

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 11.00 am on
Wednesday, 10 February 2021
This meeting was held remotely

Present:

Members: Councillor N Akhtar (Chair)
Councillor A Andrews
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor J Clifford
Councillor C Miks
Councillor G Ridley
Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor R Singh

Other Members: Councillor P Akhtar, Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities

Other Representative: Chief Inspector James Littlehales

Employees:

D Blackburn, Street Scene and Regulatory Services
V Castree, Law and Governance
V DeSouza, Public Health
N Hart, Communications
G Holmes, Law and Governance
J Newman, Director of Law and Governance
J Simpson, Business, Investment and Culture
A Walster, Director of Street Scene and Regulatory Services
A West, Law and Governance

Apologies: Councillors L Kelly and AS Khan, Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2021 were agreed as a true record, subject to recommendation 2) of Minute 40, headed 'Introduction of Parking Charges at War Memorial Park – Consideration of Objections Following a Period of Consultation' being amended to read that the monitoring and review report be submitted to a future meeting of 'Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee'.

There were no further matters arising.

3. Covid-19 Enforcement Response

The Committee received a joint presentation on the Covid 19 enforcement response. Councillor P Akhtar, Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities, attended the meeting for the consideration of this item along with Chief Inspector James Littlehales, West Midlands Police.

Councillor Akhtar introduced the item, outlining that Covid-19 Enforcement activity was being undertaken to reduce and minimise the risk of infection to the people of Coventry. Communication and engagement were key to the approach being taken in the City, and this approach was used before any formal enforcement took place.

The presentation outlined the following points with regards to the Covid-19 Enforcement Response:

- The role of the Community Advisors
- Communication
- Public Health Response
- Regulating Business Compliance During Covid-19
- The Role of Regulatory Services
- Partnership Working
- Close of and restrictions on businesses
- Right Resource, Right Time

Following the presentation, Members asked a number of questions and received the following responses:

- In response to a request for data in relation to Covid enforcement, including information on the number of Covid advisor interactions, Covid hotspots and enforcement metrics including numbers of fines, it was agreed a further briefing note containing this data would be written and shared with the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee.
- Policing by consent was the preferred method of policing, however it was at times necessary to enforce to protect the health of our communities. It was acknowledged there was a gap between the legislation and the guidance.
- Facemask exemptions were in place and there were challenges with enforcing the use of face coverings and the need to be proportionate when doing so.
- The limitations of plastic face shields was an alternative to masks.
- Information was shared between partners, including the Police and the Council to ensure a joined up approach to education and enforcement.
- The Covid advisors were initially secondees but casual staff had now been recruited too, including some furloughed staff from CV Life. There were about 25 Covid advisors with further recruitment planned.
- Regional activity included Local Authorities sharing information on how they were using the enforcement powers available to them.
- The legislation was constantly evolving to reflect changes in restrictions.
- The Communications Team would review the pictorial messaging and look to include representation of young people through it and ensure the message was clear that Covid affects people of all ages.
- There was messaging going to schools to remind pupils that social distancing needed to be maintained out of school as well as in.

- The difference between the National Test and Trace Programme and the local Coventry Programme was outlined. Coventry had set up a team of Welfare Callers to do backwards contact tracing to try and identify the source of the infection and to offer support to encourage people to isolate. The National Programme looked at the 48 hours prior to testing positive to identify where the individual may have spread the infection.
- Work was being undertaken with Supermarkets to reinforce the importance of implementing Covid secure measures in stores and encouraging shoppers to adhere to them.
- Places of Worship had been able to remain open during the current lockdown as national data indicated that there was a low risk of transmission. The importance of places of worship for mental health and well-being was also a factor in them remaining open. Some places of Worship in Coventry had chosen to close where they did not feel they were able to open safely.
- The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities would be asked to write to Government and request the inclusion of Police, Fire and Teaching staff for priority vaccination.

RESOLVED that:

(1) A briefing note be circulated to Members on enforcement activity, including metrics as well as numbers of interactions by Covid Advisors, hotspots, number of more formal actions, number of fines issued and how behaviour change is monitored.

(2) Consideration be given as to how advice could be provided to children and young people eg pictorially in the same way that has been done for adults.

(3) The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities be requested to make representation to Government for the prioritisation of key workers in the vaccination scheme to include teachers, teaching assistants, police and fire service staff.

4. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2020/2021

The Committee considered their Work Programme for the current municipal year.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2020/21 be noted and consideration be given to the inclusion of Brexit at a future meeting.

5. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.35 pm)