

Member Questions and Responses for PMSC 20th May 2010

1. Question from Councillor Roger Evans

I note in previous years the financial outturn of the council has been published during May. It is understood it will be delayed due to the current circumstances faced by the council. I note however no proposed date is yet shown on any forward plan. Can the date be given when we may see it please? I also note that there appears to be various comments and reports concerning Recovery Plans being put together and published by Councils. When will we be allowed to see, scrutinise and if needed comment on the Shropshire Recovery Plan.

Response:

The Financial Outturn Report 2019/20 will go to Cabinet on 15th June 2020.

To date we have been working through a framework of Silver and Gold Command groups during the first phase of C-19. These in turn have reported through to the Local Resilience Forum and the overarching Strategic Command Group for the region, which have been inclusive of Fire & Rescue, Police & Public Health colleagues as well as Chief Executives from Local Authorities. These groups are now shifting their focus onto the Recovery Phase, and are in the process of defining what that planning should include, what are the key objectives as a region / sector, and how effectively we can share and progress issues as we start to implement these plans.

As with other Councils, Shropshire Council has been moving to this next phase of work, and has been re-aligning the work of the Business Continuity Group and the sub-groups that sit below this. Through the Leadership Team we have been putting together a broad programme of activity (at this stage, identifying those high level activity headings), before we then develop the detail of specific areas of work. This will be an expansive programme of activity going forward and will include 'internal' business process and procedures for new ways of working, as well as how we deliver on the wider economic recovery objectives for Shropshire. Whilst there are a number of subgroups being developed to focus on specific areas of work, full engagement of local communities, and particularly the voluntary sector, will be essential – the involvement of local elected Members will be an integral part of this. The Leadership Team will share this proposed programme of activity informally as it develops, over the next few weeks, before presenting a confirmed programme of recovery activity formally to Cabinet.

2. Question from Councillor Roger Evans

It is reported that in various areas Local Authorities like Shropshire will now be taking over responsibility from government of all the Care Homes in their area. There are many comments of the good work Shropshire Council is doing in this area but what do these recent reports mean in practise. I do note that an extra £600m is being given to Local Authorities to pass onto Care Homes but what extras help and assistance will this council now be expected to take responsibility for.

Response:

Shropshire Council has been working proactively and positively with our Care Homes and system partners to provide support through the current crisis. In relation to extra responsibility and a share of National additional funding for care homes, Shropshire Council is required to identify all care homes in Shropshire eligible for the additional funding, identify the amount of funding each care home is entitled to and passport this funding to care homes.

Care Homes will still be independently responsible for their businesses and to ensure they maintain contractual requirements as monitored by Shropshire Council, and quality monitored by both Shropshire Council and the Care Quality Commission. Shropshire Council is working closely with colleagues in Health to ensure that care homes are well supported with both infection prevention and control processes and training through the Community Trust and receiving adequate GP support from named clinicians.

We are also responsible for coordinating testing in care homes across the County with the aim for these tests to be carried out by early June. In partnership with colleagues in Shrop Com we are delivering a process which will enable care home staff to be trained in carrying out testing within their homes to support their resilience and capacity for testing whenever it is needed going forward.

Shropshire Council will continue to support providers with access to emergency PPE when they are not able to access their usual supply chain through PPE provided by the Local Resilience Forum, but also using our own purchased stock of PPE where required. We will continue to provide regular support to providers, with any concerns they have through regular welfare calls via our Care Home Support Team, but also supporting them by advising on PPE procurement where they are struggling. We will continue to develop the new creative ways of working with individuals with care and support needs and build on what has already been achieved by doing things differently.

In regards payments to date - We have been able to give front line care provider organisations supplying Domiciliary Care, Care Homes and Supported Living Providers a one-off payment which is representative of an additional 10% of their current contract value for 12 weeks as at 31/3/2020. We have decided to provide this funding as a one-off payment as we know that providers are currently incurring significant additional costs in relation to the purchasing of PPE, agency staff, funding for staff who are unable to work and other financial challenges and this will immediately support their cash flow.

In addition, to assist local suppliers and companies during COVID-19, the Council is committed to pay invoices within 5 working days of the invoice date or sooner rather than on the usual 30-day terms. This commenced from 1 April 2020.

We will review the funding that we gave to providers to support them with the significant costs they have been incurring as a result of COVID-19. As we move forward for all provider partners as well as for the Care Homes.

3. Question from Councillor Roger Evans

I note the recent press release sent out by the cabinet member concerning schools and the money provided by government to help them recover extra costs due to coronavirus (CONVID-19)

Areas are identified in the appropriate government paper that is referred to in this press release.

The paper is entitled

Coronavirus (COVID-19): financial support for schools.

It details examples of what they (Government) consider can be covered by this fund. These include the increased premises related costs; support for free school meals for eligible children who are not attending school and additional cleaning.

If schools face other, extraordinary costs to deliver appropriate support to their pupils through the period referred to elsewhere in the document they should contact the DfE.

Have Shropshire Council sought any extra help for Local Authority Schools that have and are incurring costs other than those listed above.

Response:

Government guidance on School funding: exceptional costs associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) for the period March to July 2020 was published on 7 April 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools/school-funding-exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19-for-the-period-march-to-july-2020>

It referenced that in June “...we will publish further guidance for schools on the process for informing us of any additional costs relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)”. It is hoped that this guidance will take account of the actual experience of schools during the first phase of lockdown, in which the loss of ‘private income’ has been an issue for a number of schools and is not covered by the guidance published on 7 April. Shropshire Council officers have repeatedly brought this to the attention of Department for Education officials and would hope to see this covered in the revised guidance.

The guidance may also look towards other cost pressures schools will be facing as they begin planning for a phased return of some year groups after the summer half-term, for example, the purchasing of PPE for use in schools.

Council officers have regular meetings with the DfE and continue to put pressure on them regarding the loss of private income and additional costs schools are incurring as a result of COVID-19. They continue to support our maintained schools, in particular those with budget pressures, including how they are able to use reserves or other resources at their disposal. Where there are exceptions to this, we will look at individual cases, in order to present and take up individual cases to the DfE.