

**Notes of a meeting of the Covid Response Working Group
held on Microsoft Teams**

Monday 11th January 2021 – 6pm

Present

Cllr Andy Foulsham (Chair)
Cllr Gabby Barody (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Charlie Birks
Cllr Cheryl Briggs
Cllr Eric de la Harpe
Cllr Alex Greenaway

In attendance

Louise Brown Communications, Marketing and Events Officer (CME Officer)
Nigel Warner Town Clerk

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Lorraine Oates and Samantha Bowring (Chair F and GP/ Leader). **Noted.**

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Notes

The Committee received and considered the notes of the meeting held on 14th December 2020.

It was **RESOLVED** that the notes of the meeting of the Covid Response working group held on 14th December 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

Cllr Gabby Barody updated members on the Waitrose vouchers she had obtained and confirmed that as Citizens Advice had been closed, she took them instead to Abingdon Food bank where they were gratefully received.

The Communications, Marketing and Events officer updated the members on the marketplace choir request that was considered at the last meeting of 14/12/2020 and confirmed that the choir did not go ahead in the end.

5. Update from District Council

Cllr Andy Foulsham updated the members on the current Covid-19 statistics for the area confirming that the figures were looking bad. Cllr Foulsham confirmed that the Vale of White Horse District Council had set up a

community hub to help those worse affected by the pandemic. Cllr Foulsham confirmed that some of the Vale of White Horse District Councils regular services would either be suspended or delayed as a lot of staff had been deployed to the community hub. For example, the Garden Waste Service was being suspended due to staff shortages.

6. Update from County Council

Cllr Gabby Barody updated the members on the School lunch vouchers, confirming that these were continuing and a recent statement contradicting this had been corrected after Layla Moran had been involved.

Cllr Barody confirmed that the number of students attending schools was at its highest number in any lockdown with some schools reporting a third of pupils in. Members discussed the added pressure this has on teachers and the concern that teachers were not considered priority in the disruption of the vaccine.

Cllr Alex Greenaway asked if there was anything members could be doing to change this, and Cllr Andy Foulsham confirmed to members that Layla Moran had recently been lobbying for this and he encouraged members to support Layla's efforts on this.

Members also discussed the issue some school pupils were facing with digital poverty; not having computers or internet at home to complete home schooling.

Members discussed if there was anything that could be done locally to assist with this.

Cllr Gabby Barody agreed to find the names of charities that are collecting and dispersing old, donated laptops and the Communications, Marketing and Events Officer would add this information to the website once Cllr Barody had emailed it over.

The Communications, Marketing and Events Officer also agreed to email the local schools to enquire about their individual needs to see if more could be done locally. This information would be fed back the committee at future meetings.

Cllr Andy Foulsham confirmed that the vaccines were currently being rolled out across Abingdon.

Cllr Charlie Birks asked if the guildhall could be used for this while it is closed. It was agreed that the Communications, Marketing and Events Officer would contact Adreana Partridge from the County Council to offer up the facilities if they could make use of them.

Cllr Gabby Barody also enquired if the Abingdon Leisure Centre had been considered for this and Cllr Andy Foulsham confirmed that this was slightly more complicated as it was not run directly by the Vale of White horse District

Council, but by GLL instead. However, it was confirmed the Communications, Marketing and Events Officer could raise this with Adreana Partridge for consideration.

7. Things in place for Full Lockdown

The Communications, Marketing and Events Officer updated the committee on the current situation with the Councillors services, confirming that the website was being kept up to date with the latest information and the new noticeboards in town now contained this information too.

8. Update from Abingdon Coronavirus Response group

Cllr Alex Greenaway provided members with an update on the Abingdon Coronavirus Response group; confirming that whilst requests had increased slightly during the third lockdown, they were still very manageable. Cllr Andy Foulsham requested that Cllr Greenaway pass on our thanks to the Community group for all their help and time.

Cllr Charlie Birks requested an update on Abimed's and the Town Clerk confirmed they were still operating an emergency service, but this was considerably reduced from previous lockdowns now pharmacies have set up delivery services.

Cllr Alex Greenaway asked members if anyone knew if the Abingdon Food Bank still had a surplus of food supplies and if use could be made of this. The Communications, Marketing and Events Officer confirmed she would email the Food Bank to find out and would update the committee at future meetings.

9. Funding Request

Members considered a funding request that had been received from Di Nixon.

Ms Nixon had set up an initiative to provide the Intensive Care Unit at the JR with bottled water and 'on the go' snacks for nurses working long shifts during the pandemic. In order to do this Di Nixon has set up a 'Go fund me' page and will use the money raised to buy the products and physically take them up to the JR herself.

Members discussed the application and agreed it was a worthwhile investment they wanted to contribute to but were aware of the risks with a 'go fund me page' as there is no legal obligation for the organiser to use the money for the specified project.

Members asked the Town Clerks advise on this and he advised that provided the organiser was able to produce receipts and a paper trail this would likely be adequate, but that he would consult the RFO for final guidance.

It was proposed by Cllr Alex Greenaway, seconded by Cllr Andy Foulsham and RESOLVED that £250 be made from the Covid Emergency fund as a contribution to this initiative and that the funds be transferred in a way officers felt was appropriate.

10.AOB

Members requested that the Covid Response Working Group be published across social media so residents were aware the Council was meeting weekly to consider its response to the pandemic.

Cllr Cheryl Briggs updated members on an email she had received from a concerned resident about play areas still being open and children using them with minimal social distancing.

The play area in question was owned by The Vale of White Horse District Council and, whilst members agreed this particular concern should be directed to the Vale of White Horse District Council, it was agreed that a social media post should be produced reminding all users of the play areas to do so safely.

Cllr Gabby Barody reminded members that there was a balance to consider between the low risks of transmission between children outside and the benefits on their physical and mental health of being able to go outside and use the play areas. Members felt it was important to keep the facilities open, but that it would be beneficial to remind residents to use them safely.

Cllr Gabby Barody confirmed she had contacted Willows Shake shop to enquire how many school meals they prepared over the Christmas holidays and was awaiting a response. Cllr Barody would update members at a future committee meeting.

Cllr Gabby Barody and Cllr Alex Greenaway both agreed to complete the necessary forms regarding funding that were still outstanding by this committee and send over to the RFO.

11.Next meeting

Monday 18th January – 6pm

The meeting rose at 7.00 pm.