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EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

23 June 2020

Response to Coronavirus / COVID-19 Pandemic Report by Head of Legal

FOR NOTING

Portfolio Holder: Leader of the Council, Cllr Richard Millard

Key Decision: No

Report No: EHCL/017/2020

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Cabinet has requested that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider the Council's response to the coronavirus / COVID-19 pandemic and the role of Scrutiny in contributing to the longer-term approach to 'recovery'

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee note the council's response to the coronavirus / COVID-19 pandemic and submit its comments on the draft report to the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 9 July 2020.

3.0 Summary

- 3.1 The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK has presented an unprecedented challenge requiring an immediate and fast-paced response from the Council and its partners in tackling the one of the most significant challenges faced by society in living memory.
- 3.2 This attached draft report seeks to precis this response and highlight some of the main activities and issues. The Cabinet is keen to ensure the Council's COVID-19 response was effective and timely hence the recommendation to this Committee to review the Council's response to date and a request that the committee consider how scrutiny can contribute to a longer-term approach to recovery.

4.0 Summary of the Council's Response to the Pandemic

- 4.1 The Covid-19 response is co-ordinated by five workstreams, directed and overseen by the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team:
- (a) Community Support;
 - (b) Business Support;

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- (c) Staffing;
- (d) Communications; and
- (e) Finance

4.2 The strategic objectives of the Council's response were:

- (a) to support the most vulnerable in our community;
- (b) to support local businesses and administer support packages as set out by central government;
- (c) to maintain delivery of council services and in particular to protect critical service delivery;
- (d) to move to remote working for those staff who can work from home and to maintain a safe environment for those working at the Plaza or in the community;
- (e) to keep all stakeholders informed and to signpost the support available; and
- (f) to monitor the Council's finances and take the actions required to ensure financial sustainability in the short, medium and long term.

4.3 Full details of the Council's response are set out in the attached draft Cabinet report.

5.0 The Role of Scrutiny

5.1 The Leader of the Council has invited the Committee to provide a critical friend challenge to Council's response to date and in doing so voice the concerns of their constituents. Any comments or recommendations made by the Committee will be reported to Cabinet when it meets on 9 July 2020 to consider the final report.

5.2 One of the main principles of good scrutiny is to drive improvements and the committee is free to make suggestions which it deems may assist the councils future actions in the response to this pandemic.

Option 1: Do nothing. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee may set either minimal or no work programme and as an after the event consultee using the 'call in' mechanism. This option is not recommended and would limit the ability of scrutiny to help shape the future activities of the council.

Option 2: The Overview & Scrutiny Committee establish a work programme and any associated groups to undertake separate reviews on topics it wishes to focus on. These groups to submit their findings to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, which in turn will consider its recommendations to Cabinet, if any.

6.0 Implications

6.1 **Resources:**

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The impact on resources should be limited to the time engaged by the Committee. It is envisaged these additional costs can be met within the existing budget.

6.2 Legal:

The Council is a 1st tier emergency responder in a civil emergency. The emergency response is coordinated through the local resilience forum (LRF). The County, District and Borough Councils have agreements in place which help us to set out the relevant roles and responsibilities of each Council in an emergency. This reflects the different obligations on each tier of local government such as social care provision, or housing that fall to each Council. The statutory obligations remain, and they are overlaid with additional obligations such as administering grants and assisting in the coordination of volunteers. All these obligations create potential additional legal implications for the Council.

6.3 Strategy:

The Council's response to Covid 19 is an exceptional event and falls outside of the normal council strategy.

6.4 Risks:

The Council is maintaining a dedicated risk register for Covid-19 which is updated on a regular basis and which details risk and mitigations taken in managing the emerging risks. This is in addition to the normal risk management procedures in place. The Covid Risk Register can be found at *Appendix 15 of the draft Cabinet report*

6.5 Communications:

The communications strategy is set out in Appendix 11 of the draft Cabinet Report.

6.6 For the Community:

The pandemic and the lockdown introduced to control the spread of the virus has had profound impacts on Council operations as well as the way local enterprises function and residents and community groups behave. The Council's response should aim to ease this impact.

6.7 The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been completed and is set out in Appendix 16 of the draft Cabinet Report

7.0 Consultation

N/A

Appendices:

Appendix A – Draft Cabinet Report (exempt document)

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Background Papers: *None*

Agreed and signed off by:

Head of Legal Services: 12 June 2020

Head of Finance: 15/6/2020

Contact Officer: David Brown
Job Title: Head of Legal
Telephone: 02392 446524
E-Mail: David.brown@easthants.gov.uk