

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
POLICY & RESOURCES (RECOVERY) SUB-COMMITTEE

2.00pm 29 MARCH 2021

VIRTUAL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Mac Cafferty (Chair) Platts (Opposition Spokesperson), Miller (Group Spokesperson), Clare and Allcock

PART ONE

45 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

(a) Declarations of Substitutes

45.1 Councillor Allcock was substituting for Councillor Yates

(b) Declarations of Interests

45.2 Councillor Platts declared that she was Co Event Director for the East Brighton Park Run and was in a position of control and general management for the event, which was non-profit making, and had been given dispensation to vote and speak. Councillor Platts declared that she was a member of Freedom Leisure but was not involved in the management and so had been advised that she did not need dispensation to speak or vote.

Councillor Allcock declared that he was a member of Freedom Leisure but was not involved in the management of that organisation.

(c) Exclusion of the Press and Public

45.3 That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items contained in part two of the agenda.

46 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

46.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

We have critical reports to discuss today; on continued support for our businesses, including our leisure facilities, but also on the planning already in place to deal with the impact of changing coronavirus restrictions that will no doubt see more people come to our city. All reports today assert of course that we are in no way out of the woods when

it comes to the pandemic and I know many will have shared some concerns looking at the current situation in Europe where just as we are proposing opening up, many countries are again going in to lockdown. Of course, today restrictions have changed again and we are still urging people to be safe and continue safe social distancing to keep infections low.

We are approaching the roadmap with cautious optimism. By definition every stage of the government's plan introduces more social mixing and that in turn increases risk. It's not only public health workers, but event organisers and our brilliant local businesses who also need to know the virus is being well controlled. That includes our sports facilities who have been forced to close their doors, despite the value they bring to all of us, and reports today show we are committed to supporting them. We are proposing around £1 million of additional financial support for our leisure centres to secure their re-opening and operation over the next three years.

The pandemic has now affected trade for a year for many of our businesses. Today we will once again support the continued roll-out of grants. Once again, we are restrained by government guidance on the types of organisations that will be eligible for grant funding. While we remain hopeful that the city can re-open safely, we are focused on being as prepared as possible to both welcome back visitors and keep people safe. Plans today include proposals to create a new multi-agency group with oversight of this, that will include police and emergency services, the council's seafront and parks teams, highways, CityClean and environmental health among others. They will meet weekly to plan, respond to issues and share intelligence and expertise.

We are ramping up training for businesses to support them with opening, jet washing our busiest streets clean, commencing additional waste collection services along our busy seafront, recruiting a full lifeguard service and looking at how we can increase the number of public toilets available. We will also strengthen action on illegal parking, anti-social behaviour and littering.

We're clear that our city has so much to offer as a place to live, work and visit and in collaboration with our partners and business community it would be fair to say there is cautious optimism about what the next few months may hold.

We are closely monitoring the situation with Covid-19 cases and our excellent public health colleagues are watching the data like a hawk. We will not fail to act in the best interests of our city and to protect people from infection. I do repeat the 'cautious' – part of cautious optimism – we must continue to stay safe and keep infections low, even as we look forward to the future.

47 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

47.1 There was no Public Involvement.

48 COVID-19 ROAD MAP OUT OF LOCKDOWN: MANAGING THE CITY SAFELY AND OUTDOOR EVENTS PROGRAMME 2021

48.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture which outlined the spring and summer plans and multi-agency approach

which aimed to ensure that Brighton & Hove was prepared and ready to welcome back visitors and keep residents safe as lockdown restrictions were eased in accordance with the government's Spring 2021 road map out of lockdown.

- 48.2 Councillor Platts asked what steps would be taken to ensure the programmes were held safely. The Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture said that there would be Covid-safe measures for each event, and officers would be checking that the processes in place were being adhered to and were compliant with the latest guidance in place at that time.
- 48.3 Councillor Platts asked if Track and Trace systems were being used. The Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture said that there wasn't one system which would be appropriate for all events and would differ depending on whether it was a sporting event where social distancing could be enforced or whether it was a fringe event where track and trace could be used.
- 48.4 Councillor Allcock was pleased to see the extensive list of events and asked how they would all be monitored. The Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture said that in the run up to the events the Safety Advisory Group would be reviewing the programme to ensure that the appropriate safety measures had been considered, but weekly meetings were being held to look at how events had been held and whether there any points which could be considered for the next events being held.
- 48.5 Councillor Miller said that with the expected number of people visiting the City there was a need for additional toilets and it would be useful to have hand gel available. The Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture said that additional toilets would be provided for the seafront. With regard to hand gel, officers would be looking to see whether more PPE such as masks and hand gel was needed as the Summer progressed.
- 48.6 Councillor Miller noted that it was expected that there would be fewer foreign visitors but asked whether it was likely that due to staycations there would be an overall increase in numbers. The Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture said that it was expected that there would be more people both staying and visiting the City for the day. The high number of visitors would put additional pressure on cleaning and ensuring the City was kept safe, and so officers were looking at providing more advice for them and had been liaising with groups such as rail companies to remind people not to litter the beach etc.
- 48.7 Councillor Clare said that feedback on what worked and didn't work was important and asked how the Council were engaging on this with multi-agency groups. The Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture said that the Council were working with groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, Voluntary Groups etc and there was also a dedicated email address for groups to provide feedback to the Council.
- 48.8 RESOLVED:** That the Sub-Committee –
- (i) Noted the multi-agency approach that will operate from the beginning of April until the end of September 2021 to co-ordinate operations with the aim of safely and coherently managing city as lockdown restrictions are eased;

- (ii) Agreed that £1.01M of Contain Outbreak Management Funds was allocated to the Managing the City Safely City Co-ordination Group to support the work that aims to ensure that the city is prepared and can manage the easing of lockdown restrictions as outlined in Appendix 2 and paragraphs 3.5 to 3.17;
- (iii) Agreed that the revised events programme listed in Appendix 1 of this report should take place in accordance with the government's road map and associated guidance, following the approach outlined in paragraphs 3.26 to 3.38;
- (iv) Noted that final permission for events will take place for each event once the relevant step in the government's road map for coming out of lockdown has been reached, following discussion with event organisers and the Safety Advisory Group, the multi-agency group that oversee events in the city.

