

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

Monday 12th July 2021 – 6pm

Present

Cllr Andy Foulsham (Chair)
Cllr Cheryl Briggs
Cllr Eric de la Harpe
Cllr Alex Greenaway
Cllr Jim Halliday
Cllr Lorraine Oates

In attendance

Louise Brown Community Services and Events Officer (Clerk to the meeting)
Nigel Warner Town Clerk

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Gabby Barody.

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Andy Foulsham declared a non-pecuniary interest as a previous volunteer for Archway Foundation who had submitted a Covid Bounce back grant application to be considered at Agenda item 7.

3. Notes

The Committee received and considered the notes of the meeting held on 21st June 2021.

It was **RESOLVED** that the notes of the meeting of the Covid Response Advisory Working Group held on 21st June 2021 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

Cllr Jim Halliday queried why the Business meeting with the Vale of White Horse District Council that had been scheduled for 24th June had not gone ahead; the Town Clerk confirmed there had been a need for a clearer agenda ahead of this meeting. Cllr Andy Foulsham confirmed that he would pick this up directly with the leader of the Council, Cllr Samantha Bowring and the representative from the Vale of White Horse District Council.

5. Update from Vale of White Horse District Council and County Council

Cllr Andy Foulsham provided an update from the Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council confirming that there has been a significant and concerning increase in Covid cases in the County with figures now being higher than in the previous two waves with the result that the director for public health in the County has extended the key worker testing.

Members acknowledged that there has been mixed messaging from Central Government and the increased need for consistent messaging from us.

Oxfordshire County Council had released guidance against traveling to Oxford Centre unless essential and members requested that we echo this message in our own communications.

Members felt that the levels were high in areas with student accommodation and houses of multiple occupation and were hopeful that the Summer break from university would result in fewer cases.

Members discussed how the guidance from Central Government should impact the lifting of restrictions in Abingdon and Cllr Jim Halliday noted that as it was an ever changing, dynamic situation we should keep a close eye on the figures and act accordingly at the time rather than making firm plans that might need changing as the situation develops.

Cllr Alex Greenaway asked the Town Clerk how the office staff were feeling about the relaxation of restrictions and the opening up of key services and the Town Clerk confirmed that the staff had been consulted in a series of meetings on this topic and were now working on a Rota basis that would see full time members of staff working a 3:2 pattern with 3 days a week in the office and 2 days from home. Thought had been given to social distancing when drawing up the rota and necessary steps had been taken to protect our staff (sneeze guards and masks purchased and clear signs with capacity levels displayed).

6. Covid Recovery project

At the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting on 30th March 2021, three key objectives were identified for Covid Recovery within the town.

Members discussed them as below:

Grants: The Community Services and Events Officer confirmed there had been 2 applications received and members discussed as below:

Archway Foundation: An email had been received from this organisation about the possible financial assistance from the council. Members discussed how no amount had been specifically requested and no specific bounce back project highlighted and whilst they were minded to support organisations during this time, they would prefer further details with a specific project and amount confirmed.

The Community Services and Events officer would email Archway Foundation the grants application form and invite them to submit an official application that the committee would then consider.

Music Centre grant: An application for £1450 had been received to cover the cost of their Covid Bounce Back project. Members discussed the applications as below:

Cllr Eric de la Harpe was in support of the application as musicians had suffered during the Covid Pandemic and felt we should be encouraging this within Abingdon. Cllr Alex Greenaway also felt this was definitely covid specific and that we should support where possible, but felt we should be giving a percentage rather than the full amount.

It was RESOLVED that £1000 from the Covid Emergency Grant Fund would be awarded to the Music Centre Trust.

Additional Benches within the Town Centre: The Community Services and Events officer confirmed that an order had been placed for these and they were due to arrive and be installed by 6th August. Members extended their thanks to the Outdoor Services Manager for actioning so quickly.

Engagement with Local Businesses: As outlined above Cllr Andy Foulsham has agreed to pick this up directly with the Vale of White Horse District Council in consultation with the leader of the council.

7. General update on Town Council Services

The Town Clerk provided members with an update on how stage four would impact Abingdon Town Council; confirming that the risk assessments had all been updated and that despite the Governments move away from restrictions, we would still be data rather than date led and would still encourage members and staff to take regular lateral flow tests and remain cautious.

Staff members were being actively encouraged to stay away from the office if unwell (even if displaying not obviously covid symptoms).

8. AOB

Cllr Alex Greenaway asked if there was an update on when Abingdon Park Run would be returning. Cllr Eric de la Harpe confirmed that he had been working on this as part of his role as a Vale Councillor and confirmed that despite a slight delay due to land ownership Park run would be beginning again on Saturday 24th July.

Cllr Alex Greenaway also asked members to consider if the Town Council should be formally recognising the volunteers that have helped during the Covid Pandemic. The Town Clerk reminded members that the High Sheriff awards and Mayors awards had been awarded to volunteer groups and members were cautious of diluting these awards by doing too many throughout the year.

Members agreed that the new benches in Roysse Court Gardens would be a suitable place for plaques to be installed as recognition for the work of the volunteers and this would be RECOMMENDED up to the Urgency committee.

9. Next meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted as Monday 16th August 2021 – 6pm

The meeting rose at 7:15 pm