

Emergency Committee

Wednesday 25 March 2020 at 16:00 at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Ali (Chair);
Councillor Millard.

Officers: David Stevens (Chief Executive);
Neil Cox (Director - Prevention and Protection).

Members observing remotely: Councillors Crompton, Y Davies, Hadley and Shaeen.

8/20 **Urgent Business**

Variation to the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy in response to Covid-19 Outbreak

The Director - Prevention and Protection reported that in accordance with his delegations, it was proposed to make variations to the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy in response to Covid-19 Outbreak to maximise the potential for taxi drivers to continue working. These temporary variations included:-

- the means of drivers undertaking Child Sexual Exploitation training
- extension to the expiry dates of medical certificates
- DVSA had announced that cars and vans and motorcycles due their MOT from 30 March 2020 would have their MOT extended by 6 months. This would continue until confirmed otherwise. Vehicles must be kept in a roadworthy condition and drivers could be prosecuted if they drive an unsafe vehicle
- extension to the timeframe for Interim Vehicle checks
- not issuing new plates for renewals, using exemption letters to confirm renewal has been completed until collection of plates can be arranged.
- ability to defer payment of fees if necessary.

All amendments would be done in consultation with the Chair of Licensing Committee in a way to reduce detriment to the trade, maintain public safety and reduce risks to council staff by minimising the need for face to face appointments.

Any variations would be kept under review until guidance from Central Government and Public Health England changes to allow services to resume to business as usual.

The Committee endorsed this approach.



Decision in relation to The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Business Closure) (England) Regulations 2020 Appointment of Officers

It was reported that The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Business Closure) (England) Regulations 2020 had come into force on 21st March 2020 as part of the national response to the COVID-19 Coronavirus.

The regulations required a person responsible, i.e. owner/proprietor, for carrying on such a business to close the premises or part of the premises which food or drink were sold for consumption on the premises and cease selling food and drink for consumption on the premises.

Two offences were created by the regulations:-

- contravention of the regulations, without reasonable excuse
- obstruction, without reasonable excuse, of any person carrying out a function under these regulations.

Both offences were summary only and punishable by a fine. Both individuals and companies could be prosecuted.

In accordance with his delegations, the Council's Head of Paid Service delegated authority to the Director – Prevention and Protection to act in order that the Council could be compliant with any statutory provisions. The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer was also given delegated authority to commence any proceedings required in line with the Regulations.

The Committee noted this action and the Chair confirmed that all actions by officers taken under delegated powers would be published on the Council's CMIS site and, where it would have been a decision have been a decision of a member/committee, it would be reported back to the next business meeting of the Full Council.

9/20

Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared at the meeting.

10/20

Resilience Plan Update: Covid-19

Consideration was given to the Council's initial plans to address the varied and significant challenges associated with the Covid-19 virus. The plan would continue to evolve over the coming weeks and months as the situation developed and the Council planned and responded to address emerging issues.

The Sandwell COVID19 plan had been developed to outline the Council's response to this crisis and sit alongside our existing business continuity arrangements.

The Plan outlined five key priorities, the actions we had either already implemented or were about to implement, our key partners and how we would communicate with all key stakeholders of the council. The key priorities were as follows:

- **Health & Social Care** - Protecting and supporting our elderly and vulnerable residents through this period by working with partners across the health and social care economy to ensure that our residents, particularly those who were vulnerable, had caring responsibilities and those with underlying health conditions received the support they required;
- **Citizen & Communities** - utilising the strength of our strong and resilient communities to help us support those people with the greatest need;
- **Infrastructure & Supplies** - working with our key partners to ensure that services that were vital to the borough's infrastructure continued to operate effectively;
- **Business & Economic impact** – to do everything in our power to minimise the impact of these challenges and the pressure they create;
- **Organisational impact** - work to minimise the impact of this disruption and ensure that our critical services continued to be delivered without interruption whilst maintaining support to our staff group and key group workers through this very challenging time.

In response to concerns raised regarding business as usual, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Council was writing to all residents to highlight that the Council would be directing all resources and services to conserve life and protecting the most vulnerable in Sandwell. Information was being made available to residents on the Council's website on who to contact in an emergency.

Work was currently ongoing on the potential loss of revenue to Sandwell as a result of Covid-19 and a further report on the findings would be submitted to the Committee in due course, this included the potential loss of income and how far the government grant would stretch, based on low, medium, high infection rates.

The Chair placed on record his thanks to the officers for all of their hard work in responding to this crisis.

Agreed That the Council's resilience plan to address the Covid-19 outbreak be endorsed.

Meeting ended at 16:14

This meeting was webcast live and is available to view on the Council's website (<http://sandwell.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>).