

6 MAY 2020

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 6 May 2020

- * Cllr Barry Rickman (Chairman)
- * Cllr Edward Heron (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Diane Andrews
- * Jill Cleary
- * Michael Harris

Councillors:

- * Jeremy Heron
- * Alison Hoare
- * Mark Steele

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Ann Bellows
Sue Bennison
Geoffrey Blunden
Hilary Brand
Fran Carpenter
Steve Clarke
Anne Corbridge
Steve Davies
Jan Duke
Barry Dunning

Councillors:

Jacqui England
David Hawkins
Christine Hopkins
Alan O'Sullivan
Caroline Rackham
Alvin Reid
Steve Rippon-Swaine
Derek Tipp
Neil Tungate
Christine Ward

Officers Attending:

Bob Jackson, Alan Bethune, Tim Davis, Louise Evans, Grainne O'Rourke, Colin Read, Daniel Reynafarje, Andy Rogers, Manjit Sandhu, Claire Upton-Brown, Karen Wardle, Matt Wisdom and Mark Williams

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence received from Cabinet Members.

77 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2020, be confirmed and signed.

78 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllr E Heron declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 5 on the agenda, at minute 81 below. The interest concerned his membership of Hampshire County Council. He concluded that there were no grounds under common law to prevent him from remaining in the meeting to speak and vote.

79 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman confirmed that Mr Bruce Tindall, Chairman of Pennington and Lymington Lanes Society had registered to speak in respect of item 7 on the agenda – Local Plan. Mr Tindall had chosen to submit a statement which would be read out to the meeting shortly before item 7 commenced, at minute 83 below. A copy of the statement is attached to these minutes as Appendix B for reference.

80 RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS - COVID-19

Portfolio Holders gave a presentation on the Council's response to the Coronavirus – COVID-19 pandemic. The slides from the presentation are attached to these minutes as Appendix A for reference.

The Council had been working closely to national government guidelines and delivering on government priorities, (which aligned well with the Council's own corporate objectives) in supporting:

- the most vulnerable in our community
- local business and our economy
- delivery of essential local public services

The Council had responded in many different ways, examples of which included such measures as:

- A Shielding Hub had been established to protect residents, supporting the most vulnerable in our community with food packages, prescription collections and social contact. The New Forest Hub was receiving the largest number of referrals in Hampshire.
- Accommodation for Rough Sleepers and continuation of essential housing maintenance
- Business financial support – passing on over £40 million of financial support to over 3,000 businesses. NFDC was in the top 20% of over 300 local authorities in managing this support.
- Council Taxpayer Hardship Fund of £886,000 available and being targeted at those in greatest need.
- Keeping essential services running and identifying critical staff. Thanks to investment in ICT over recent times, the Council's 400 office staff were able to work from home.

- Refuse and recycling and 4-weekly glass collections were continuing on schedule.
- Public Toilets had been closed for the safety of New Forest residents.
- All Health & Leisure Centres closed to the public and payments suspended. All Instructor staff, majority of operational staff and additional management staff had been furloughed. Dibden Golf Course was also closed.
- Business continuity plans for lockdown had been prepared for Planning and Building Control.
- Parking fees had been suspended to assist those helping the vulnerable. Town car parks open but coastal car parks closed to encourage social distancing.

It was noted that many Health and Leisure staff had been furloughed or redeployed. Some staff had been redeployed to support essential activity such as the Council's Local Response Centre for the most clinically vulnerable residents in the New Forest.

An impact assessment would be carried out in the following areas to support the development of recovery plan, via the establishment of four new Task and Finish Groups:

- Community (including volunteers and charities)
- Local business and economy
- Service delivery
- Council finances and resources

It was unlikely that there would be a clear separation between the response and recovery stages i.e. the Council will still be responding to COVID-19 when it is also implementing its recovery plan.

The Leader of the Council responded to a question concerning financial reductions and non-essential services. He said that the administration would adhere to its promises, and emphasised that each portfolio holder had set out details of the investment of human and financial resources where needed to address the emergency. The Council's prudent financial approach had ensured that the Authority was in as good a position as any to meet the ongoing and future challenges. As many councillors as possible would have the opportunity to participate in the new Task and Finish Groups, shaping the 'new normal', and he encouraged all members to engage.

The Leader of the Council thanked staff and members for all their efforts in meeting the challenge of the COVID-19 emergency.

81 REPORT FROM THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER ON THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF CORONAVIRUS - COVID-19**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Cabinet note the financial implications as set out throughout the report.
2. That the Cabinet recommend to Council that:-
 - (a) The budget for 2020/21 be updated to take into account the emergency funding received and the new expenditure pressures and income losses being sustained by the Council; and
 - (b) The Medium Term Financial Plan be updated to reflect the challenges to its delivery that have arisen as a result of COVID-19.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Finance, Investment and Corporate Services.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

Cllr E Heron declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of this item. The interest concerned his membership of Hampshire County Council, which had involvement with some aspects of NFDC's financial arrangements. He concluded that there were no grounds under common law to prevent him from remaining in the meeting to speak and vote.

