

Folkestone & Hythe District and Parish Councils' Joint Committee

Held at:	Remote meeting
Date	Thursday, 16 July 2020
Present	Councillors Graham Allison, Laszlo Dudas, Frank Hobbs, Neil Matthews, Terence Mullard, Martin Sweeney and Paul Thomas
Apologies for Absence	None
Officers Present:	Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Gavin Edwards (Performance and Improvement Specialist), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer) and Tim Madden (Director of Transformation and Transition), Dean Pratt (Programme Manager) and Steve Weakley (Business Support Manager)
Others Present:	None

1. **Appointment of chairman**

Proposed by Councillor Paul Thomas
Seconded by Councillor Graham Allison and

RESOLVED:
Councillor Frank Hobbs is appointed Chairman for the meeting.

Affirmation received from all members.

2. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2020 were submitted, approved. The Chairman agreed that his electronic signature could be added to the minutes.

4. **Covid-19 Recovery Plan**

Cabinet report C/20/13 was attached to the agenda which provided an overview of the Council's response to date in relation to COVID-19 and sought approval of an overarching framework which will guide the development and delivery of the Council's COVID-19 Recovery Plan.

Mr Ewan Green, Director of Place, introduced this report which had been agreed at Cabinet on 24 June 2020 with an additional key theme added 'Environment and response to Climate Change' to the recovery framework.

Mr Green pointed out various successes during lockdown; the processing of top-up grants for small businesses; the successful achievement of staff working from home; set up of Community Hubs which has meant valuable contact with the district's vulnerable residents. He also mentioned that the financial position of the Council will be challenging.

Members heard about the five key themes of the Recovery Plan which will lead to the 'new normal' going forward linking in with the new Corporate Plan.

Members were keen to offer help and support in contributing to the success of the Recovery Plan. They felt that networking is a big priority ensuring all councils within the district work together. Mr Green was happy to provide information to all Parish/Town Councils on a regular basis.

The One Stop Shop in New Romney was mentioned, a valuable weekly service that has ceased at present due to COVID-19. This service will be looked at as part of the Customer Access Strategy with assurances that services will be available for all.

Members congratulated staff on the Community Hubs set up and the smooth and efficient processing of the various grants available to businesses.

5. **Update on re-opening of High Streets within the District**

Mr Green gave a presentation which looked at the safety aspects of re-opening the High Streets and the next steps. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

Members noted the following:

- The introduction of Pavement Licences for the hospitality sector which will allow bars/restaurants to place tables and chairs outside their premises. Mr Green will provide further information.
- The mandatory introduction of face masks in all shops. It was noted that the district council can offer guidance to shoppers and retailers however they cannot enforce this new rule.

- There is some concern that shoppers are fearful when shopping, however face coverings may allay some fears.

In summing up this item, members agreed that the Council had carried out High Street re-opening in an excellent manner, however it is important to remember the smaller retail areas for example, Dunes Road in Greatstone. The Parish and Town Council members were all keen to help in any way they can.

6. **'My Account' demonstration and launch details**

As part of the Customer Access Strategy, a presentation was given to members detailing the introduction of an online self-service customer account called 'My Account'. This new service pulls a customer's council service activities into one place, providing real time information and transactional ability.

Members were given a live test system presentation and taken through some of the processes that will be available to customers. The planned launch of 'My Account' is 3 August 2020.

Further development enhancements will be released thereafter ensuring customer usage improvements.

Members noted the following:

- Percentage uptake is expected to be up to 80% and hopefully higher.
- Some customers will require 'educating' on the new system with the help of Customer Services, Comms and Social media.
- There are residents who do not have internet access and would be unable to use this new service
- Although there are no plans to develop an App, the service is mobile responsive.

Members thought this was an excellent addition to the Council's services and thanked officers for the insightful presentation.