

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

Monday 15th February 2021 – 6pm

Present

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

In attendance

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

1. Apologies

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

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Notes

The Committee received and considered the notes of the meeting held on 1st February 2021.

It was **RESOLVED** that the notes of the meeting of the Covid Response Working Group held on 1st February 2021 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

None.

5. Update from District Council

Cllr Andy Foulsham confirmed he had received an email from the Vale of White Horse District Council as a response to a question he asked at their council meeting recently. Cllr Foulsham had shared this, via email, with members prior to the meeting and encouraged them to refer to it as it provided a good summary on free school meal provisions for half term and Easter.

Cllr Foulsham also confirmed that under 70's and the clinically vulnerable were now being offered the Covid vaccine and that the Council should be encouraging anyone 70 or over who was yet to receive the vaccine to contact their GP.

The Town Clerk asked if anyone was aware of how the vaccine was being offered locally (Phone/letter). Members felt this varied according to the area and the GP practice but that a common method being used was telephone calls.

Members discussed an issue that had taken place at the Kassam Stadium Vaccination Centre at the weekend that had resulted in people being turned away from the Centre without receiving their vaccination. Members confirmed this had been a miscommunication regarding whether nursery staff were being offered the vaccination at this point or not.

Whilst members sympathized with those individuals, Members were generally happy with the way the Centre was being run and felt it was efficient and safe. They acknowledged this communication issue had been a national issue not just a local one and that steps were being taken to ensure it did not happen again.

6. Update from County Council

Cllr Gabby Barody confirmed she did not know of any further updates relevant to this committee.

Cllr Andy Foulsham spoke to members about a detailed area map from the County Council that showed the Covid rates in two areas of Abingdon were now low enough to show as white, meaning there were fewer than three cases. Members all agreed this was encouraging news and were pleased to see the figures heading in the right direction.

However, it was agreed that hospital admissions are still considerably higher than the first wave and that the NHS and its staff were still under immense pressure. Cllr Gabby Barody confirmed that when people used the phrase 'to Overwhelm the NHS' they were referring to people being turned away and denied the care they needed. Cllr Barody confirmed to members that the Country had managed to avoid this, despite it being a very real possibility a few weeks ago.

Members all agreed that whilst figures were coming down it was really important that residents be encouraged to stay as vigilant as ever. Any relaxation of the guidelines too early could result in another wave that would affect the economy, the public safety and emotional wellbeing beyond anything seen yet.

It was agreed that this message of vigilance would be spread across the Town Council website and the social media platforms.

7. Digital Poverty

Cllr Andy Foulsham confirmed this project was almost complete with the funding being released directly to the schools tomorrow (Tuesday 16th February). Confirmation of the full amount awarded, and suppliers' details, had been sent to all schools.

Members asked if there was a photo opportunity for this that could be published across social media.

The Town Clerk confirmed he was meeting the clerk of Christs Hospital this week and would arrange a photo opportunity with her.

8. Update from Abingdon Coronavirus Response group

Cllr Alex Greenaway was not at the meeting so an update from him could not be provided.

The Comms, Marketing and Events Officer updated the committee on the level of admin support she was providing the Community group; confirming it was still very low and manageable and that she wasn't aware of any issues within the group.

9. AOB

The Town Clerk updated the committee on a notification received from the National Association of Local Councils regarding Virtual meetings and confirmed that they will come to an end on 7th May 2021. After this date face to face meetings should resume. It was felt Primary legislation is needed for virtual meetings to continue and that there is no parliamentary time for this.

The Town Clerk expressed concern over this as the Town Council had been wanting to introduce hybrid meetings even past the lockdown restrictions. He confirmed the building is already set up and in place for hybrid meetings if permitted.

The Town Clerk suggested that members may wish to lobby their MP on this particular issue.

Cllr Gabby Barody felt contact should be made with Layla Moran and that the safety of members, staff and residents should be the priority when considering this issue.

Cllr Andy Foulsham confirmed he would contact Layla Moran to obtain her input on this issue. Would update committee at future meetings.

Market:

The Town Clerk confirmed that there had recently been queries from certain traders regarding whether or not they were permitted to trade. (Most notably the plant stall). We have not permitted them to trade this lockdown and The Town Clerk confirmed that this has now been released as official guidelines. Whilst members had sympathy for the stall holders, they agreed the safety of residents and traders was the highest priority.

Cllr Andy Foulsham thanked the Town Council for continuing to operate the Market Place safely and successfully.

Members were happy to continue with fortnightly meetings. No need to increase to weekly but felt the need to move to three-weekly was a bit premature at the moment.

10. Next meeting

Monday 1st March – 6pm

The meeting rose at 6.45 pm.