DISCUSSION:

The Council's 2020/21 budget and forward looking Medium Term Financial Plan agreed earlier this year had both been significantly impacted by COVID-19.

Since publication of the report, the Council had received notice of its allocation of the second tranche of Government funding (£1.6bn), which totalled £1.783m. With the Council losing approximately £1m in income per month and incurring additional expenditure pressures in response to COVID-19, the support funding and the general budget reserve of £3m would be fully utilised by the end of August 2020.

The Council will continue to set out its position to central government and is supporting calls for further funding to be released to the sector.

The Council would also be reviewing and prioritising options for maintaining essential statutory services. There were still many unknown factors, including the future timescale of the lockdown measures as well as further government funding.

82 NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL'S SHARED OWNERSHIP SCHEME

RESOLVED:

That the introduction and implementation of a Shared Ownership Scheme based on the Shared Ownership Policy at Appendix 1, be approved.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

PORTFOLIO:

Housing Services

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and highlighted that, whilst there would always be a great demand for social rented properties, there were many households within the District who were renting in the private sector but who would never be able to buy a home of their own due to high house prices in the area.

Under the proposed Shared Ownership Scheme, households would be able to acquire a share in a property, anywhere between 25% to 75%. The scheme then promoted the opportunity, when affordable, for households to increase their share up to 100%.

The Portfolio Holder responded to a question on the timing of the introduction of the scheme and felt that there was no advantage to delaying its implementation as there was a need to help people onto the property ladder now.

83 ADOPTION OF THE LOCAL PLAN 2016-2036 PART ONE: PLANNING STRATEGY**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet recommends to Council that:

- a. The Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy, as attached in Appendix One, be adopted as part of the Development Plan for the area.
- b. The Local Plan Policies Map be updated to include the changes set out in Appendix Two.
- c. Authority is delegated to the Chief Planning Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure, to make any final editing changes considered appropriate to the document prior to final publication.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Planning and Infrastructure.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

A statement by Mr Bruce Tindall, Chairman of Pennington and Lymington Lanes Society (PALLS) was read out concerning the Local Plan. The Pennington and Lymington Lanes Society, a local community group with 700 members who were committed to protect and enhance the special character of the lanes to the south of Pennington and Lymington. Mr Tindall expressed concerns over the consultation and process, in particular in relation to site SS6 and claimed that their objections had been ignored. A copy of the statement is attached to these minutes as Appendix B for reference.

The Chief Planning Officer responded that these points had been addressed at the Local Plan Examination hearing on 3 June 2019, by the Council's appointed QC, and had been fully debated, but the representations made by PALLS in respect of this site had not been accepted by the Inspector. The Chief Planning Officer was in

contact with PALLS concerning the access arrangements but this would need to be dealt with as part of the detailed planning applications.

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and paid tribute to all staff involved in the preparation of the Local Plan in what was a very challenging local area, and was very pleased with the outcome.

The Portfolio Holder proposed a minor amendment to Recommendation c, to the effect that the Chief Planning Officer consult with him as necessary on final amendments to the Local Plan document before publication, which was accepted.

CHAIRMAN

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Response to COVID-19

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Cabinet

6 May 2020

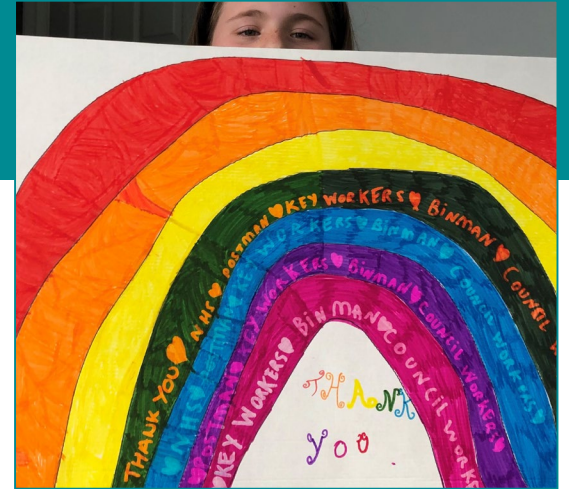


Minute Item 80

Leader's portfolio

Our Community Matters

- Shielding Hub established to protect New Forest Residents on advice of NHS England, and supporting some of the most vulnerable in our community with food packages, prescription collections and social contact. Hub is receiving largest number of referrals in Hampshire.
- Rough Sleeping – ensuring no-one is left on the street (including “Sofa Surfers”) (22 found accommodation).
- Business financial support – passing on over £40 million of financial support to business in the form of grants. To date, we have processed £33.375 million of grants to over 2,742 businesses; 94% of those who had completed a return.
- Council Taxpayer financial support – Hardship Fund of £886,000 available. To date utilised approximately £350,000.
- Keeping essential services running and identifying critical staff - each Portfolio Holder will explain what actions have taken place and what is happening.



