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EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting held on Thursday 21 May 2020 at 6.00 pm.

Under Regulations made under the Coronavirus Act 2020, the meeting was held virtually. Members of the public were able to view the virtual meeting via the District Council's website at www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk or via our YouTube channel.

PRESENT

Councillor Garry Purdy - In the Chair

Councillors Sue Bull, Paul Cruise, Graham Elliott, Chris Furness, Clare Gamble, Susan Hobson and Claire Raw.

Paul Wilson (Chief Executive), Sandra Lamb (Director of Corporate Services), Tim Brand (Director of Regulatory Services), Karen Henriksen (Director of Resources), Ashley Watts (Director of Community & Environmental Services), Steve Capes (Director of Regeneration and Policy), Sally Rose (Waste & Recycling Contract Manager), Jim Fearn (Communications and Marketing Manager) and Jackie Cullen (Committee Assistant).

358/19 – ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Two nominations were received for the role of Chairman, as follows:

It was proposed by Councillor Susan Hobson and seconded by Councillor Chris Furness:

“That Councillor Garry Purdy be elected Chairman of the Emergency Committee”

Voting:

For	5
Against	3
Abstentions	0

It was then proposed by Councillor Clare Gamble and seconded by Councillor Claire Raw:

“That Councillor Paul Cruise be appointed Chairman of the Emergency Committee”

Voting:

For	3
Against	5
Abstentions	0

Councillor Garry Purdy was duly elected Chairman of the Emergency Committee.

359/19 – APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Two nominations were received for the role of Vice Chairman, as follows:

It was proposed by Councillor Clare Gamble and seconded by Councillor Claire Raw:

“That Councillor Paul Cruise be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Emergency Committee”

Voting:

For	3
Against	5
Abstentions	0

It was then moved by Councillor Sue Bull and seconded by Councillor Chris Furness:

“That Councillor Susan Hobson be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Emergency Committee”

Voting:

For	5
Against	3
Abstentions	0

Councillor Susan Hobson was duly appointed as Vice Chairman.

360/19 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In line with the Council’s temporary suspension of direct public participation the following questions were submitted in writing:

(A) From Fiona Johnston, by email

I understand that you are in planning for the ease of restrictions to support visitors to the Derbyshire Dales in the coming weeks. As a resident that has complied fully with the Government’s CV19 guidance to ensure the safety of the community, I am concerned that this has all been in vain.

I understand that you cannot overturn the Government's decision to do this, but you have some powers to manage local communities in a safe way for the residents.

I urge you to consider not to open car parks until after the Bank Holiday, or toilets, and relay the message that the people in our communities more than the need for visitors to escape from their own communities and potentially place others at risk. The weekend past was crazy here and there was evidence everywhere that social distancing was being ignored.

Can you please put this on your meeting agenda and have a clear and considered plan for your approach.

(B) From Gillian Beer by email

Further to your email about the discussion of resumption of garden waste collections, please could you pass the following as input from a member of the public:

I strongly support the resumption of the garden waste collection as soon as possible. This is a service that rate payers have paid for and, while I understand the reasons, this service is not being delivered. Unfortunately the service disappeared at the start of the spring tidy-up of gardens and the garden is growing strongly at the moment. My husband and I are isolating so visits to the tip are not an option, so we are dependent on this service. I hope that the Council and Serco will find a way to restart this service as soon as possible.

(C) From Pamela Butler, by email

Would the committee please clarify what plans are in place to mitigate problems with visitors this coming weekend?

Photos on our community Facebook page showed a row of motorbikes in Matlock Bath as if it was a normal summer weekend. I also believe that public toilets are closed (as a protective Covid-19 measure) but that this means there have been instances of people using open space as toilets.

(D) From Janine Cole, by email

Having endured in the region of 2 months of lockdown to keep the area relatively Covid 19 free, I am extremely concerned that the desire to bring much desired funds into the area will result in a lack of vigilance regarding an influx of visitors.

Can you please explain how you, as my local council, plan to deal with an anticipated influx of visitors this Bank Holiday weekend, who may not respect our sterling efforts to protect our vulnerable residents? I would like to be able to explain to friends and neighbours that our interests are being protected.

