

CABINET 15 JUNE 2020

MEMBER QUESTION TIME

1 Question from Cllr Roger Evans

There is much talk about putting in place “Recovery Plans” and note a press release was issued recently by the Leader of Shropshire Council concerning the setting up of two groups of Conservative Councillors to look into this. Despite efforts to work cross party, no members from the second largest group of councillors appear to have been included. We are now in the recovery phase with many businesses opening on June 15th. To help all of Shropshire to recover from the present and continuing situation then surely cross-party joint working is best. For us to all to work together as is happening in most other Local Authorities.

Response

Whilst we are still very much in response mode to manage the impact of Covid-19, we are also working on transitional planning to reinstate services following central Government guidelines. In order to do this, operating frameworks have been developed;

- An overarching Internal facing (Corporate) framework
- External facing framework
- Service Level Operating frameworks.

These follow the governments phases of relaxation and demonstrate how we will reinstate and operate safely (recovery). This is also being undertaken in parallel with the refocus work and both undertakings are intrinsically linked. A protocol is in place for the reinstatement of operational assets which is led by central Government and PHE Guidance and signed off by Directors.

All of the above feeds into the overarching Corporate Recovery Plan.

The Council has made an extensive effort since the outbreak of Covid-19 to ensure a broad spectrum of business support and engagement. This has included the promotion and distribution of Government cash grants and advice and support to many of Shropshire’s businesses through both the Marches Growth Hub and teams within the Council including Economic Growth and Regulatory Services. The Council has been working closely with key stakeholders and business organisations throughout this period with representatives from a cross section of sectors including the Shropshire Business Board, Marches LEP, Federation of Small Business, Chamber of Commerce, and NFU among others.

As lockdown measures have eased and a timeline became clear about the re-opening of non-essential retail businesses on 15th June, in addition to continuing the responses and management of further grants through the extended funds (over 700 applications in the first week), officers have also been preparing plans for the re-

opening of these businesses and our market towns. This work has been across departments with a multi-team approach to offer support and advice to businesses and working with town councils and business organisations including the Business Improvement Districts to help with the immediate measures for re-opening.

A digital guide is being prepared that will be published at the weekend to offer businesses a simple clear resource for information and advice in one place, letters have been sent out to businesses with lots of information about where to go for support for their re-opening including our internal Regulatory Services team and we continue to meet regularly with business organisations to ensure that we are aware of business issues and concerns and get key messages out via these channels.

The development of our economic and social recovery plans will be key to the longer-term work to support businesses and our communities. Lots of data has started to be gathered to begin to inform this from a number of sources as it will be key for us to form a clear picture of the impacts based on evidence. We feed this through the Marches LEP directly into Central Government as well.

We will continue to involve business representation and key partners in this work going forward. The Council is leading two informal working groups set up to address the Coronavirus induced economic recession. To be clear these are not decision-making committees of the Council they will however involve Cabinet members discharging their portfolio holder responsibilities. The Economic Taskforce will address economic impacts and the Social Taskforce to help mitigate the social impacts on our citizens and communities. The membership has been drawn from across a variety of public, private and third sector organisations.

The Economic Taskforce will look at how to support local businesses and the local economy through the recession while the Social Taskforce will look at such issues including universal credit and housing. Both taskforces meet for the first-time next week. The Economic Taskforce involves a number of the partners listed above and specifically;

- Chair of Shropshire Business Board
- Chief Executive of Marches LEP
- Chief Executive of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
- Department of Work and Pensions representative
- Local Federation of Small Business representative
- Education representatives including University Centre Shrewsbury and a College rep
- Sector representatives including visitor economy, construction, agriculture, manufacturing, professional services and voluntary sector