Community Affairs portfolio

Local Response Centre



- NFDC's LRC was established on 31 March 2020 in support of the Hampshire Coronavirus Helpline Hantshelp4vulnerable, to provide help to the most vulnerable, including those under the Government shielding measures who currently have no family or friends to support them.
- The LRC consists of a team of about 15 Council employees from various departments who receive, process and action referrals from the County Council helpline. Referrals relating to people who are under the Government's Shielding Measures are dealt with by the Council direct, with others being referred to the voluntary sector via Community First.
- A food hub has been set up at Applemore Health & Leisure Centre to receive food supplies and box up into food parcels for delivery for those on the shielding list, who haven't yet received their Government food parcel or to those for which the Government food parcel isn't appropriate, due to dietary requirements or other needs.
- In the first two weeks 336 referrals were received. New Forest is receiving more referrals than any of the other District or Borough Councils. 499 referral received to 20/4/20.
- 159 food deliveries have been made from the Food Hub (to 20/04/20).
- To date, more than 40 people/families have been identified for ongoing support through weekly food deliveries.



Community Affairs portfolio

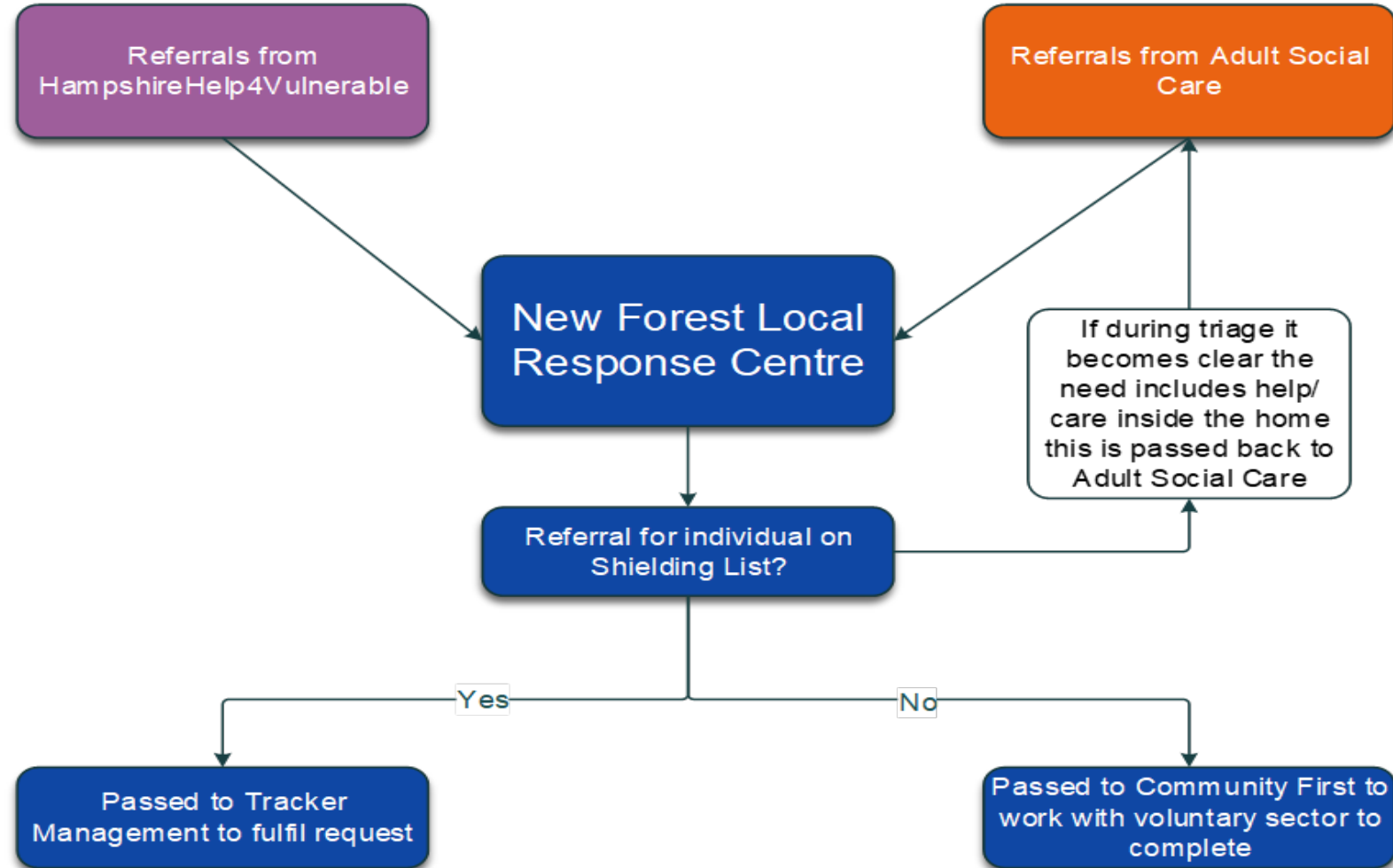
Shielding Hub

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Local Community Groups and Town & Parish Councils – all supporting those in need in the District.

