



# Leigh-on-Sea Town Council

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Chairman: Cllr Jill Healey  
Vice Chairman: Cllr Vivien Rosier  
Town Clerk: Helen Symmons *PSLCC*

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING OF THE LEIGH-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL  
TUESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020  
LEIGH COMMUNITY CENTRE, 71-73 ELM ROAD, LEIGH-ON-SEA

Present: Cllrs: Vinice Cowell (from minute 128), Keith Evans, Paul Gilson, Jill Healey, Carole Mulrone, Damian O'Boyle, Vivien Rosier, Mike Wells and Andy Wilkins

Also in attendance: Helen Symmons (Town Clerk), Chief Inspector Ian Hughes, Southend District Commander and 1 member of public.

MINUTES

***The meeting opened at 7.30 pm***

124. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS INCLUDING HOUSEKEEPING

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and asked Councillors to be mindful of what is going on in the world and to heed advice. The Chairman was delighted to introduce Chief Inspector Hughes, recently appointed as Southend District Commander for Essex Police. Ian spoke a little of his background in Southend Police. He was incredibly proud to be appointed having worked for 16 years in Southend Police. He spoke about his vision and relationship with Leigh Town Council, the contingency plans in place for COVID-19 and his accessibility. Ian asked that his email address and twitter handle be added to the minutes. Ian was made aware of a local issue by Cllr Gilson. The Chairman thanked Ian for attending especially during his annual leave time.

***Chief Inspector Ian Hughes left the meeting***

He can be contacted by email [ian.hughes@essex.police.uk](mailto:ian.hughes@essex.police.uk) or twitter @ChiefInspHughes

The Chairman then confirmed that Declan Mulrone had resigned as a councillor earlier in the month. She was very sorry to see him step down as personally he had been of great support to her and she wished thanks to be minuted as he had done an awful lot for the Council often behind the scenes.

Relevant housekeeping announcements were made.

125. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: Mark Bromfield, Doug Cracknell, Anita Forde, Alan Hart, Caroline Parker and Emma Smith

Additionally, Cllr Hart had sent in correspondence requesting that his apology for absence due to prolonged ill health be accepted.

Following a proposal (Cllr Healey, seconded Cllr Wells), Council **RESOLVED** to accept Cllr Hart's apology and wished him a speedy return to good health.

126. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Cllrs Evans and Mulroney declared a non pecuniary interest in any matters involving Southend Borough Council being Borough Councillors as well as Town Councillors.

127. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING 21<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2020

The minutes of the meeting 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020 were agreed to have been an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

128. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS **Agenda item 5**

The Chairman read a further email from Keith McLaren. He had asked for the statement to be presented as he was planning to attend the meeting but due to COVID-19 felt he now could not attend.

***Cllr Cowell joined the meeting***

The Council made no request to the Town Clerk for an item to be added to the agenda of the next Council meeting when that took place.

The Chairman read correspondence from a member of the public sent in having read agenda item 5b. The member of public present at the meeting asked to speak as she had been the writer of the correspondence at agenda item 5b. Various comments were made to Council who noted them but clarified that the member of public that she was referring to had not been a Leigh plot holder when she was Chairman of Council and therefore had no interest to declare at the time when the decision of the non-resident allotment levy was made.

The Chairman advised Council that in response to many enquiries and correspondence from residents regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the Town Clerk that day had prepared specific risk assessment and business continuity plan documents for Council to consider as pressure was coming to bear on Council to respond to the worrying and troubling times in light of the government announcement on the evening 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

Council **RESOLVED** the COVID-19 risk assessment (Appendix 1)

Council **RESOLVED** the recommendations in the COVID-19 business continuity plan being mindful of the duty of care towards staff and councillors as well as users of facilities and services (Appendix 2).

The Town Clerk spoke at length with regard to possible ideas for the Council to be involved in with regard to community resilience. Councillors felt to ensure that expectations were managed in the quickly changing scenario of the pandemic, a meeting should be held for Councillors to discuss ideas and plans. Cllrs Evans, Gilson, O'Boyle and Rosier were keen to be involved. The Town Clerk reminded Council that all Councillors needed to be invited. Cllr Rosier volunteered to look at a leaflet idea and would email all Councillors. The Town Clerk would advise the Emergency Planning Officer at Southend Borough Council that the Community Centre was available if needed.

129. SOUTHEND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllr Mulroney reported that public health was working flat out. All Borough Council meetings had been cancelled for the next 2 weeks and obviously there was a lot of pressure on the Borough Council because of their role in certain services. Cllr Evans said on a more positive note there had been planting of wild flowers on the verges in Kenilworth Gardens and lots of trees planted around the Borough. Cllr Mulroney confirmed 700 street trees and 5,000 whips. Cllr Rosier highlighted that 9 trees to form a mini orchard had been planted in Library Gardens.

130. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

It was confirmed that Cllr Forde had been referring to the Annual Town Meeting. Council felt that as this had been postponed then the item was not relevant at the present time to consider.

131. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The report was **NOTED**. The Chairman advised that she had also attended the Yantlett Residents Association with Cllr Evans, the Mayor of Southend's Chinese New Year event and her own Chairman's Charity Wine tasting event which was a great success and raised over £800

<b>COMMITTEES</b>
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132. COMMITTEES – **Agenda item 9**

- a) Cllr Healey presented the minutes of the Planning, Licensing & Highways Committee as per the Agenda. There were no recommendations.
- b) Cllr Wilkins presented the minutes of the Community & Culture Committee as per the Agenda. There were no recommendations
- c) Cllr Evans presented the minutes of the Staffing Committee as per the Agenda. There were no recommendations.
- d) In the absence of the Chairman of the Finance & Governance Committee and there being no Vice Chairman at the present time, Cllr Healey presented the minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee as per the Agenda and the recommendations therein:

Minute 43 – Internal Audit Report Recommendation

**RESOLVED** to adopt the recommendation made by the internal auditor

***The member of public left the meeting***

Minute 45 – Investment Strategy

**RESOLVED** to adopt the Investment Strategy

Minute 46 – Risk Management Strategy

**RESOLVED** to adopt the Risk Management Strategy

Minute 47 – Review of Risk Register

**RESOLVED** to adopt the reviewed Risk Register

Minute 48 – Governance Statement

**RESOLVED** Statement 1 – The Council has put in place arrangement for effective financial management during the year and for the preparation of the accounting statements with specific control measures.

