

COVID RESPONSE BOARD

29 April 2020

Present:

Elected Members	Councillors Warrington (In the Chair)
	Bray, Cooney, Fairfoull, Feeley, Gwynne, Kitchen, Ryan and Wills
Chief Executive	Steven Pleasant
Borough Solicitor	Sandra Stewart
Section 151 Officer	Kathy Roe

Also in attendance **Dr Asad Ali, Steph Butterworth, Jeanelle De Gruchy, Richard Hancock, Dr Ashwin Ramachandra, Ian Saxon, Sarah Threlfall, Jayne Traverse and Jess Williams.**

133. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 15 April 2020 were accepted as a correct record.

134.. UPDATE ON FOSTER CARERS – COVID RESPONSE

Consideration was given to a report of the Deputy Executive Leader/Director of Children's Services, which set out a proposal to for support for Tameside Foster Carers with children and young people in their care. The report recognised that Foster Carers due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, are being asked to care for children for significantly extended period of time due to the government's guidance of social distancing and staying at home. For many of our foster carers they were also providing education to children whilst the schools were closed as they had made a decision in collaboration with the children's social worker, that it was safer for children to be looked after within their family units within their foster placement. They continued to access the support of virtual school.

It was stated that Tameside Foster Carers were working under extraordinary circumstances to provide stable, secure and nurturing home for Looked After Children, whilst also looking after their own and immediate families' health needs. It should be acknowledged that with children and young people at home for longer periods of time, this would impact on expenditure within the homes with things such as utility bills, food shopping, equipment and activities for the children and household members.

Members recognised the vital work undertaken by foster carers and the difficult circumstances in which they were undertaking their role. However, Members asked for further information on the options available for providing additional support and the approach taken elsewhere taking into account their fiduciary duties with public funding and the need to reduce inequality as against the public generally who are also impacted upon by the pandemic..

AGREED:

That an updated report be submitted to the next meeting of the Covid Response Board elaborating on the options available for additional support for foster carers and the approach taken by other local authorities.

125. UPDATE ON CAR PARKS – COVID RESPONSE

Consideration was given to a report of Executive Member (Transport and Connectivity) / Director of Operations and Neighbourhoods) which reminded Members that an earlier Executive Decision

outlining temporary changes to the Parking Services team had been approved on the 8 April 2020. The Executive Decision approved the following service adjustments:

- The temporary suspension of parking enforcement, on both on-street and off-street locations within the borough until further notice.
- The redeployment of a number of NSL Parking Enforcement Officers to critical service areas that require extra resources during this period
- Suspension of the bailiff service
- Suspension of staff parking payments from 1 April 2020 until 1 July 2020

The report set out details of the financial impact of the changes and provided an update.

Members noted the update and requested a further report setting out impact of Covid on carpark expenditure..

AGREED:

That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of Board providing an update.

126. FURTHER TEMPORARY SERVICE CHANGES ACROSS THE OPERATIONS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS DIRECTORATE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Community Safety and Environment) / Director of Operations and Neighbourhoods, which set out a number of temporary changes to services across Operations and Neighbourhoods as follows:

Operations and Greenspaces

In order to maintain social distancing; playgrounds, outdoor gyms and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) to be closed until further notice.

Markets

Ashton Indoor Market to have priority access times for vulnerable residents and designated key workers and Hyde Market Hall to be temporarily close until further notice. In addition all Outdoor Market activity had been suspended across Tameside. The report referenced that there were a number of schemes announced by the Government to support small businesses.

Public Protection and Regulatory Services

It was explained that 45 business held an environmental permit in order to control their emissions. A requirement of the regulations was the payment of an Annual Subsistence Charge, set by Defra, payable at the beginning of each financial year. Letters were to be sent out to advise the respective businesses of this year's charges and to expect an invoice for said amount.

The Council had to undertake a risk assessment of its private water supplies every 5 years. This was a chargeable service with the invoices split between the residents served by a supply. As it stood four supplies had been risk assessed, which supply a total of 27 residents and payment was due for issue. However, it was suggested that it would be prudent to delay the issuing of the above invoices until such time as the situation had improved.

There were currently skips and scaffolds in place around the Borough where work was no longer being carried out. Permits had already been paid for but have since expired. It was recommended that a determination should be made to waive any further charges for skips and scaffolding permits that are currently on the highway until 1 June 2020, when the decision would be reviewed.

Cultural and Customer Services

In accordance with government guidance face-to-face independent mobility assessments to determine eligibility for a blue badge were not being scheduled. Blue badge applications were being processed and where the application was one where the criteria for qualification needed no further assessment or where a desk-based assessment could determine eligibility, they continued to be

processed as normal. However, when a decision cannot be made without a face-to-face assessment, applicants were advised that their applications could not be processed at this time, but would be completed when an appropriate level of assessment can be undertaken.

Members were informed that the Department for Transport acknowledged that Councils may have to delay processing new Blue Badge applications and reapplications, and may also have an existing backlog of current applications. The UK Government had endorsed new guidance issued jointly by the British Parking Association, the Local Government Association, and London Councils, advising that local authority parking teams should not issue Penalty Charge Notices to citizens using Blue Badges with an expiry date of 1 January 2020 onwards. The guidance stated this relaxation of enforcement against expired Blue Badges should continue initially until 30 September 2020.

AGREED:

That the Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Community Safety and Environment) consider an Executive Decision recommending:

- (i) The closure of playgrounds, Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and outdoor gyms.**
- (ii) The closure of the Hyde Indoor Market**
- (iii) The closure of all Outdoor Market activity, including the temporary monthly events.**
- (iv) Revised opening times for the Ashton Indoor Market, as set out in the report at paragraph 2.3.**
- (v) To delay invoices issued under the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR Regs) and the Private Water Supply (England) Regulations 2016 (amended 2018) (PWS Regs)**
- (vi) Waive any further charges for skips and scaffolding permits that are currently on the highway until 1 June 2020**
- (vii) To follow the Department of Transport's recommendations relating to the assessment of Blue Badge applications, as set out in the report at paragraphs 2.13-2.16.**

CHAIR