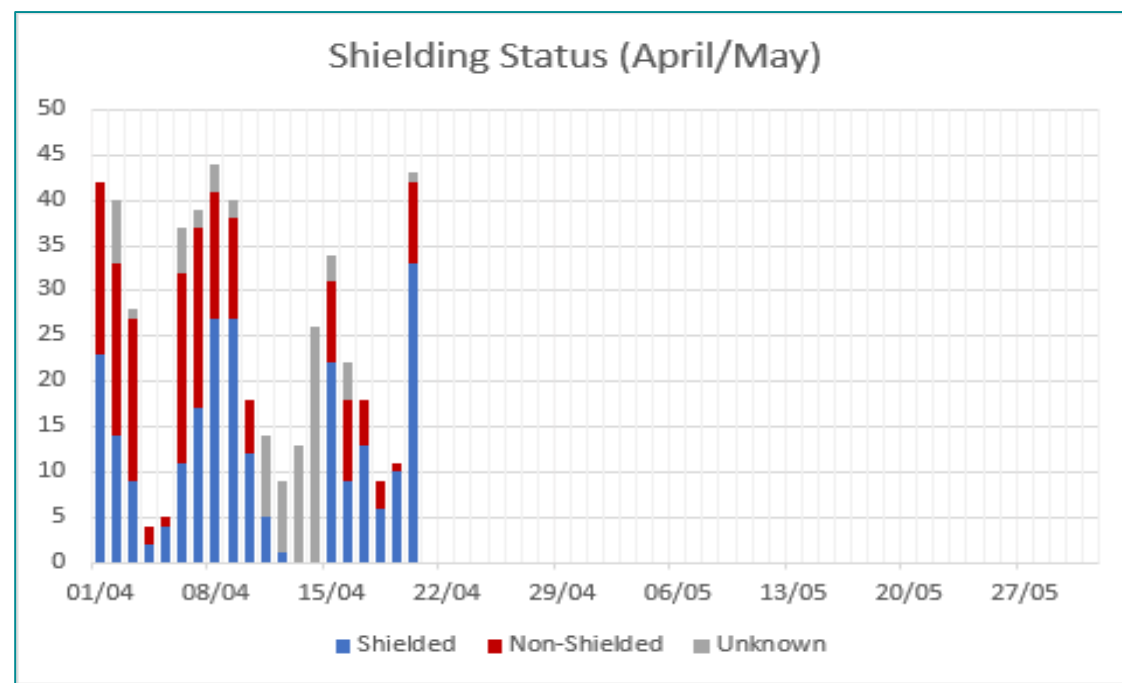
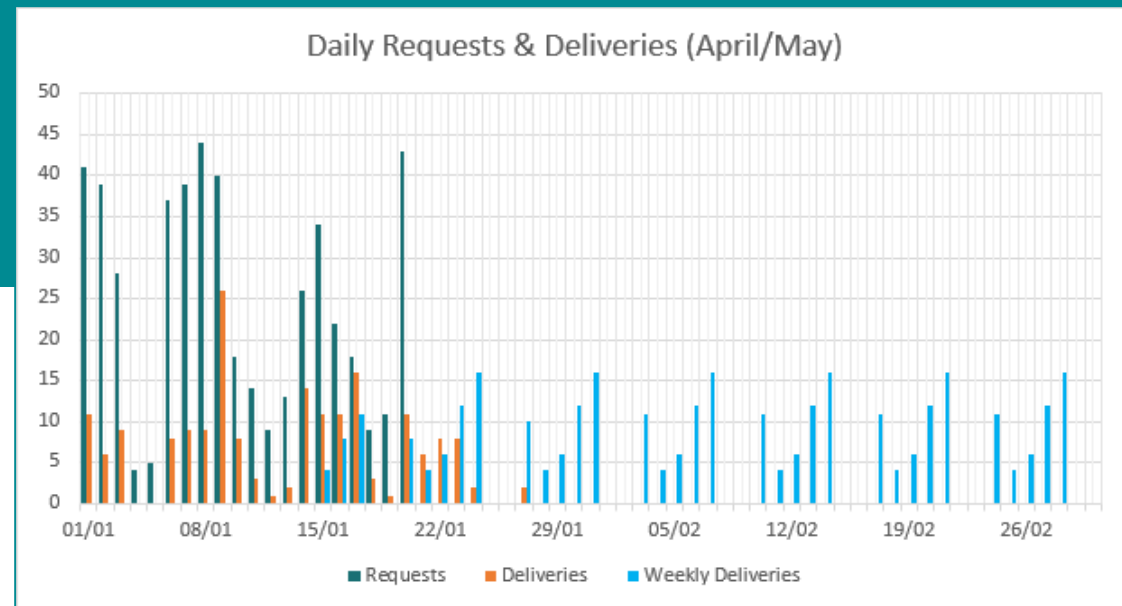
