-lockdown, including intelligently targeted communication and engagement work, enhanced contact tracing, additional support for the national test and trace offer and the availability of local resources. In reflection of the impact on Council resources, additional funding was being provided. Members asked a number of questions to the Portfolio Holder and Director of Public Health including:

A Councillor asked what assurance could be given to residents if they had to go into hospital that the risk there wasn't higher than at home due to the recent outbreaks. The Board was advised that the outbreaks at the hospitals were now under control and both hospitals had been working closely with Public Health England to make sure the right measures were in place. The Director advised that the follow up measures were in place but agreed to follow up on this and provide confirmation to the Board. The Portfolio Holder advised that the Health O&S Board would consider this further at its meeting on 30 November 2020.

A Councillor queried whether all children had received a laptop who were entitled to in order that their education could continue if they were having to isolate or if their school or bubble within school was closed. The Portfolio

Holder undertook to provide an update on this issue to the Councillor (**see action sheet**).

In response to a question regarding how the situation was going to be managed post lockdown with regards to care homes the Director of Public Health advised that the Health Protection Board assesses the infection rate within the community and regular letter go out to care homes with advice on whether it is safe to continue visiting, public health would want to ensure people can continue to visit their loved ones safely, which measures such as rapid testing should support.

A Councillor asked about the numbers recovering from Covid and how they were being dealt with moving back into the community from hospital and the length of hospital stays. The Director advised that there was work going on to review the discharge from hospital processes and the Director undertook to provide this information in a briefing note following the meeting (**See action sheet**).

A concern was raised about the mental health impact of the current lockdown. In terms of public health data the Director advised that it wasn't possible for them to evaluate data on this yet. The Director advised that he had looked at data from the first lockdown but that this would be a good question to put to those providing relevant services. In this lockdown there had been guidance on continuing support groups which recognised the importance of this support and social contact.

In response to a question on rapid testing a Councillor asked if you could infect other before it was picked up as a positive on a test. It was noted that they did work better with a higher viral load. There were designed to work on people who were asymptomatic. They were more likely to give a false positive than a false negative.

A Councillor enquired about how rapid testing would be utilised within homeless shelters and for those living on the streets as they were among the most vulnerable. The Board was advised that it was early days as the health protection board had only just certified them. People would need to be supported to understand the test result and supported through the consequences of a positive result. The Director undertook to provide an update to the Board following the meeting.

Then Portfolio Holder recorded her thanks to the Director for Public Health and his team for working in the current extraordinary circumstances.

A Board member asked about the Covid Marshalls on the streets to ascertain what they were doing and to where they reported.

The Portfolio Holder outlined some of the measures taking place during the current lockdown which included that:

parks, gardens, beaches and where possible, takeaway concessions, car parks and toilets were remaining open during the lockdown period;
Schools were remaining open and only closing when required;

The local universities were also remaining open although a number of lectures were currently on-line;

- Support groups of up to 15 people could continue to meet, particularly for vulnerable children and domestic violence.
- Hospitals were currently continuing their elective work.
- There was a difference in retail in terms of what has been able to stay open and what hasn't from the last lockdown.
- Homelessness services were not anticipating everyone being rehomed during this lockdown, however there were fewer people on the streets many have had very positive outcomes. Those remaining on the streets are now mostly known to St Mungo's. The severe weather emergency protocol would probably utilise hotel accommodation.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety gave an update to the Board on compliance and enforcement and explained that since March 2020 there had been multiple changes in legislation. The Board was informed that there was multi agency working with police and Town Centre Rangers in the town centre. Environmental Health Officers were visiting businesses and checking that they were Covid secure as part of a strategy to ensure compliance with Covid regulations. There were seven Covid Marshals who were deployed to focus on areas of higher transmission. They were working BCP wide to encourage social distancing and to educate and explain guidelines in the public realm and with businesses. Once the lockdown period ended, they would be able to assist with queue management where required.

A Board member asked about the Covid Marshals to ascertain type of activities they were undertaking and to where they reported. The Portfolio Holder explained that the Covid Marshals started just before lockdown on 31 October, and on this date they focussed on the Bournemouth night time economy area. Since their inception they had reported 15 businesses not following Covid regulations and dealt with large groups needing to be disbursed.

The Board were advised that from the 5 November the local authority was now duty bound to in law to enforce non-compliance with legislation. Environmental Health and Trading Standards officers had been diverted to deal with large scale non-compliance. Three enforcement notices had been issued.

A Board Member raised a concern about the amount being spent on enforcement and whether they provided value for money. It was suggested that this needed to be done in a light touch way. The Portfolio Holder advised that Covid Marshals were funded from a central government grant. Not all of which was spent on Marshals, some was being used to support business compliant officers, who supported businesses in operating in a Covid secure way. Ultimately, they reported to Andy Williams. In assessing value for money, the Board was advised that it was still early days but would take this point on board. The main reason for employing these measures was to ensure the safety of the whole community. Covid Marshals do not have any enforcement powers so is a light touch approach.

