

EMERGENCY COMMITTEE MEETING – 21ST MAY 2020

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4

Questions posed by members of the public cover a number of common themes. In the interests of efficiency and to avoid unnecessary repetition, I propose to address each individual theme in turn.

Managing Visitor Numbers (Fiona Johnson, Pamela Butler, Janine Cole, Anna Greene, Andy Nash, Sarah Hancox, Andy White, Paul Morgans)

On Monday 11th May, the Prime Minister published the Governments Covid-19 Recovery Strategy which set-out the approach to dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. The strategy included a timetable for lifting restrictions in England, some from as early as Wednesday 13th May.

In summary, the Government has now advised that people may drive to outdoor open spaces (including National Parks), irrespective of distance so long as they respect social distancing guidelines while they are there. People can also exercise as many times each day as they wish and spend time outdoors subject to not meeting up with any more than one person from outside their household.

Prior to last weekend, the District Council, alongside its partner organisations, ran a concerted PR campaign which clearly stated that whilst people were now allowed to travel, the vast majority of facilities and services (e.g. pubs, cafes, restaurants, public toilets, play areas, visitor centres etc) across our district remained closed. The only exception related to the re-opening of car parks to alleviate potential adverse impacts on our communities and in the interests of road safety.

However, despite our request for people to stay at home, we all know what happened in practice. Many of our market towns and villages were inundated with visitors, ignoring social distancing guidelines and causing concern amongst our communities. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the Government's advice, the Police are powerless to restrict the number of visitors or enforce social distancing, as it is not an offence not to social distance. This position has not changed since last weekend and is unlikely to change for the coming Bank Holiday weekend.

Neither the District Council nor the Police, have the ability to stop visitors coming to the Derbyshire Dales. All we can do is to emphasise that the Derbyshire Dales is not open for business and encourage visitors to take their exercise closer to home. We will be emphasising that message again this coming weekend.

Provision of Public Conveniences (Fiona Johnston, Paul Morgans)

At the start of the coronavirus lockdown, an operational decision was taken to close the 11 public conveniences operated by the District Council. This decision was taken because :

- There is significant potential for Covid-19 transmission in such areas (seats, door handles, wash basins, taps etc).
- Unlike toilets in hospitals or supermarkets, our public toilets are in uncontrolled environments, with open access. Queueing systems to manage crowds would need to be installed, and managed, at peak times. Portaloos pose the same health risks.
- We could not guarantee the safety of members of the public using our facilities due to our inability to clean as frequently as would be required;
- We could not guarantee the safety of our staff who have to clean such facilities in terms of PPE, hygiene etc;
- We acted collectively with other partner agencies, to emphasise that the Derbyshire Dales is not open for business as normal.

In considering our position for the coming weekend, we have invited the views of four of the larger councils who were the main focus of visitor pressures last weekend. They have provided mixed responses. Three want the toilets to stay closed - including Matlock Bath Parish Council - while another wants them reopened.

The Council have asked itself this question: What has changed from last weekend to justify a change in position? The only consideration now brought into play are claims that people were relieving themselves in the streets last weekend. Whilst this was reported across social media, the District Council did not receive a single request for service to clean-up any areas and the Police have since advised that such claims were not widespread. It is therefore difficult to assess the full extent of this; however it is acknowledged that a single incident in itself is unacceptable.

Whilst it is clearly undesirable that people should conduct themselves in this way, it would not justify a significant change in our position to protect - as a priority - the health and welfare of the public and our staff.

In addition to the above, there are increasing concerns nationally and regionally that the R-value is showing signs of increasing at a time when the full impact of the relaxed measures will not be evident for a further 2 – 3 weeks.

In the circumstances, it is considered to be premature to re-open public toilet facilities as we cannot guarantee the safety of the public or our workforce.

Risk assessments are in progress to consider the measures that would need to be put in place to re-open any toilets. That cannot, however, be this weekend.

Businesses Operating (Sarah Hancox)

The Regulations that were brought in to respond to the pandemic have always been clear that takeaway food and drink premises could remain open during lockdown. This includes ice cream vans. Many chose not to open during the initial phase of the disease but are now beginning to reopen. The Regulations are clear that any food or drink purchased from those businesses must be consumed off the premises. This prohibits consumption at tables or benches sited on the premises, but does not require

that food must be taken home for consumption. Therefore if the food or drink is consumed at a table off the premises the business will have complied with the law.

Advice for businesses operating takeaways is available on the Council's website and in person, on request. Council officers are also authorised to enforce the business closure elements of the Regulations and work alongside police and trading standards officers to do so. If there are any concerns that businesses are not operating in accordance with the law, these may be reported at licensing@derbyshiredales.gov.uk from where appropriate action will be co-ordinated.

Resumption of Garden Waste Collection Service (Gillian Beer, Bruce Field, Roger Morton, Mrs. Clifton)

On behalf of the Council and its waste collection partner, Serco, we apologise for the temporary disruption of the garden waste service. The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and the need to adhere to the Governments Social Distancing guidance has reduced Serco's capacity to deliver a full service. Our Officer have however, continued to work with Serco in exploring options to restore the service – as you will see from this evening's report.

There have been suggestions that the service could operate on a monthly basis, rather than the proposed fortnightly collection. This option was considered, but this approach is unlikely to address the expected high levels of garden waste already waiting for collection, and would ultimately increase the amount of time it would take to move back to 'normal' collection rounds.

With regards to the suggestion of residents paying an additional fee for the restoration of the service, we do not feel this is appropriate approach. The temporary cessation of the service is a district wide issue and there are residents who will need collection but cannot afford to pay an extra direct fee for this service.

Food Waste Collection Service (Claire Cadogan, Jackie Brown)

We apologise that the food waste service has been slightly disrupted by the current Pandemic. The food waste will continue to be fortnightly alongside your grey bin as has been the case for several weeks. We will review the food waste service once we have had six weeks' of garden waste collections in place.

Unfortunately, the usual Spring delivery of free biodegradable food bags is suspended until further notice. If you are running out of the food bags that we supply then, in the current circumstances, we are happy for people to put food waste direct into their kerbside caddy (it would be good if you could wash it out afterwards) or add their kitchen caddy to the kerbside collection. You can also use any biodegradable bag that conforms to BS:EN13432 standard, displaying the logo shown below:-



Enforcement of Parking Restrictions (Helen Abraham)

This weekend there will be an active Police presence across the Derbyshire Dales and Civil Enforcement Officers will also be patrolling the area.