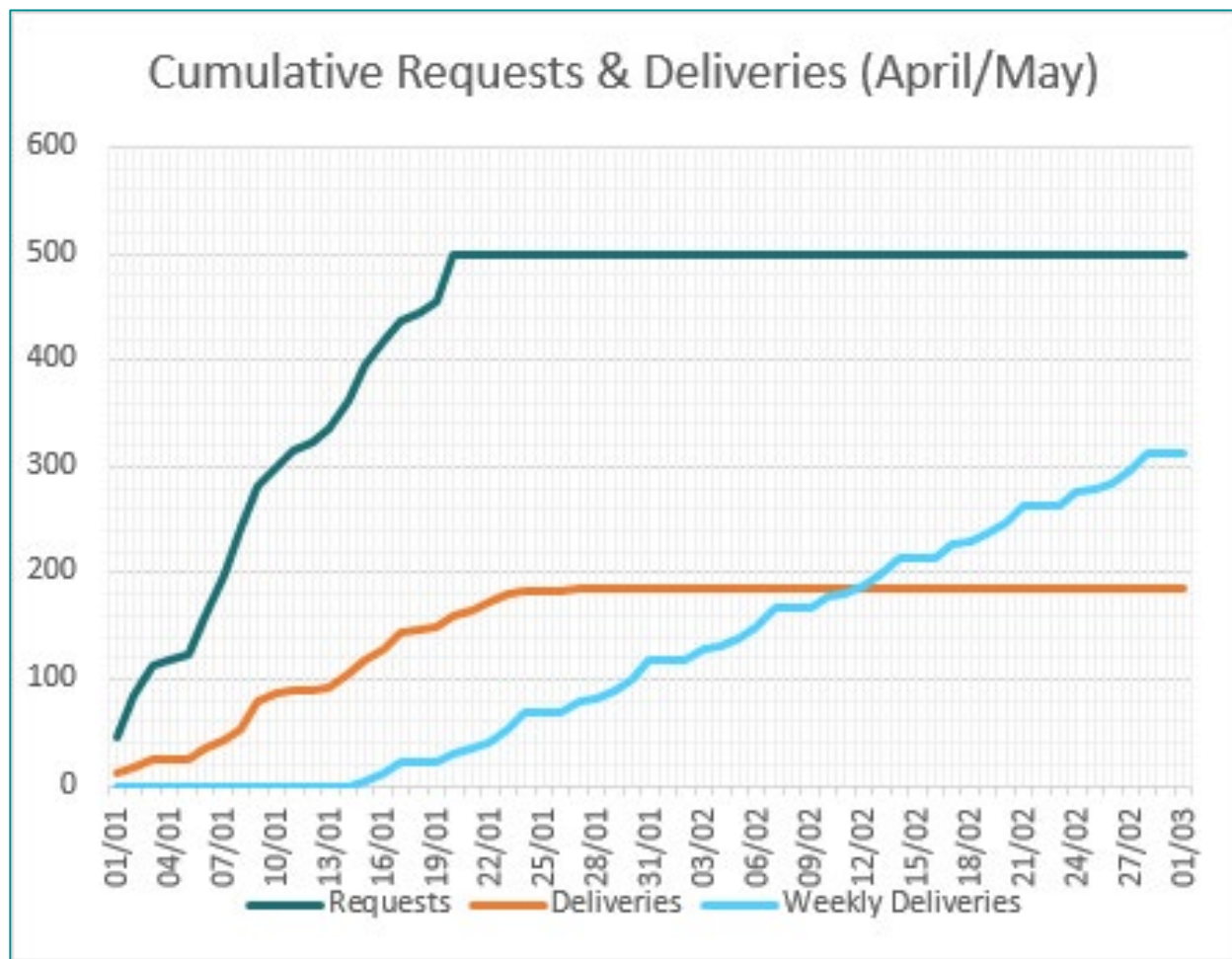
Voluntary Groups supported by Community First.