A Board member raised concerns about the support available to the night-time economy. There was a support grant available provided by funding from central government to support business who have had to close or business further down the supply chain whose operation had been impacted. A press release had gone out today to encourage businesses to apply. The night-time economy, which was previously left out, would be included in the scheme this time.

The Portfolio Holder for Covid Resilience updated the Board on the Together We Can initiative to support the most vulnerable within the community. The central mission to support those who would otherwise be struggling was its key aim. Over the last week at peak demand the service was receiving about 300 calls per day, at its peak in March or April it was 800 and community resilience had grown over the past few months. Welfare calls were taking place for those who had tested positive to check they were ok and these were normally well appreciated. The extremely clinically vulnerable cohort, who were part of the shielding cohort needed to isolate and they were for the most part coping well. The Portfolio Holder also updated the Board on the mental health and support which was available to people. Information was also given on access to food measures and schemes which were in place and the provision which was being planned for Christmas. The Portfolio holder noted the good will of businesses, individuals and groups in this regard. The portfolio Holder undertook to provide the Board with an email on the status of leisure facilities at Hengistbury Head and Stanpit **(see action sheet)**.

The Portfolio Holder also updated the Board on the recovery programme including the needs of the business sector but also the impact that they had on employment and the community more generally. There was ongoing engagement with business and the Rediscover Safely online programme had been launched to support local businesses.

The Leader advised that they were pleased to see the furlough scheme extended so that businesses would hopefully be able to come out of it in a position to grow stronger in 2021. With the support schemes in place it was noted that they wanted to ensure that business were not falling through gaps and as this was the second time round the discretionary schemes were launched there was the benefit of past experience in dealing with it. The Leader wanted to ensure that those sectors who hadn't had a lot of support before were provided for this time round.

A Councillor advised that under the previous scheme there was quite a lot of restrictions under the previous scheme and asked whether this scheme gave genuine discretion. The Leader advised that there was significantly more discretion in this scheme than previous scheme. It was also available to those who did not have a rateable premise and would include freelancers.

A Board member asked if the Council was ready for provision of meals during the Christmas holidays for those entitled to free school meals. The

Portfolio Hodler advised that they were looking to make sure no one fell through the gaps and that families were being supported in a more streamlined way. The COuncil was currently working with schools and school meal providers to deliver this. The current number of children eligible for free school meals was about 9000, However it was expected that the October census in schools would give higher numbers of families claiming free school meals. It was also noted that free school meals was not the only indicator of need. Some would not be able to recognise that they have a need in advance. A proposal on this would be consulted on in the next few days.

In regard to an enquiry about communications the Portfolio Holder advised that there was work ongoing on this but that there was always more which could be done. The Portfolio Holder advised that they would make sure through the wider partnership that everybody was exploiting all available contacts.

A Councillor asked about the support businesses that were not on the front line but were providing services to those businesses who had had to close. It was noted that a lot of support business fell through the provision last time and there was a push to make sure they were included but that if there were any particular concerns the Leader asked Councillors to contact him about it.

In response to a question the Portfolio Holder advised that the schools meal programme would cover the school holidays, including February Half Term, funding had to be spent by the end of the financial year. The funding could be used to target families, but it must be through the lens of the children. The Board members were advised to direct people to the 'Let's Talk Money' programme through citizens advice.

A Board member asked about the provision of other services through libraries such as citizens advice, support groups and community fridges. The Councillor was waiting for the go ahead on whether community fridges could operate from the libraries. The Portfolio Holder agreed to respond on this specific issue to the Councillor. Some services were able to continue online and there was a need to get the libraries up and running post lockdown.

The Portfolio holder for Community Safety agreed to speak to Environmental Health on whether there is anything which could be done in terms of operating a service from the libraries.

The Board was informed that local authorities would come out of lockdown into a tiered system and there was debate on where the boundary for those tiers would lie. The NHS was leading on the vaccination programme but the Council stood ready to help with this in whatever way it could. It was not yet known what reduction in restrictions was likely to be.

The Chief Executive commented that the scale of impact on local government, the economy and society could not have been predicted and

the scale of change, which BCP as a new council had withstood well could not have been expected. The Chief Executive expressed his appreciation for all staff at the Council, Councillors and volunteers.

The Chairman noted his thanks to the Portfolio Holders and to the Director of Public Health for their presentations.

95. Forward Plan

The Chairman advised that this had been discussed in the training and development session held earlier in the afternoon and that this would be amended and reported back to the next meeting of the Board.

96. Future Meeting Dates 2020/21

The Board noted the future meeting dates for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year.

The meeting ended at 7.54 pm

CHAIRMAN