**RESOLVED** Statement 2 – The Council has maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness with specific control measures.

**RESOLVED** Statement 3 – The Council took all reasonable steps to assure itself that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and proper practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of the Council to conduct its business or on its finances.

**RESOLVED** Statement 4 – The Council has provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

**RESOLVED** Statement 5 – The Council has carried out an assessment of the risks facing the Council and have taken appropriate steps to manage these risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance where required.

**RESOLVED** Statement 6 – The Council maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the council accounting records and control systems.

**RESOLVED** Statement 7 – The Council took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.

**RESOLVED** Statement 8 – The Council has considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after year end have a financial impact on the council and where appropriate have included them in the accounting statements.

Minute 52, 53 and 54 – Movement to Earmarked Reserves from Committees

**RESOLVED** with as per Appendix 3

Minute 51 – Virement with effect 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020

***The Town Clerk left the meeting***

**RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk's salary scale be increased to national scale 44 and that the budget difference be vired from Salaries Earmarked Reserve to the 2020/21 Salaries Budget.

***The Town Clerk returned to the meeting***

Minute 58 – Approve Expenditure

**RESOLVED** to approve the expenditure as listed which was signed by the Chairman.

133. REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

Cllr Forde's comprehensive report was **NOTED**.

Cllr Healey advised that the Public and Passenger Transport group meeting had been cancelled.

<b>DECISION ITEMS</b>
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134. COUNCILLOR MOTION **Agenda item 11**

The Chairman read out an email from the Head of Parks and Open Spaces as follows:

Further to my emails concerning the section of the old toilet block that LTC would like to improve and decorate with art, the following additional works are proposed to enable this project to continue.

- \*\* Supply and install concrete blocks to act as coping stone to top of concrete wall.
- \*\* Supply materials to repair cracks and fill deep areas of uneven Concrete wall.
- \*\* supply and install materials to repair damaged concrete floor item.
- \*\* supply and paint inner concrete walls with white masonry paint with textured finish.
- \*\* Supply and paint stain blocker paint to cover graffiti on concrete walls item.
- \*\* Supply and install pointing to seating blocks where the pointing is missing.
- \*\* Supply Grassprotecta including fixing U (This is not a path but will protect the slope that people may wish to walk on)
- \*\* Supply and paint concrete floor
- \*\* Shutter and concrete to top of slope to repair damaged area

These works will be fully managed and include all necessary site facilities, e.g. temporary fencing during works.

To complete the project we would be looking for a contribution of £8,722.80 ex VAT.

Our contractor has some capacity at present to undertake these work so I would be great full if you could confirm if you would like us to continue with the works.

Once the works are complete, if you want to work with the leigh art trail to decorate the wall again we would be happy to work with you on this'.

Cllr Gilson then moved his motion adding he believed the site would be wrecked after completion as the Town Council cannot protect it. It was confirmed that the Town Council would not be responsible for maintenance, just a contributor towards its restoration. A full discussion took place with all Councillors able to contribute to the debate.

**THE MOTION TO REVERSE THE DECISION TO PROVIDE FUNDS TOWARD THE RENOVATION OF THE BELVEDERE (VIEWING PLATFORM) WAS DEFEATED.**

135. COUNCILLOR MOTION **Agenda item 12**

Cllr Gilson withdrew both motions in light of the new information that had come forward since submitting them.

Leigh Town Council wish to have an official position on the airport to represent the community.

The Council **RESOLVED** to hold a PDG meeting with Cllr O'Boyle chairing the meeting. An email will be sent to all Councillors.

136. SOCIAL ISOLATION PROJECTS **Agenda item 13**

The agenda item was discussed and following a proposal (Cllr Healey, seconded Cllr Wells) Council **RESOLVED** to add in a review of the COVID-19 community reliance plan to the social isolation projects.

Council **RESOLVED** a Social Isolation budget of £5,000 from 1<sup>st</sup> April from the Volunteer Earmarked Reserve. A PDG will be held to establish some specific goals.

137. SPATIAL PLAN **Agenda item 14**

The Chairman thanked Cllr Rosier for Chairing the meetings which all enjoyed.

The Council **RESOLVED** that PDG meetings for each vision be held

<b>FOR NOTING / CONSIDERATION</b>
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138. TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2020/21

Council **NOTED** the dates.

139. GDPR FOR MEMBERS

Council **NOTED** the request.

140. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- a) Council **NOTED** that the magazine had gone to print and would be distributed 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.
- b) Council **NOTED** the debrief suggestion and also felt that Council should look at other methods of engagement. A piece will be added to the next magazine.

<b>FINANCIAL</b>
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141. COPY OF FINAL COUNCIL BUDGET 2020/21

Copies were distributed to Councillors.

<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>
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142. MOTION TO EXCLUDE PUBLIC – The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

**RESOLVED** that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted the public and press be excluded and instructed to withdraw – SO3d other special reason

143. VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

In view of the earlier business and the postponement of the Annual Town Meeting, Council **RESOLVED** to defer this item.

