

# Cabinet – 4 November 2021

## Questions from Councillors

**1 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):**

Can the administration explain why Harlow's bid for the levelling up fund was unsuccessful and what re-assurances can they give that when the second wave of funding becomes available in Spring of next year Harlow will be successful?

**Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):**

Harlow Council's bid for Playhouse Quarter and Stone Cross Square was submitted in the first round of the government competition for the Levelling Up Fund.

In June, we secured £23.7 million from the Government to kick start key regeneration projects. We submitted a bid as part of the Levelling Up Fund for further investment to support our regeneration plans.

Our bid was scored very highly by Government officials and we have been invited into the second round of funding expected in the Spring of next year. The Council strongly welcomes this as it gives our new administration more time to ensure our bid fits into our wider regeneration plans.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):**

When was the bid of £23.7 million submitted?

**Supplementary reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):**

I will get an officer to send a reply in writing.

**2 Councillor Tony Edwards to Councillor Joel Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):**

Noting the next meeting of the Covid Recovery Working Group has now been scheduled for the 9<sup>th</sup> of November. Could the Community Resilience Portfolio Holder explain what he understands to be the terms of reference of the Working Group and why the Group has only had one meeting (28<sup>th</sup> June) since the Conservative administration took office in May of this year.

**Reply from Councillor Joel Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):**

At Annual Full Council, the working group meeting dates for the municipal year were agreed formally. It was agreed by Annual Full Council that meetings would only be held on a quarterly basis. The September meeting was postponed because it clashed with another meeting. At the point where we were planning for that meeting to be moved, infection rates in the town had dropped and the governance cycle meant that a meeting was not able to be arranged. It was agreed that the Covid Recovery Working Group would meet early this month. I can confirm that the working group will be on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November. Members of the working group should receive the agenda shortly.

The Council continues to monitor Covid-19 infection levels in the town carefully and stands ready to work closely with all community leaders to do everything possible to safeguard public health if circumstances change.

The terms of the working group are:-

- (i) To advise the Portfolio Holder on the proposals contained within the developing pandemic action plan including short, medium and long term objectives and measures taking into account the changing landscape.
- (ii) To provide a forum for consultation on measures and strategy within the pandemic action plan.
- (iii) To advise and comment on work with regional health officials to prepare for and mitigate any further outbreak or second wave of infection in Harlow;
- (iv) To identify Council-related impacts that may require additional resources or service delivery methods; and
- (v) To provide a focus for:

*Developing greater community resilience*

- community action, cohesion, and greater resilience.
- supporting the recovery of BAME communities, clinically vulnerable and other marginalised groups
- engagement with the voluntary sector and faith-based communities

*Educating the public about health risks and working to mitigate future outbreaks*

- preparation and planning to ensure, with other public sector agencies, that in the face of future outbreaks or emergencies, all residents are

given the best possible health protection and outcomes, particularly those at risk of health inequalities.

- community education on the on-going public health risk and to mitigate future Outbreaks

*Advancing the post-COVID local economy*

- proposals for new ways of working
- business engagement
- innovative ways of growing the local economy

(v) To harness data and monitor recovery performance to ensure that services delivered post COVID, meet the changing needs of residents and businesses.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Tony Edwards to Councillor Joel Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):**

Noting that between 22 July 2020 and 22 March 2021 there were 10 meetings, the importance given to it at that time, and I hear now that it has now been reduced to quarterly meetings and noting that the Covid pandemic is not over yet by a long way, will there be a facility to revisit with the members of that group the frequency of meetings and given the enormity of the agenda that we are going to have to tackle will we have the opportunity of meeting on a more frequent basis to address the issues that are likely to come forward?

**Supplementary reply from Councillor Joel Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):**

I am happy to discuss at the next Covid Recovery Working Group on 9 November the frequency of meetings. We obviously need to keep the situation particularly around Covid infections under constant review and the Council does do this. There are two key things I will just add on the back of what Councillor Edwards has said. The Council has already commenced activity around community resilience with its strategy and consultation going forward and you will see on the agenda for later this evening that we have set out our position statement around our Health and Wellbeing Strategy and considerations that we want to take forward. I am very keen and look forward to the thoughts of all Members on that cross party working group. My commitment to that working group is that we will keep the situation under review and will look at the frequency of our engagement to determine what actions need to be taken going forward. I look forward to that discussion coming up early next week.