

**MINUTES OF THE COVID-19 RECOVERY WORKING GROUP
HELD ON**

19 November 2020

6.30 - 7.20 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Eugenie Harvey (Chair)
Councillor Simon Carter
Councillor Joel Charles
Councillor Tony Durcan
Councillor Tony Edwards
Councillor Mark Ingall
Councillor Frances Mason

Officers

Brian Keane, Chief Executive
Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning
Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Property and Deputy to the Chief Executive
Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing
Simon Hill, Head of Governance
Andrew Murray, Head of Housing
Adam Rees, Governance Support Officer
Lisa Thornett, Corporate Governance Support Officer

43. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Johnson and Russell Perrin.

44. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Simon Carter declared a pecuniary interest as a remunerated Council appointed Director of HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd.

Councillor Joel Charles declared a pecuniary interest as a remunerated Council appointed Director of HTS (Housing and Regeneration) Ltd and HTS Group Ltd.

45. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2020 are agreed as a correct record.

46. **MATTERS ARISING**

a) Minute 39 - Update on Covid Infection Rates in Harlow

In response to questions from Councillor Carter it was explained that Covid Marshalls had been active since the first week of November. They had been dealing with complaints about possible breaches received from members of the public. They had also received training on physical and hidden disabilities, and people suffering from anxiety.

New signage in the Town Centre was being set up over the next few days.

b) Minute 41 - Letter to, and Response from, Councillor John Spence r.e. Covid Infections in Care Homes

It was confirmed that the letter seeking assurances about support for domiciliary care workers had been sent.

47. **UPDATE ON COVID WEEKLY BRIEFING REPORTS**

Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning, updated the Working Group on the rates of infection in Harlow. The latest data showed a significant increase in infection rates to 145 per 100,000. This reflected increases throughout Essex and the East of England.

The Council had now been informed that the fast test facilities to be opened across Harlow would have tests completed on site. The Council's role would be to provide premises. These tests would be targeted at employers, those in high priority areas such as care homes, and those who had been in contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19.

Brian Keane, Chief Executive, explained that Princess Alexandra Hospital was not currently at capacity and had a spare ward available in the event of increased demand.

48. **FEEDBACK FROM BUSINESS NETWORKING EVENT ON 13 NOVEMBER 2020**

The Chair said that the event had been encouraging and there had been an engaged discussion which could help start something useful.

In response to a question by Councillor Charles, the Chair said that the event would be used as a springboard to aid business recovery, and that levels of participation in the future, monthly, events would be monitored.

49. **BUSINESS GRANTS**

Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Property and Deputy to the Chief Executive, provided an update on the administration of grants for businesses that had been impacted by Covid-19. Applications would be live by Monday 23 November 2020.

The Council had received £2.8 million, which may be increased if the lockdown period was extended. Businesses were limited to receiving a maximum of £3,000 over a four week period.

Simon Freeman said that the implementation of business grants would be reported back to the Working Group, including businesses that weren't eligible. Whilst the Council could show some discretion on providing support to businesses, it still had to work within the framework set by the Government.

50. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

In response to questions raised by Councillor Charles, Brian Keane said that he had been working with the Police and the MP to develop and implement a town centre action plan to help deal with public order issues.

Through the Community Hub the Council had been contacted all residents on the NHS' clinically extremely vulnerable list to ensure they had the support they needed, and was also circulating a leaflet which provided useful support information.