***The meeting closed at 9.34 pm***

**LEIGH TOWN COUNCIL**  
**RISK ASSESSMENT AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY RESPONSE TO**  
**COVID19**

**This Risk assessment has been conducted specifically for Leigh Town Council with reference to its staff, Councillors, and activities including public events. The Town Council accepts no liability whatsoever should any other person or body choose to utilise the information contained herein for their own purposes. You are strongly advised to consult Government websites for advice on coronavirus and conduct your own risk assessment pertinent for your own situation/organisation which will be different from that of Leigh Town Council.**

**1.0 Introduction**

On 31 December 2019, Chinese authorities notified the World Health Organization (WHO) of an outbreak of pneumonia in Wuhan City, which was later classified as a new disease: COVID-19.

- 1.1. On 30 January 2020, WHO declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern” (PHEIC). On 11<sup>th</sup> March WHO categorised the outbreak as a pandemic. And subsequently stated on 14<sup>th</sup> March that Europe is now the centre of the pandemic
- 1.2. UK Chief Medical Officers HAD classified the risk to the UK as moderate. This has now been raised to high as of 12<sup>th</sup> March
- 1.3. On 10 February, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, announced [strengthened legal powers to protect public health](#). [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus\) Regulations 2020](#) have been put in place to reduce the risk of further human-to-human transmission in this country by keeping individuals in isolation where public health professionals believe there is a reasonable risk an individual may have the virus.
- 1.4. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March the Government published its response plan to the virus which consists of 4 phases
- Contain: detect early cases, follow up close contacts, and prevent the disease taking hold in this country for as long as is reasonably possible (This includes individuals at risk of carrying the virus being asked by NHS111 to self-isolate for 14 days. Those testing positive are placed in quarantine (either under appropriate medical care or at home) and are required to undergo further testing with two negative results before being released from quarantine.
  - Delay: slow the spread in this country, if it does take hold, lowering the peak impact and pushing it away from the winter season. This may involve social distancing measures including closure of schools and cancellation of public events.
  - Research: better understand the virus and the actions that will lessen its effect on the UK population; innovate responses including diagnostics, drugs and vaccines; use the evidence to inform the development of the most effective models of care
  - Mitigate: provide the best care possible for people who become ill, support hospitals to maintain essential services and ensure ongoing support for people ill in the community to minimise the overall impact of the disease on society, public services and on the economy
- 1.5. The main public health campaign messages from the Government are as follows:
- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
  - always wash your hands when you get home or into work

- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin straight away and wash your hands afterwards
- try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

1.6 As of 12<sup>th</sup> March, the Government announced it was moving from containment phase into delay phase. New advice has been issued as follows:

- Anyone who shows certain symptoms is now required to self-isolate for 7 days, regardless of whether they have travelled to affected areas. This means people should stay at home and avoid all but essential contact with others for 7 days from the point of displaying mild symptoms, to slow the spread of infection

The symptoms are:

- a high temperature (37.8 degrees and above)
  - a new, continuous cough
- Individuals are no longer asked to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If their symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days contact NHS 111 online at 111.nhs.uk. If they have no internet access, they should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

1.7 The Government has announced that it will be considering further social isolation measures including banning large public events as from next week. Whilst schools remain open at this time closure may be considered at a later date. It should be noted that breaking news over the weekend indicates elderly people may be quarantined for 4 months and other drastic measures may need to be implemented including forced requisitioning of buildings as temporary hospitals.

## **2.0 Sources of Information**

2.1. The Town Council will be acting on information and guidance available from the following sources to which all Councillors, staff and members of the public will be signposted.

- (a) Coronavirus – UK Government Response  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>
- (b) General information to the public  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>
- (c) Guidance for non-clinical settings – Employers and Businesses  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-guidance-for-non-clinical-settings-and-the-public>
- (d) NHS Overview, symptoms and advice  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- (e) Government Action Plan  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan>

- (f) Government Advice for Self-Isolation at home  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>
- (g) WHO – Getting Workplace ready  
[https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7\\_6](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6)

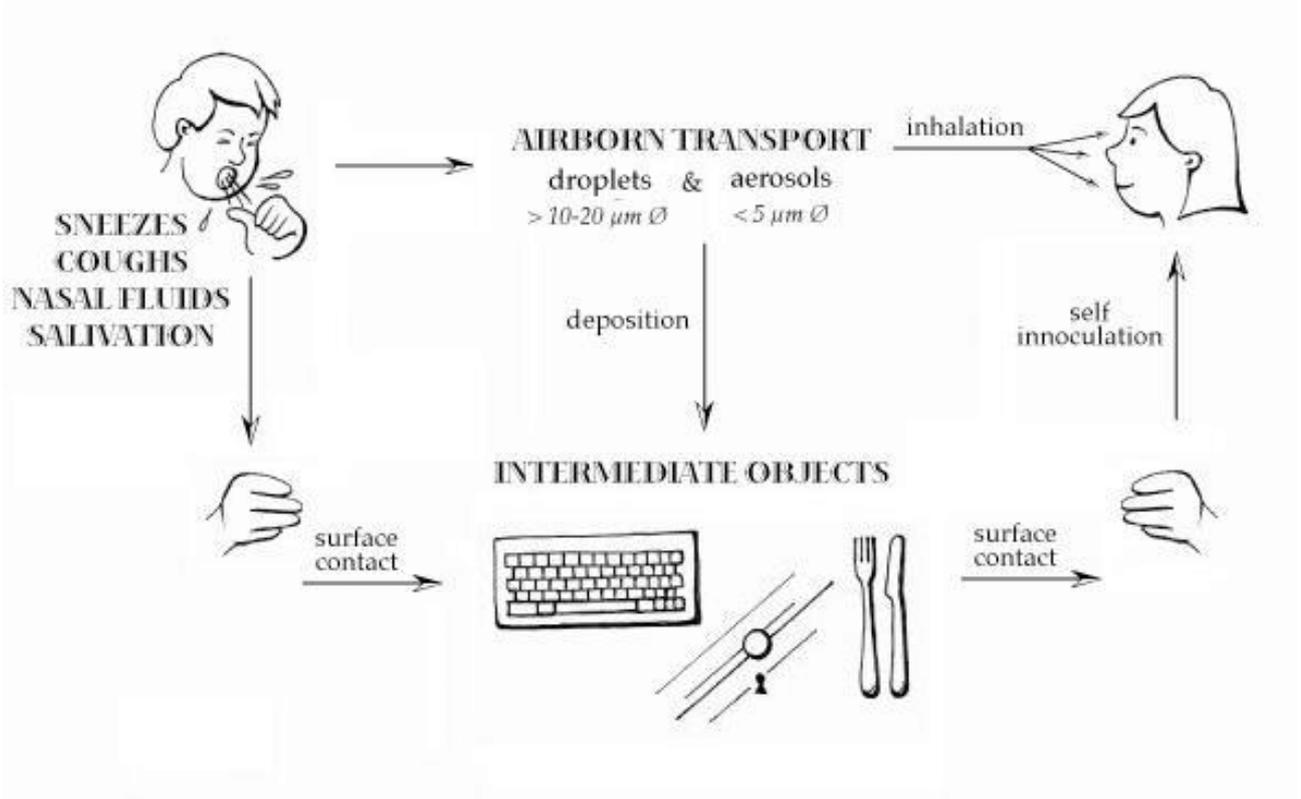
2.2. In the preparation of this risk assessment and the subsequent business continuity plan, additional information/guidance has been utilised by the Clerk from the following sources:

- (a) Research published by Chinese Centre for Disease Control
- (b) WHO website technical guidance
- (c) Society of Local Council Clerks
- (d) National Association of Local Councils
- (e) Local Government Association information for Councils  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-councils>
- (f) Ellis Whittam (Employment and Health & Safety Advisers)
- (g) National Joint Councils for Local Government Service – Advisory notice 6<sup>th</sup> March

### **3.0 Key facts underpinning the risk assessment**

The following information has been used to underpin the risk assessments.

- 3.1. This is an enveloped respiratory virus spread in aerosols/droplets via person to person direct contact and indirect contact with infected surfaces/hands. Main transmission routes are therefore as follows:



The key to managing the risk of contracting the virus is to limit the opportunities for spread/transmission. This not only includes the main campaign measures suggested by NHS England in respect of hand sanitisation and reducing aerosol transmission by using tissues, but also adopting procedures for surface decontamination of “multi-use touch points” such as door handles, keypads etc.

3.2. This is a novel virus hence unlike influenza, there is no natural immunity/vaccine. Therefore it is likely a high proportion of people will become infected (current estimates are 80% of the UK population) and according to the Governments action plan up to 20% of the Council's staff/Councillors may be infected during the peak of the outbreak. Business continuity planning is therefore key to maintaining Council services and corporate decision-making capabilities.

3.3. Of 44,672 confirmed cases in China

- 80.9% (or 36,160 cases) were considered mild
- 13.8% (6,168 cases) severe (requiring hospitalisation)
- 4.7% (2,087) critical (requiring assisted ventilation/intensive care)

(Source - China Centre for Disease control)

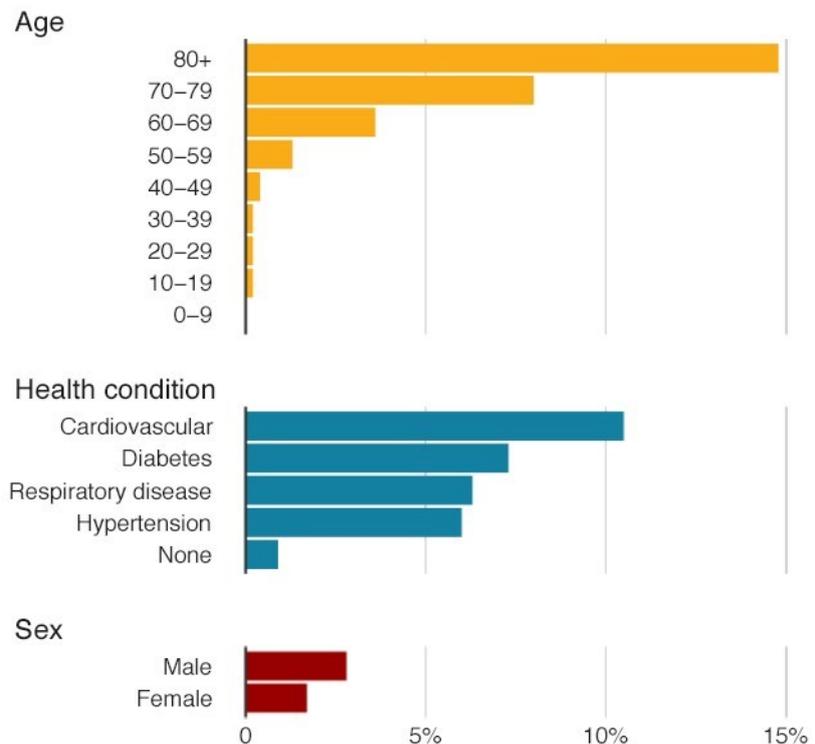
Children can be infected and can have a severe illness, but based on current data overall illness seems rarer in people under 20 years of age

So far, there has been no obvious sign that pregnant women are more likely to be seriously affected

3.4. The population segments at most risk of severe disease/death are those over 60 or with underlying medical conditions including diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular and renal issues and respiratory issues. This has implications when assessing the risk to the public, councillors and staff in Leigh-on-Sea.