If they cannot continue to support, eg, due to being inundated or themselves ill – this should be referred back to the HampshireHelp4Vulnerable contact centre.



Referrals and food delivery data

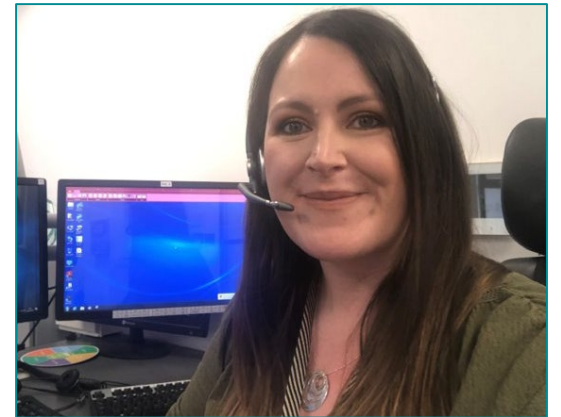
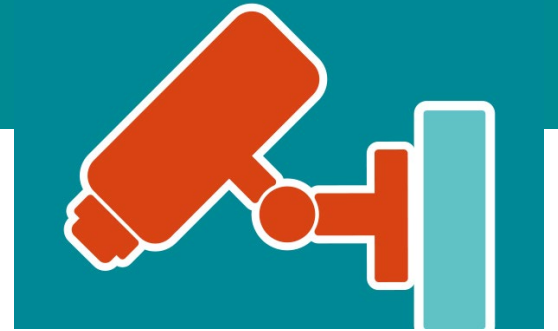
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Community affairs portfolio

Headlines

- All Information Offices closed, Customer Services business as usual, working from home.
- CCTV operating as normal, with redeployed staff from Leisure Services and Electoral Services providing resilience.
- Carelines operating as normal, apart from new installations.
- Community Safety Team operating as normal, with enhanced daily liaison with the Police.
- Website project progressing to plan. Housing and Planning pages near completion.
- Elections staff all working and partially redeployed to support Local Response Centre and CCTV/Appletree Careline.
- Two Town and Parish casual vacancies currently being considered and daily enquiries being processed, other election work on hold. Awaiting national guidance on Annual Canvass due to commence in August.
- Utilisation of Councillors' Community Grants.



Housing portfolio

Housing management

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- New tenant letting initially suspended, but new plan devised to allow lettings, subject to enhanced safety procedures being implemented. A number of properties reserved for emergency accommodation.
- Homelessness Team continue to operate and all rough sleepers offered accommodation.
- Spread out vulnerable homeless clients in shared Temporary Accommodation to self-contained accommodation.
- Key messages for concerned rent payers published and phone calls diverted direct to the Tenancy Account Team.



Housing portfolio

Housing maintenance



Services Maintained:

- Gas and statutory servicing continues.
- Essential repairs continue.

Service Changes:

- Non-essential reactive repairs suspended.
- Non-essential programmed works suspended.

Staff Resources:

- Majority of staff are either working from home or available for work, or redeployed.
- Backlog of non-essential in-house reactive maintenance jobs stands at 235 jobs.
- It is expected that Capital works carried out by external contractors will catch up.



Housing portfolio

Housing strategy and development

- All team members working as normal.
- Some delay on projects which depend on external contractors.
- No immediate financial implications beyond delays to planned expenditure and housing completions.



Economic development portfolio

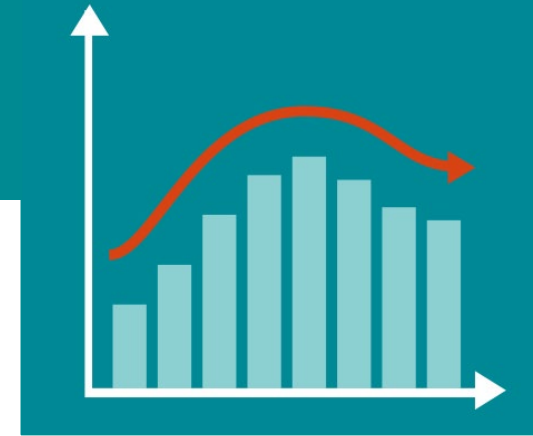
Supporting local business - actions



- Contact details on website directing all to dedicated email and phone line.
- NFDC/NFPB started series of virtual business support workshops, following cancellation of all NFBP events.
- Specific webpage developed for COVID-19 business support.
- Daily communications going to businesses.
- Working with Solent LEP to provide grant funding through Rural Resilience Fund.

