

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

9 November 2021

6.30 - 7.37 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Joel Charles (Chair)
Councillor Russell Perrin (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Simon Carter
Councillor Tony Durcan
Councillor Tony Edwards

Officers

Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration
Hannah Criddle, Governance Support Officer
Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance
Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment

8. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

Proposed by Councillor Russell Perrin (seconded by Councillor Simon Carter) it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Joel Charles be appointed as Chair of the Covid-19 Recovery Working Group.

Proposed by Councillor Joel Charles (seconded by Councillor Simon Carter) it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Russell Perrin be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Covid-19 Recovery Working Group.

9. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Maggie Hulcoop.

10. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

11. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 29 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

12. **MATTERS ARISING**

Councillor Edwards raised a question on the frequency of the Working Group meetings. Councillor Charles advised that the current meeting arrangements would continue to be reviewed and, if it was felt necessary, meeting frequency would be increased. Councillor Charles noted that the infection levels in the town were not showing a sustained increase that matched the trajectory under lockdown, but the Council continues to monitor the numbers carefully.

13. **UPDATE ON COVID-19 POSITION**

Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration, noted that the weekly briefing note had been circulated to Members today. He noted that there had been a fall in infection rates over the past ten days. Andrew Bramidge went on to say that infection rates were now spread more evenly across the different age groups. He also noted that Harlow had some of the highest infection rates in Essex and vaccination levels in the town were not in line with neighbouring authorities.

Andrew Bramidge agreed to produce data comparisons across other East of England areas as part of the weekly briefings.

Councillor Charles advised that the Council would continue to proactively push out positive communications about the booster jab campaign and would continue to work with the West Essex CCG to focus on trying to reach the harder to contact adult groups in the town.

Councillor Edwards asked whether the Council had any data on the economic impact of Covid-19 on local businesses. Councillor Charles confirmed that a virtual business forum would be held shortly and noted that the forum allowed for a two-way conversation with local employers.

14. **COMMUNITY RESILIENCE STRATEGY**

Councillor Charles advised the Working Group that the draft Community Resilience Strategy had gone live for consultation this week. He noted that the strategy had five key pillars. Councillor Edwards suggested that a further pillar around “economic inequality” or “financial stability” be added and also suggested that base line data be agreed for comparison purposes. Councillor Charles advised that the Council was awaiting the Essex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) data to help inform the Council’s future approach, but would in the interim be able to share emerging evidence from the new Community Hub and agreed for the detail to be included in the weekly briefings.

Councillor Carter suggested that a public consultation meeting be held as not everyone has access to the internet. Councillor Edwards also suggested that the consultation needed to be in plain English. Councillor Charles confirmed that the Community Engagement Strategy (including

the Community Resilience Strategy) would be looked at to be made more accessible.

15. **ORAL UPDATE - RECOGNITION OF THOSE WHO CONTINUE TO RESPOND TO COVID-19**

Councillor Charles advised the Working Group that a celebration event would be held but the Council would need to decide when it would be best to hold the event. The aim would be to host an inclusive event to celebrate the individual contributions of those who responded to the pandemic and provided support to those who are most vulnerable to Covid-19. Councillor Charles welcomed suggestions from Members.

Councillor Durcan suggested that the event be town-wide rather than singling out individuals. A number of suggestions were made including events at the Playhouse or Town Park and the potential to be incorporated into the Harlow Carnival celebration.

Councillor Charles suggested that the event may be held in the summer of 2022 depending on the Covid-19 situation at that time.

16. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE WORKING GROUP