### Death rate varies by age, health and sex

Proportion of deaths among confirmed cases

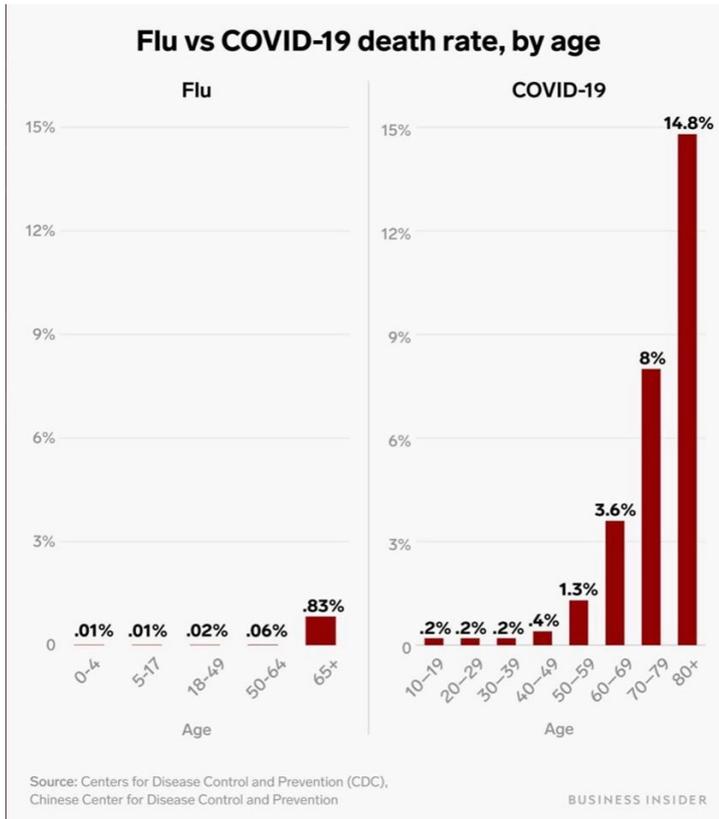


Source: Chinese Centre for Disease Control & Prevention, 18 Feb 2020





The death rate will be significantly higher in the elderly (who are immunised against flu) than for an influenza outbreak as the following comparison shows:



- 3.5. Transmission of the virus is no longer contained or restricted to direct contact with people travelling abroad. The virus is now spreading within the community.
- 3.6. Unlike flu, there is a much longer incubation period, and people start shedding the virus at a much earlier stages before any symptoms are showing (pre-symptomatic phase) Although studies in China show the incubation period can range from 0-27 days. WHO have determined a quarantine/isolation period of 14 days to be appropriate. Most people start showing signs between 5-11 days post infection.
- 3.7. Data available suggests the virus can survive in the air for at least 3 hours, on cardboard for 24 hours and on hard surfaces (e.g. stainless steel, melamine etc) for up to 72 hours, possibly longer. In respect of infection by close contact, advice is to limit contact to no more than 15 minutes and to stand more than 2m distance.
- 3.8. Once recovered from the virus, an individual has immunity. Tests are still being conducted to understand how long after recovery infectious viral particles (as opposed to fragments of viral RNA) are shed. Recent published research indicates that people with mild symptoms stop shedding infectious virus after about day 10 of the onset of symptoms. This is relevant in respect of how soon after recovering from coronavirus staff can return to work and Council can resume business.

- 3.9. The key risk of exposure is therefore from pre-symptomatic staff, Councillors or members of the public having contracted the virus and subsequently attending Council activities and thereby transmitting the virus to others.
- 3.10. The Town Council cannot determine or control what people do away from the workplace.

#### **4.0 Current position**

As of 9am on 17 March 2020, 50,442 people have been tested in the UK, of which 48,492 were confirmed negative and 1,950 were confirmed as positive. The latest confirmed number of deaths was to be announced later that day.

A daily bulletin is issued at 2pm giving the number of confirmed cases. There is a 24 hour delay before details of the locations of the confirmed cases are released by Public Health England. This is now recorded by Upper Tier Local Authority so unless it is published in the press, it may not be possible to readily identify whether there are confirmed cases in Leigh-on-Sea. The bulletins are monitored daily by the Town Clerk as the risks will increase once cases start to be confirmed within the local community.

The government has announced that it will not be testing people with mild symptoms for coronavirus who are self-isolating. Therefore, the number of confirmed cases will not accurately reflect the extent to which the population of Leigh-on-Sea is infected.

Although the Dept of Health and Social Care, Public Health England and the NHS are leading on the UK response to the outbreak, the Town Council nevertheless has a duty of care to staff, Councillors and members of the public to conduct its own risk assessments at local level specific for its activities and take steps accordingly.

## **5.0 PEOPLE AT RISK**

The Town Council cannot control what people do in their personal time and how they choose to respect (or not) the guidance from HM Gov or indeed take additional steps to limit their exposure (such as taking holidays, visiting public places etc). Councillors and Members of the Public have a choice in whether they undertake Town Council activities however staff do not.

The Town Clerk is aware of staff in vulnerable risk groups and two members of staff are already in social isolation for 12 weeks.

In addition some members of staff care for close family members in vulnerable groups. Their specific concern is not that they become infected but that they unknowingly transmit the virus during the 14 day asymptomatic period to their vulnerable relatives. Again, if they have vulnerable dependents, then decisions on working from home may need to be made at an earlier stage.

### **5.1. Administrative Staff**

Risk of infection from staff - currently medium owing to working in Open Plan office at the community centre. Hand sanitiser push-button dispense units provided in the office and toilets, anti bacterial spray and wipes for surfaces. Notices in toilets regard to washing, soap dispensers and hot air dryers (risk of aerosols).

Risk of infection from each other – relies on all members of staff acting responsibly and following all precautions to keep the work area free from contamination and not coming into work if they feel ill.