Economic development portfolio

Supporting local business - staffing



- All team working from home and deployed to support business enquiries.
- Additional resource from Planning Development Management Admin supporting business enquiries.
- Team leader joined Solent LEP Task Force.
- Working closely with Finance on release of various Business Rates Grants – in top 20% of over 300 local authorities in managing this support.
- Intelligence gathering to support recovery work being co-ordinated by LRF.

Finance, investment and corporate services portfolio

Headlines

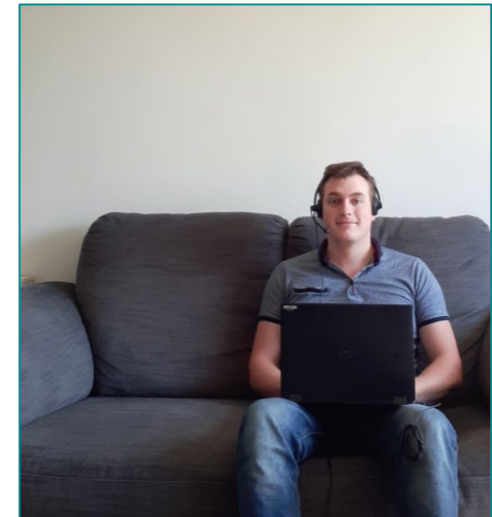
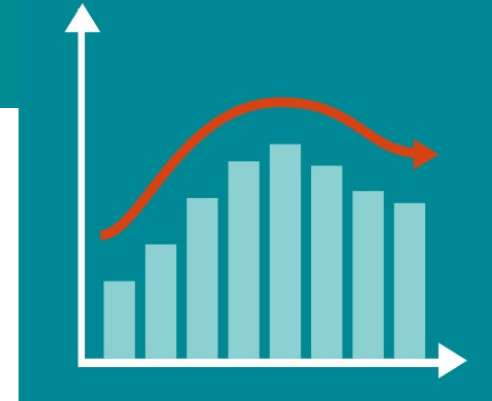
- Business Grant Funds paid to the Council 1/4/20; NFDC e-form for applications live 2/4/20. Within 7 days, 1,993 payments made, totalling £24.6M. Plenty of positive feedback on ease of application and speed of pay.
- Council Tax Hardship Grant to enable reductions to Direct Debits implemented in April.
- Government support for Cashflow and Funding.
- Council Tax and Business Rates call handling working from home.
- New Finance System cutover plan ran as scheduled and new system live first week in April.
- LTH still open for Tenants and NFDC staff, but minimal usage.



Finance, investment and corporate services portfolio

Staff resources

- Over 100 Corporate Service Employees working from home: Testament to NFDC investment in ICT that its infrastructure could accommodate this so readily and easily for over 400 staff in total.
- Post Room operating from ATC and offering enhanced incoming digital post and printing services.
- All Democratic services and Support team working from home:
 - Preparing for virtual meetings
 - Supporting the Leader/CEO Member Skype sessions



Environment portfolio

Essential services maintained



- All weekly refuse and recycling and 4-weekly glass collections on schedule.
- Office-based staff working from home.
- Grass-cutting operating with revised frequencies.
- Litter-picking continuing in priority areas.
- Food Inspectors used to follow up breaches of closure orders and assist pubs or restaurants to change activity to take-aways.



Environment portfolio

Services changed

- Public Toilets closed.
- Garden Waste temporarily suspended (now re-started).
- Special Collections suspended.
- All Play Areas closed.
- Taxi and knowledge tests suspended.



Environment portfolio

Staff resources



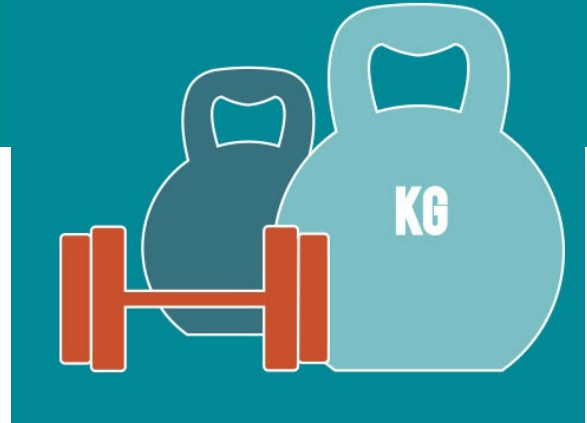
- Majority of frontline staff working.
- 20 Leisure, 22 Open Spaces and Street Scene and 4 Environmental Health Staff trained to assist with refuse.
- 26 staff identified as vulnerable – self-isolating.