49 COVID 19 ARG GRANTS FOR BUSINESS UPDATE

- 49.1 The Sub-Committee considered the report of the The Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture which provided an update on the Covid 19 Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) for Business allocated to the council in relation to the second and third national lockdowns and the work that has taken place to administer the funds under the delegated powers of the Executive Director for Economy Environment and Culture which were approved by a Policy & Resources (Urgency) Sub- Committee on the 13 November 2020 and 4 February 2021.
- 49.2 The Chair noted that there was an amendment from the Labour Group and asked Councillor Platts to propose it.
- 49.3 Councillor Platts said that she was aware that some businesses had missed out on receiving grants, particularly those that had bought businesses during lockdown and so weren't listed at Business Rate payers, and so the amendment sought to include 'recognised representatives of the business community' in the consultation for the issuing of grants. Councillor Allcock seconded the proposed amendment.
- 49.4 Councillor Clare asked what engagement had taken place with business leaders so far, and noted that some businesses had said that the allocation of grants was too slow and was concerned that if the Labour Group amendment was agreed that involving more groups in the consultation would slow the process further. The Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture said that during the lockdowns the Council had worked with business leaders which included the Economic Partnership, the Federation of Small Businesses, the University and the Voluntary Sector and having made those connections the Council were in open dialogue with them and so got instant feedback on how things were working. Any steps with engaging further with representatives of the business community would delay the allocation of grants and added that the Council did have limited discretion of how money was awarded. The Assistant Director City Development and Regeneration added that the schemes remained much the same and the grants would go to similar businesses.
- 49.5 Councillor Platts said that if businesses had changed hands during the pandemic then they couldn't access the grants and so the Council should check with businesses if the

process was still fair. In response to a question from the Chair, she said that the number of businesses which had changed hands was low and was probably less than six, and so was unlikely to cause a huge delay. The Assistant Director City Development and Regeneration said he would ask about businesses who may have missed out on the grants and see what could be done to support them.

49.6 Councillor Miller noted that there was a delay in some grants being paid and asked why that was, and referred to paragraph 3.32 of the report and asked why there were differing amounts. The Chair noted that there had been many changes to the grant system, with at least eight big changes and thirteen smaller changes and said that those who had been processing the grants were doing a brilliant job and were working as quickly as possible to process all the grants. The Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture said that payments for grants for the current lockdown were being made now and should all be completed by the end of March 2021. With regard to paragraph 3.32 the differences were due to different rateable values of businesses.

49.7 The Sub-Committee voted on the amendment and it was agreed.

49.8 RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee –

- (i) Noted the progress being made to administer the £8.401m Additional restrictions grants, under delegated powers, relating to period from 5 November 2020 to 31 March 2021;
- (ii) Agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture, in consultation with the Acting Chief Finance Officer and recognised representatives of the business community, to determine the criteria and agree processes for issuing the Additional Restrictions Grants using the top-up that government will issue in April, taking account of the need to issue the grants as quickly as possible to assist with reopening of businesses.

50 SPORTS FACILITIES CONTRACT EXTENSION - FREEDOM LEISURE

50.1 The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture regarding the contracts with Wealden Leisure Ltd trading as Freedom Leisure manage the council's sports facilities.

50.2 Councillor Allcock asked if the opening of the swimming pools would be advertised and was advised that it would, and the Council's Communications Teams would be working with Freedom Leisure.

50.3 Councillor Allcock asked if the Council would be looking to bring the service in-house once the contract expired. The Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture confirmed that all options would be considered.

50.4 Councillor Miller asked how much Freedom Leisure would receive from the recovery fund, and how the support the Council gave to them compared to other similar Local Authorities. The Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture said that they would receive £630k, and the support which the Council gave them was good and there was a dedicated officer support to manage the contract.

50.5 RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee –

- (i) Noted the significant financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon Freedom Leisure as the operator of the council's Sports Facilities and the financial support already provided;
- (ii) Noted that a high proportion of the management fee which was waived during the period 1 July 2020 to March 2021 was reclaimed by the council as lost income from central government;
- (iii) Noted that the successful application to the National Leisure Recovery Fund (NLRF) for a grant which will be passed on to Freedom Leisure as required by the associated terms and conditions in respect of business relief and recovery;
- (iv) Agreed that £0.363m of Contain Outbreak Management Funds be allocated to Freedom Leisure;
- (v) Agreed that the Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture and Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law be granted delegated authority to settle the terms of the contract variations and take any steps necessary to implement the recommendations above.

Part Two Summary**51 SPORTS FACILITIES CONTRACT EXTENSION - FREEDOM LEISURE - EXEMPT CATEGORY 3**

RESOLVED: That the recommendation be approved.

52 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

52.1 RESOLVED: That the items listed in Part Two of the agenda and decisions thereon should remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 3.35pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of