Risk from members of public (Particularly bereaved who may have lost someone to coronavirus) – staff advised to stay in the office and keep distance at reception area, staff advised not to meet in small confined rooms, to ensure they are 2m away and limit contact time to no more than 15 minutes.

### **5.4. Councillors**

Risk from staff, each other and members of the public whilst attending Council meetings/events and undertaking constituency work with residents.

### **5.5 Members of Public**

In particular MoP attending Council events and meetings.

Attendance at Council and Committee meetings is normally low with the exception of Planning and Development Committee, particularly if there is a contentious planning application

## **MEASURES**

The measures adopted will be defined by whether the Government is still working to contain the virus or merely delay it. The point at which further measures will need to be undertaken, including working from home, will be determined by when the first cases start to be confirmed in the local community.

### **6.1. INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES – hand and surface sanitisation**

A programme of sanitisation has been in place for two weeks around the community centre and within the office. Supplies are up to date, although we are aware that shortages are prevalent with some products and may not be available when our supplies get low.

All stocks are currently kept under lock and key

### **6.2. INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES –Self Isolation, Working From Home, And Phase 2 Social Isolation Measures**

#### **a) Self Isolation**

The NJC have issued guidance on the response by Employers to PAID absence from work owing to coronavirus in accordance with the Green Book terms and conditions.

Self isolation: Currently any order for self isolation will be given by NHS 111 either as a result of contact tracing or as a result of the individual contacting them for advice. This will be treated as absence with full pay but not as sickness absence. Employees who are actually ill will be treated as off sick with associated sick pay in the usual manner. However Employees cannot just unilaterally decide to self-isolate without providing the Town Council with reasonable justification in order to qualify for full pay.

**It is important that all staff and Councillors SPEAK DIRECTLY to the Town Clerk if they are ordered to self-isolate or feel ill as the individual circumstances /timing of the self-isolation will impact the risk assessments and may mean other staff/Councillors could be advised to self-isolate.**

#### **b) Working from Home**

At some point, it will be necessary for the Council to consider staff working from home as per HM Gov advice. This will mainly apply to Senior Officers of the Council.

- 1) The Town Clerk has consulted with IT Support about making provision for staff to work from home whilst being able to access the documents on the server via a secure VPN connection.

**N.B.. Most insurers including the Council's insurers are not covering business interruption costs owing to coronavirus. This is because at the time policies were taken out, coronavirus was not a recognised notifiable disease on the Government list. This may change in due course as pressure mounts.**

**c) Cancellation of Council meetings**

It is a legal requirement that all Council and committee meetings must be open to the public (except for discussion of sensitive matters). Councillors can choose not to attend. If a meeting is called i.e. the agenda produced then it cannot be cancelled. If it is not quorate, then it will not proceed, it will be opened and immediately closed.

Full Council meetings and the Annual Town Meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> April take place in the community centre. At Council meetings there is sufficient distance between the public and the Council members to reduce the risk of infection, however at the Annual Town Meeting, Councillors sit amongst the electorate. Councillors attending meetings also run the risk of infecting each other.

The NALC Legal Team are investigating whether an alternative to holding face to face meetings (e.g. video conferencing with live streaming of the public) can be utilised by Local Councils during a period of risk to public safety, or whether total suspension of the council decision making process is the only option. This information will be shared as soon as it is known. The Town Clerk will also keep up to date with Government announcements.

**d) Council Events and other services**

Council events such as the Farmers' Market, Community Day will need to be evaluated in light of Government announcements.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**(i) To approve the Risk Assessment**

**BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN**  
**IN RESPONSE TO COVID19 PANDEMIC**

This document has prepared in association with the Town Council's Risk Assessment for COVID19.

**Introduction**

As there is no immunity to this novel virus, it is estimated that up to 80% of the UK population will become infected at some point during the course of the outbreak which is expected to last at least 4 months in the UK. According to the Governments action plan up to 20% of the Council's staff/Councillors may be infected during the peak of the outbreak.

The Government issues new guidance for households with possible Covid-19 infection on 17<sup>th</sup> March. This sets out that individuals are still asked to self-isolate for 7 days from the onset of Covid-19 symptoms but any individuals in the household are now asked to self-isolate for 14 days from that moment as well. It also included social distancing guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-guidance-for-households-with-possible-covid-19-infection>

The Government issued social distancing guidance on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

1. *Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough;*
2. *Avoid non-essential use of public transport, varying your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible;*
3. *Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to [employer guidance](#) for more information;*
4. *Avoid large gatherings, and gatherings in smaller public spaces such as pubs, cinemas, restaurants, theatres, bars, clubs*
5. *Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.*
6. *Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.*

*Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is pragmatic.*

Summary of Advice

Group/ Action	Wash hands more often	Household isolation for 14 days*	Self - isolation for 7 days**	Social mixing in the community***	Having friends and family to the house	Use remote access to NHS and essential services****	Vary daily commute and use less public transport	Home working
0 – 69	Yes	Yes	Yes	Advised against	Advised against	Advised	Advised	Advised
70+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
Any age Member of vulnerable group with an underlying health condition <sup>1</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
Pregnant women	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
Those with serious underlying health conditions	As above, but further bespoke guidance will be provided by the NHS next week							

It is understood that people in at-risk groups will be asked within days to stay home for 12 weeks.

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP also announced support for local councils including the following:

- *Councils will be able to use their discretion on deadlines for Freedom of Information requests*
- *The deadline for local government financial audits will be extended to 30 September 2020*
- *It will consider bringing forward legislation to remove the requirement for annual council meetings to take place in person*
- *It will consider bringing forward legislation to allow council committee meetings to be held virtually for a temporary period*

With the potential impact on Council staff, Members, contractors and suppliers, effective Business continuity planning is required to maintain Council services and corporate decision-making capabilities.