Leisure and wellbeing portfolio

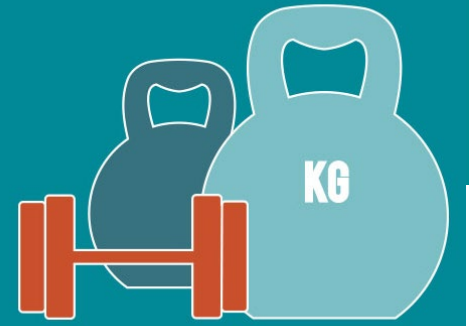
Service impacts

- All Health & Leisure Centres closed to the public and payments suspended.
- Dibden Golf Course closed.
- Free Les Mills workouts promoted to customers.
- Leisure review delayed; further update end of June.



Leisure and wellbeing portfolio

Staff impact



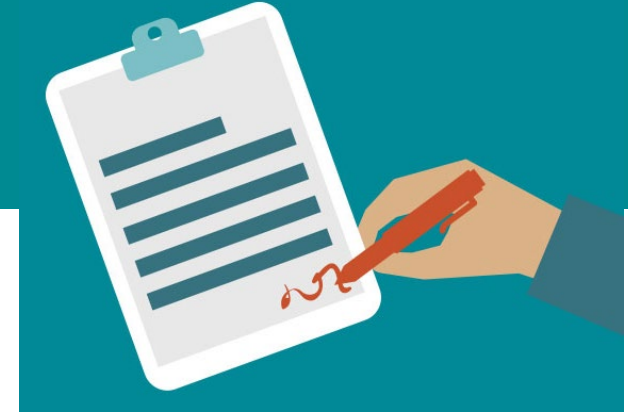
“Use of Government Furlough”

- All Instructor staff, majority of operational staff and additional management staff furloughed. Council making pay up to 100%.
- Some staff re-deployed to: Shielding Hub, CCTV and Waste
- Small number of staff planning for recovery and re-opening, with social distancing restrictions likely to be in place.



Planning and infrastructure

Headlines



Service action:

- Business Continuity Plans for lockdown prepared for Planning and Building Control including site visit protocol.
- All but a couple of officers started working from home.

Staffing:

- Development Management and Building Control working as normal supported by Admin - presence at Appletree Court.
- Development Management Admin providing additional support on Economic Development business enquiries.
- Land Charges operating as normal, personal searches being done electronically.
- Tree Service working as normal.
- Planning Policy and Environmental Design working as normal.

Planning and infrastructure

Car parking



Service action:

- Car parking charging suspended to assist carers and volunteers to shop for the vulnerable.
- Town and village car parks remain open.
- All coastal car parks made secure and closed, working with Police.

Staffing:

- Parking Enforcement officers redeployed to encourage social distancing on coast and assist with food deliveries.



Leader's portfolio

Our community matters – recovery plan



An impact assessment in the following areas will help support the development of a plan for recovery:

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- Community (including volunteers and charities)
- Local business and economy
- Service delivery
- Council finances and resources



It is unlikely there will be a clear separation between the response and recovery stages i.e. the Council will still be responding to COVID-19 when it is also implementing its recovery plan

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Cabinet 6 May

Statement from Pennington and Lymington Lanes Society

Statement from Pennington and Lymington Lanes Society, a local community group with 700 members who are committed to protect and enhance the special character of the lanes to the south of Pennington and Lymington.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak in these exceptional times. Our statement relates to your next agenda item concerning the adoption of the Local Plan.

We are specifically concerned with a site to the south of Lymington, identified as SS6 in the plan but our concerns raise broader issues relating to consultation and process. The Gunning Principles, which have been confirmed by the Court of Appeal as applicable to all public consultations, require (amongst other things) that consultation takes place when a proposal is still at a formative stage and the product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account. They have been breached in this case. SS6 was not identified as a strategic site at the initial consultation stage known as Regulation 18 and as such there has not been true consultation on this site as required by law. In addition the Inspectors have not addressed this point nor the substance of many of the other points made by some 340 representors including ourselves following the consultation at deposit draft stage, known as Regulation 19. Therefore any adoption of the Plan which includes site SS6 would appear to us to question its lawfulness, as neither the Council nor the Inspectors have properly considered the representations made in a meaningful way and indeed the Inspectors have simply not addressed the Regulation 18 point at all.

The allocation of SS6 as proposed by the Council would unreasonably and without justification or scrutiny impose detailed development requirements which could deny the local community an opportunity for democratic involvement if development proceeds. The Council has ignored the request from both PALLS and the elected local council, Lymington and Pennington Town Council, to remove the reference in policy SS6 for a vehicular through route in the absence of any verified highways assessment in order that this matter could be determined in the light of all the evidence at the appropriate time if development proceeds. This is another example of how the Council has failed to listen to the reasonable concerns of its communities and denied them the right to meaningful consultation and participation.

Bruce Tindall

Chair PALLS

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