



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED – ALL

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Audit & Risk Committee

17th June 2020

Member Scrutiny & Involvement During the Covid-19 Pandemic

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF DELIVERY COMMUNICATIONS AND POLITICAL GOVERNANCE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the committee on the scrutiny and member involvement during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report provides Audit & Risk Committee a summary of how scrutiny and member involvement has been maintained during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.2 This report is not focusing on what the Council has done to support the city during the COVID-19 pandemic, although some high-level background is provided.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Committee note the report and comment.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The outbreak of the Coronavirus was declared in December 2019, with the UK government introducing social distancing in March and the country going into “lockdown”.
- 4.2 Early on in this process the Council activated its business continuity plans. This has meant services such as waste collection and key enforcement activity to protect the safety of our residents and businesses has been maintained. During this time many of our services have also been able to continue operating through home-working, which has been supported by the significant work of the ICT division. Although some services have

necessarily closed in accordance with Government regulations, such as leisure centres, libraries and De Montfort Hall.

- 4.3 Some services have seen additional pressures placed on them during this period to continue supporting local residents and businesses. Examples include Adult Social Care, Housing and Homelessness, Revenues and Customer Support and Public Health
- 4.4 In addition to this, the Government announced a series of financial packages for the Council, residents and businesses. The largest in financial terms is the Small Business Grant and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant scheme, followed more recently by the Local Discretionary Business Grant scheme. The Council expects to have allocated over £70m to eligible businesses, charities and sole traders by the time the schemes close.
- 4.5 Full details on the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic can be found the report to Overview Select Committee on 21st May 2020, link below.

<http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk:8071/documents/s111432/Leicester%20City%20Councils%20Coronavirus%20Response.pdf>

5. COMMITTEE MEETINGS & INFORMAL BRIEFINGS

- 5.1 In March, the Council made the decision to cancel committee meetings in the light of social distancing and isolation requirements.
- 5.2 Following this decision, the Government introduced regulations to enable virtual meetings to take place, being formally enacted on the 4th April 2020. Therefore, it was not possible to hold formal committee meetings until this point.
- 5.3 Adapting to these regulations and ensuring both staff and members were familiar and able to use the ICT systems for virtual meetings required quite a lot of preparation, including addressing wide ranging ICT requirements. Significant testing was also required to ensure we were ready to hold formal, public meetings virtually.
- 5.4 The first virtual meeting was held by Licensing on the 24th April, followed by Planning on the 13th May 2020.
- 5.5 Since then OSC had a virtual meeting on the 21st May focusing on Covid-19. Other Scrutiny Commissions and Committees are now progressing as demonstrated by this meeting.
- 5.6 Whilst formal meetings have not been possible, the Executive and officers have worked hard to engage with all members throughout this process and examples are provided below:

- 15th April 2020 - Briefing for OSC members and Labour Group officers
- 21st April 2020 – Briefing for Leicester East members
- 22nd April 2020 – Briefing for Leicester South members
- 23rd April 2020 – Briefing for Leicester West members
- 13th May 2020 – All member briefing

5.7 For all briefings, members were invited to raise questions in advance to enable responses to be provided during the briefing or afterwards if appropriate. Further to this, notes from each briefing were circulated to all members.

5.8 Members have received regular updates via email at least weekly from the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance. In addition, the City Mayor has emailed about a number of specific issues. All such emails encouraged members to raise questions/issues with either the City Mayor, Executive or officers as appropriate, and to feedback aspects they wanted to know more about or have clarified.

5.9 Member and Civic Support Team have contacted members by phone to check on any issues or concerns. Members have also been receiving the all staff emails and press releases.

5.10 Although formal meetings were unable to happen for a short period this report demonstrates how scrutiny and member involvement has continued throughout this unprecedented period for the Council.

6. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

i. Financial implications

None arising directly from this update report.

ii. Legal Implications

No direct legal implications arising from this update report.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/ NO	Paragraph/References within the Report
Equal Opportunities	No	
Policy	No	
Sustainable and Environmental	No	
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	
Corporate Parenting	No	

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Leicester City Council's Coronavirus Response – OSC 21st May 2020.

8. CONSULTATIONS

None

9. REPORT AUTHOR

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