## **BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN**

The three main priorities for the Council are:

- a) Ensuring the Health and safety of staff, Councillors, volunteers, contractors and Members of the Public participating in Council activities
- b) Maintaining effective and lawful decision-making processes
- c) The continuing operation of essential services and contractual obligations

### **1.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Much of this has been covered in the Risk Assessment in respect of the measures the Town Council has already taken during the containment phase. Decisions now need to be made as the country enters delay phase with specific focus on social distancing, isolation and shielding the At Risk groups from becoming infected as per the Gov strategy

#### **1.1. STAFF:**

Four members of staff are in the At risk group, one is currently in social isolation for 14 days, another is taking social distancing measures. It is expected that this period could be for 12 weeks.

Working from home preparations are being finalised for the Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk and Assistant Responsible Financial Officer. This will help to manage the number of staff who may be off at any one time in self isolation. The Marketing & Profile Officer will also be able to work from home much of the time.

Owing to the risk of infection from each other it is proposed that two members of staff are in attendance in the office each day. This will be done on a rota basis

#### **1.2. COUNCILLORS**

Any Councillor with an At Risk status is to be discouraged from attending any further meetings and does so at their own risk. At Risk Councillors can however nominate substitutes for Planning Committee meetings as per the Council's Standing Orders.

This will not be relevant if the Government introduces legislation to allow video conferencing – however Councillors may be ill or unable to dial in at the appropriate time

1.3. PUBLIC EVENTS

Now that the Government are discouraging social gatherings including pubs/clubs etc the Town Council's planned events have been assessed as follows:

EVENT	DATE	NOTES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Annual Town Meeting (with presentation of Good for Leigh awards and Volunteer of the Year).	24 <sup>th</sup> April	Statutory requirement to hold between 1 <sup>st</sup> March and 1 <sup>st</sup> June. Requires minimum 7 clear days notice May be prohibited next week by Govt legislation	POSTPONE
VE75 Celebration Afternoon tea	10 <sup>th</sup> May	A large social gathering with potentially At risk group attending and volunteering	POSTPONE
Community Day	7 <sup>th</sup> June	A large social gathering with significant face to face contact with potentially At risk group attending and volunteering	POSTPONE
Youth Market	July	Too soon to call	Continue preparations
Celebration Farmers' Market	July	Too soon to call	Continue preparations

1.4 COUNCIL/COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All Meetings shall be open to the public and the press unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. (Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act (1960)

Furthermore, current legislation means that any decisions must be made by a quorate meeting of Councillors present (3 for Committee, 6 for Council) and voting in the room by show of hands. (i.e. not by videolink or email)

Even if videoconferencing is permitted, it is proposed that some meetings are postponed until August. There is plenty of administrative and report work already required to support the Committees' previous decisions which the Clerk and Assistant Clerk can undertake from home/office. There is a comprehensive Scheme of Delegation in place for the Town Clerk.

Community & Culture Committee	April	CANCEL
Allotments Association Liaison	April	CANCEL
Finance & Governance Committee	May	PROCEED
Full Council	May	PROCEED
Community & Culture Committee	June	CANCEL
Full Council	July	TBC

**RECOMMENDATION**

- (i) That meetings only take place where necessary business/decisions are required and cannot be postponed until the autumn or delegated to the Clerk.
- (ii) That such meetings should only take place if new legislation is introduced to permit videoconferencing

## 1.5 STATUTORY DEADLINES/REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the Annual Town meeting for residents, there are a number of statutory meetings, requirements and deadlines that apply to local Councils. There has been no change to legislation or government guidance to amend or temporarily suspend these statutory duties so despite the logistical and practical issues imposed by coronavirus, the Council is still obliged to comply with the law.

### **(a) Annual Town Council Meeting Tuesday 19th May**

The Council must hold an Annual Meeting every year which, because this is not an election year, must be held in May (LGA (1972) Schedule 12 para 7(1) (2)) There is only one statutory item of business and that is the election of Chairman. However normally the Annual meeting also elects Committees, etc as stated in the Standing Orders.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**To proceed on agreed date**

### **(b) Approval of Annual Accounts/Annual Return – Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June**

All local Councils are required under s168 of the LGA (1972) to submit an annual financial return to the Secretary of State showing income and expenditure. The Local Audit and Accountability Act (2014), Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations and the Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015) detail the procedure required. As a Category 2 authority with expenditure over £25k but below £6.5m, Leigh Town Council is obliged to complete an Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and submit this to the External Auditor (PKF Littlejohn) by their deadline of 1st July. The law also requires there to be a 30 day public rights inspection period of the accounts to include the first 10 days in July.

Given the Government's most recent announcement, it may be that both the Internal Auditor and the Year End Accountants may wish to postpone their visits. In addition, it is likely that pending emergency legislation will delay the date for submission to 30<sup>th</sup> September

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That if practical and permitted - to proceed with the approval of the Annual Return and Accounts in May**

### **(c) Casual Vacancy**

The Council has advertised a casual vacancy. If an election is not called by 10 electors by 26th March, the vacancy will be filled by co-option. As the government has already suspended the May elections until 2021, it is reasonable to assume any by-election would also not take place until then for the same reasons. If no election is called and the vacancy is to be filled by co-option, the earliest this could happen would be at a quorate May meeting as the invitation to co-opt has to be advertised in compliance with the Town Council's co-option policy.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**If required to proceed with co-option at the Annual Town Council meeting on 19th May.**

## 1.6 SERVICES

### **(a) Publications**

The News Flash piece can continue even if staff work from home. Social media and website can also be maintained working from home. This will become

increasingly important in respect of the Town Council's support of the community.

**(b) Website Compliance**

Both the Town Council and Community Centre websites are now compliant with accessibility law.

**(c) Office Opening For Enquiries/recycle bags to Members of the Public Etc**

This could be managed providing it is safe for staff to attend on a rota basis.

