

SALISBURY CITY COUNCIL

Report

Subject : COVID 19 - Update on the work of the council since 23 Mar 2020
Committee : Full Council
Date : 29 June 2020
Author : Annie Child, City Clerk

1. Report Summary:

1.1. The report provides an overview of the work of the council since 23 Mar 2020 when COVID 19 (CV19) restrictions were applied.

2. Staffing and Location of Workforce:

- 2.1. The Guildhall is closed for general daily use with staff periodically visiting to collect post and carry out other essential tasks. All office based staff are working from home and have usual access IT and phones.
- 2.2. Shop Mobility and the Info Centre are closed to the public but may re-open once the need for these services is established and appropriate risk assessments conducted.
- 2.3. The Senior Management Team are all working from home and meet regularly via Microsoft Teams.
- 2.4. The staff based at the depot are following all guideline regarding use of the buildings, restroom, and vehicles to promote social distancing.
- 2.5. The Crematorium Team are working in two cohorts and social distanced from funeral directors, the bereaved and other visitors to the Crematorium and Cemeteries as much as possible.
- 2.6. Bemerton Heath Centre and the Friary Centre are closed to the public but staff are accessing when required to allow the delivery community services
- 2.7. One member of the staff team is shielded and 2 people have been in 7/14 day isolation due to exposure to people with CV19 symptoms.
- 2.8. Many members of the staff team are juggling child care commitments and the support of partners who are key workers.
- 2.9. Overall morale has been good and the staff team have been flexible and understanding in response to the changes in their ways of working, and there has been an overriding willingness to help to support the local community.

3. Environmental Services:

- 3.1. In late March and April grounds maintenance and street cleaning service delivery was reduced. This has now return to near normal levels although there were changes to the cleaning regimes to reflect the drop in footfall in the city centre. With the re-opening of the high street regimes are reverting to normal.

- 3.2. Our Parks and Open spaces have remained open at all times but the play area and outdoor gym equipment is closed.
- 3.3. The Scarecrow Key Worker competition in the front garden/yard or window was well supported with some great entries from all ages
- 3.4. The allotments have remained open and has seen a rise in activity at all sites.
- 3.5. Floral display will be concentrated on the Market Place and Guildhall Square only this year due to the lack of availability of flowers from our suppliers.
- 3.6. All SCC managed public toilets were closed except those at the Coach Park. Toilets are now being reopened as we are able to complete the risk assessment and ensure safety of staff and users.

4. Business Team Services:

- 4.1. The Guildhall is closed to bookings and will remain so until government guidance changes.
- 4.2. The Charter Market was cancelled but has since re-opened on 16 May 2020 with social distancing measures in place. All other markets have been cancelled.
- 4.3. All SCC events have been cancelled until 31 Aug and all planning suspend on events until 31 Dec. The Salisbury Illuminated Carnival has been cancelled.
- 4.4. Plans for Christmas remain under review and will be consider by Full Council at its meeting on 29 Jun 2020.
- 4.5. During the rapidly changing the situation, the website and social media have played a key role in communicating with our residents. More than 30 press releases have been released since 23 Mar, with over 115 tweets. During this period we are also making our website accessible in with the accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018, work which must be began by Sep 2020.

5. Communities and Customer Services Team:

- 5.1. The Communities Team has has two key tasks to support those residents and vulnerable people already know to them through these difficult times and to support those newly in need of assistance due to CV19.
- 5.2. The Communities Team worked with Wessex Community Action to establish a volunteer registration scheme, with over 160 volunteers and a similar number of requests for assistance, which allowed those in need and those wishing to assist to be put in touch with each other. This scheme continues to operate and the numbers of volunteers managed by the scheme is increasing as community schemes fold-up as people return to work.
- 5.3. The team also directly distributed free food parcel to households in need across the city working with volunteers and partners such as Anyone Can Cook, and Fairshare. Science packs and activity videos were also produced by the team.
- 5.4. The Customer Services team have been in place in Guildhall answering the telephone since March. There has been increased volumes of call as members of the public sought the council's advice on many different topics

from shop opening times to are the parks safe to use. Other members of the team working from home responded to email enquiries, carried out administration tasks and conducted review of team policies and procedures.

5.5. The key task for this team now is to assess how the Info Centre and Shop Mobility can be safely re-opened in line with government guidance.

6. Finance, Corporate Services and HR:

6.1. The Finance Team although working from home has closed the accounts for the financial year 2019/2020 and these accounts have been internally audited. The Council will consider these during its meeting on 29 Jun 2020

6.2. The Leader of the Council and Chairman/Vice Chairman of the Finance and Governance committee have reviewed the 2020/2021 budget to examine in detail the impact of the CV19 on the income and expenditure of the council. A report will be provided to F&G committee on 13 Jul 2020 with full details. The Senior Management Team have been advised of the changes to their budget and this will be kept under close scrutiny during this financial year.

6.3. The Clerk has met regularly with the Group Leaders, the Committee Chairman/Vice Chairman and the Leader of the Council during lockdown. The Clerk has also distributed to all councillors a weekly update on the activity of the council.

6.4. Microsoft Teams has been rolled out for all councillors and rehearsal meetings have been held in advance of public remote meeting.

6.5. The Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group has met remotely since March and continue to make progress.

6.6. The HR Manager has co-ordinated the deployment of staff during the lockdown, our transition to home working and the risk assessment and other process required to return staff to work at their usual worksites. This will continue over the next months as required and in line with government guidance. The City Council have frequent pulse survey with staff who reported that are motivated when working from home and also feel safe when in work.

7. Civic News:

7.1. It is with much regret that the death of Councillor Charles Rogers OBE on Mon 15 June 2020 is reported. He will be sorely missed by all members and officers of the council.

7.2. The deaths of Mr Frank Lockyer, past Clerk and Mr T Cowie, past Mayor are also reported with regret to the Council. The Mayor was able to represent the Council at Mr Lockyer's funeral despite CV19 restrictions.

7.3. The Guildhall has been flying a 'thank you to the NHS flag' and in addition a local company Peachy Productions has illuminated the Guildhall with thank you messages on Thursday evenings throughout May and finally celebrating images of local Volunteers on 4 Jun 2020.

8. Reopening the City:

- 8.1. The City Council has been working with partners including the BID, Wiltshire Council, Chamber of Commerce and others, to support the safe reopening of the high street as lockdown restrictions are eased.
- 8.2. The City Council has jointly funded the informational stickers display in the city with the BID.
- 8.3. SCC will be providing City Ambassadors in the city to provide a welcome and reassurance to shoppers and visitors. The scheme will operate for as long as there is a need for it. It is staffed by SCC personnel redeployed from other roles and runs on Tuesday and Saturday 1000-1500.

9. Recommendations:

It is recommended that Full Council:

- 9.1. Note that this report.

10. Wards Affected: All

11. Background Papers: Nil

12. Implications:

- 12.1. **Financial:** Nil
- 12.2. **Personnel:** As shown in this report
- 12.3. **Environmental Impact:** Nil in relation to this report
- 12.4. **Equalities Impact Statement:** Nil in relation to this report