

EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting of the Emergency Committee of South Norfolk Council held on Wednesday 1 April 2020 at 10.00am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: J Fuller (Chairman), C Brown, M Edney, R Elliott, K Kiddie and K Mason Billig

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors: Y Bendle, D Bills, V Clifford-Jackson, B Duffin, J Easter, L Glover, J Halls, C Hudson, K Hurn, W Kemp, J Knight, T Laidlaw, N Legg, L Neal, S Nuri, J Rowe, R Savage, A Thomas and V Thomson

Officers in Attendance: The Managing Director (T Holden) and the Assistant Director of Governance & Business Support (E Hodds)

1 EMERGENCY POWERS COVID-19

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer), which sought approval to make amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Emergency Committee, and also to suspend the six-month rule in relation to Members attending meetings of the Council and the Committees on which they serve.

The Chairman explained that due to the current situation with COVID-19, the Managing Director, had, in line with the current Terms of Reference of the Emergency Committee, decided to convene the Committee.

The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support presented her report, referring to the amended Terms of Reference, outlined at Appendix A. She explained that the proposed amendments would ensure that the Committee would be stood down at the decision of the Managing Director, once normal business was able to resume. The amendments also reflected the required succession arrangements should certain members and/or officers be unable to conduct their roles.

Members noted that a further recommendation of the report was to suspend the six-month rule in relation to Members attending meetings of the Council and the Committees on which they served. This would allow for those members who might not be able to attend meetings, physically or remotely, due to illness. The Assistant Director assured members that this would be reviewed on a monthly basis.

During discussion, members suggested that paragraph 16.5 of the Terms of Reference, required amendment, to allow for forms of voting, other than a show of hands. Officers agreed to add "that voting be conducted in line with legislation in force at the time"

With regard to the role of the Scrutiny Committee, members noted that it would be appropriate, after the COVID-19 impact had reduced, for the Committee to then consider any lessons learnt. However, the Managing Director and the Monitoring Officer would be providing the necessary scrutiny of any decisions made by the Emergency Committee.

In response to a query regarding public access to the meeting, the Assistant Director explained that unfortunately the Council was not in a position to be able to live stream meetings at the current time. However, this was being explored further to see if this could be accommodated for future meetings. An audio recording was being made of the current meeting and would be placed on the website for public access. It was also noted that the press had been contacted and invited to join the meeting remotely but had declined to attend on this occasion.

In terms of regulatory committees, the Assistant Director explained that it was anticipated that Licensing would quieten down, with little or no demand for hearings, although a surge in applications was expected as restrictions were lifted. It was hoped that the Development Management Committee would continue to meet, albeit remotely, due to the important impact planning had on the local economy. Officers were awaiting Government guidance and relevant regulations, to advise on such matters.

In response to a question regarding the role of Cabinet members, the Assistant Director explained that although the Emergency Committee could take on the role of the Cabinet, the roles and responsibilities of portfolio holders would not change.

The Managing Director then outlined the current arrangements in place to tackle the emergency across the District. He was pleased to report that the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), was working well, as were the delivery groups that sat beneath it. District Councils were providing a high level of support to the LRF, which was working on four main workstreams:

- Community Resilience, to provide food, medicines and support to individuals
- Excess Deaths, looking at anticipated death rates and the implications of that
- Cyber, looking to ensure that appropriate security was maintained, and
- Health and Social Care, to provide professional help and care into peoples' homes.

He further explained that food for the vulnerable had arrived in the County and would soon be distributed to district councils for delivery. Members noted that this food was for distribution to those vulnerable people identified by the Government. As it currently stood, if the Council was to identify vulnerable people not on the list, any assistance of food would need to be met through the individual's own finances or borne by the local authority.

Voting was then carried out by way of a roll call, and it was unanimously

- RESOLVED:**
1. To agree the Terms of Reference for the Emergency Committee, subject to minor changes;
 2. To agree to suspend the six-month rule in relation to Members attending meetings of the Council and the Committees on which they serve, pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972. This will be reviewed by the Monitoring Officer on a monthly basis.

The meeting concluded at 10.24 am.

Chairman