**(d) Community Centre opening for hirers**

Many hirers have cancelled their sessions over the coming months. However, many have still yet to do so, seeking advice from Office staff as to what they should do. To date we have referred them to Government advice but clearly many are reluctant to follow this and would rather the decision be made for them. The loss of income to the Council would be approximately £10,000 per month. At present it is hard to quantify the savings. Closing the centre will also affect trade to the café, a small business within the centre.

Already there are staffing pressures in keeping staff as safe as possible from infection and being able to service the community centre on staff shortages, which is happening already. As a tier of local Government, it could be seen that we have a duty to uphold the advice of central Government.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (i) All community centre hire be cancelled with effect from 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020**
- (ii) Under the terms and conditions of hire, the Council reserves the right to cancel a booking at any time, without penalty. No compensation will be given. Hirers will only be entitled to the return of the hire cost ideally as a credit against future bookings when we re-open.**
- (iii) The community centre remains open for Council office purposes only and for the café should the proprietor so wish.**

**(e) Skate Park/Strand Wharf**

There is low risk to staff from these activities providing that precautions are taking when touching equipment/bins and they do not engage with the general public for more than 15mins at 2m distance. In the event that areas cannot be inspected weekly they will be closed until inspections can resume. The extension work on the Skate Park is due to commence 20<sup>th</sup> April subject to contractors' availability.

**(f) Allotments**

Many of the users of the allotments are in the At-risk category. It is hoped that they will follow social distancing guidance. Caretakers can be used to keep communal areas tidy if the allotment associations are unable to do so. Staff are to not engage with allotment holders for more than 15 mins at a 2m distance.

**(g) Farmers' Markets/Youth Club and Community Transport programme including social club**

These services have all been cancelled with effect from 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 until 30<sup>th</sup> April when it will be reviewed.

**2.0 COMMUNICATION**

It is vitally important that effective lines of communication are available between staff, Councillors and members of the public. This will be particularly important in delivering

any community resilience projects and ensuring delegated authority in consultation with specific Councillors where necessary can proceed

- Three members of senior staff will be configured to work from home.
- All staff will utilise their mobiles to talk to each other. Additionally the Town Clerk has a BT Cloud voice communicator app to receive telephone calls made to the Town Council.

### 3.0 MAINTAINING LAWFUL DECISION -MAKING PROCESSES

#### 3.1. THE DELEGATION OF POWER

The law <sup>1</sup> permits a Council to delegate decision-making and discharge of statutory powers/functions (including “power to spend”) to the following

- i. A Committee, (who may further delegate to a sub-committee) but not a Working Party)
- ii. A Council Officer (Clerk, RFO... who may delegate to another officer) (see below)
- iii. Another Local Authority

In order to perform these functions on the Council’s behalf. This doesn’t prevent Council from performing the responsibilities/decision-making itself and legal responsibility always remains with the Council. Although there are certain matters that the law states cannot be delegated and must be discharged by a meeting of the Full Council, delegation can remove the requirement to convene a Full Council or Committee meeting whilst still enabling functions to be undertaken lawfully.

**N.B. Authority to make decisions cannot be delegated to an individual Councillor or Councillors. However they may be consulted by the Clerk before a decision is made/actions are taken by the Clerk.**

The Clerk as Proper Officer /RFO is therefore the only individual in law who can act on behalf of the Council (although the Clerk can delegate power to other staff) and lead the administration of all the Council’s activities Some obligations are statutory whilst others are determined by the Council as part of the Clerk’ job description. These delegated powers therefore arise as the everyday duties of the Proper Officer and Responsible Finance Officer, including management of all staff, services and finances.

The Town Council is fortunate to have an Assistant Town Clerk and Assistant Responsible Financial Officer who have delegated authority to deputise for all aspects of the Clerk’s role in the Clerk’s absence including the statutory responsibilities.

At all times the Clerk has to comply with Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. These can only amended by a decision of full Council. The Orders/Regulations therefore address specific principles (including those laid down in statute) for governance (lawful/legal management and control by the organisation as a corporate body) of all financial operations, decision making and conduct of the Council.

#### 3.2. EMERGENCY POWERS

Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the Scheme of Delegation for the Town Clerk does permit the Clerk to take decisions on urgent matters where no meeting is scheduled within the necessary timescale.

#### 3.3. FINANCE AND PAYROLL

Proposal on how finance and payroll will be administered by the Clerk and Deputy Clerk working from home are detailed in Appendix 3.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**To approve the Business Continuity Plan**

**To consider Council's involvement in community resilience with a view to forming a plan over the coming week.**

**Appendix 3 – Administration of Finances and Payroll whilst working from home**

Approval of Invoices for Payment	Normally by Full Council at bi-monthly meeting and signed by Chairman	Next approval will not be until May F&G meeting.
BACS payment authorisation  This will negate the need for Councillors to visit the office and sign cheques	Email authorisation from Councillors to the payment being made. All other procedures remain the same	Log on to electronic banking from home or office by Town Clerk or ARFO. Hard copy invoices to be collated by ARFO to prepare schedule for approval. TC then signs/codes and once authorised ARFO puts on BACS system. ATC then takes hard copies to approve payments correctly made. If ARFO in office then dual control system applies as normal.
Bank reconciliations	ARFO will undertake regular bank reconciliations as normal	Councillor checks can retrospectively be made as normal
Procurement/placing of orders	Day to day/within budget can be effected from home/office by TC or delegated Officer	Financial regulations apply with regard to emergency spending.
Monthly Staff payroll	The Council is contractually obliged to ensure wages are in employees bank accounts by the 24 <sup>th</sup> of every month. March payroll has been run but now end of year procedures must be implemented first before software can be utilised for new financial year.	April payroll can be sent to payroll contractor now. It is accessed via a secure login and the payments processed by the RFO. A temporary standing order will be set up for monthly payroll payments.