(E) From Anna Greene, by email

As a resident of the Derbyshire Dales (Wensley) I would like to know if you will be discussing provisions in place for controlling any influx of visitors over the coming bank holiday weekend.

(F) From Andy Nash, by email

The government is suggesting people can travel for exercise and this means more people are coming to the Peak Park and Derbyshire Dales. As most of the hospitality industry is closed this means that people are short on facilities.

Could you tell me what plans there are for ensuring basic services like public conveniences are being made available and how visitors will be catered for?

Are there any plans to communicate what will be available and where?

(G) From Sarah Hancox, by email

As the partner of a shop owner in Bakewell, I am becoming increasingly concerned about the seeming un-preparedness and lack of joined up thinking in terms of the easing of lockdown restrictions within the Peak District National Park and the DD in general.

Problems caused by visitors are increasing - many caused by takeaway venues offering food, with some even providing tables and chairs. There is even a licensed ice cream van, all of which is intentionally encouraging tourism.

There is nothing else open in Bakewell; as you know, the public toilets are closed - people have been observed urinating in the street, and an entire family have been caught accessing our shop toilet, down an alley.

There seem to be no visible plans drawn up by the council to mitigate the potentially harmful effects of allowing tourists to behave as though it is 'business as usual'.

This is not only in relation to Bakewell, but many other areas - Matlock Bath was overrun with bikes last weekend and the verges bordering the roads over the Eastern Moors are becoming eroded by tourists.

My home village has a large elderly population and a tourist attraction at the best of times; residents need to be protected until there is a clear and sustained reduction in deaths.

Please can you let me know what the council is planning on doing in terms of managing the potential influx of tourists this bank holiday weekend, mitigating the risk of infection to locals and ensuring that people remain safe?

(H) From Andy White, by email

In the wider public interest there were concerns over this last weekend, following the lifting of some government travel restrictions, about the number of visitors in the Dales, and our own Town of Ashbourne.

What plans are in place to mitigate the influx of people into The Dales and reduce the risk of Coronavirus infection to the general public?

(I) From Paul Morgans, Mayor of Bakewell, by email

At the recent Bakewell Town Council meeting (18/5/20) we discussed this weekend's anticipated high volume of visitors to Bakewell. In this regard, the main problem that the town faces is the closure of the public lavatories. While we appreciate the difficulty of arrangements for cleaning, the lavatories are essential for accommodating visitors. You will have heard reports of insanitary behaviour in the town last weekend.

A safe procedure for cleaning has to be formulated to cope with the continuation of covid-19. The lavatories can surely not be left closed for the many months until it is completely over. Offices and factories have re-opened, their lavatories are cleaned.

Please urgently address the cleaning problem and get this important service to the public reinstated, even if only for limited hours of peak demand.

The alternative of putting up negative signage at the entrance to our town (and others in the Peak district), does not appeal and does not solve the problem.

A large number of visitors will inevitably descend on Bakewell and neighbouring towns this weekend. Bladders and bowels do not stop working by government decree.

We would appreciate the issue we have mentioned above be put as an agenda item for your forthcoming meeting on 21st May

(J) From Claire Cadogan, by email

I am a resident in Edensor.

I would like to know why the council is discussing restarting garden waste collections but is not discussing the prospect of restarting weekly food waste collections.

We are a family of 6 and are struggling greatly with fortnightly food waste - we fill our caddies well before 2 weeks are up, despite all our best efforts. Particularly given the currently wonderful weather, the food bins become smelly very quickly and are extremely unhygienic. Surely this should be prioritised over garden waste?

(K) From Helen Abraham, by email

I am a Derbyshire Dales District resident with a question for the Emergency Committee 21st May 2020 meeting.

Given the extraordinary overcrowding and lack of social distancing last weekend, caused by people visiting beauty spots, towns like Matlock Bath, Bakewell, etc, what are Derbyshire Dales District Council doing for next May Bank Holiday weekend to restrict the number of parking bays/street parking and to enforce breaches of these restricted parking provisions, in order to ensure local public health safety and reduce the spread of Coronavirus?

I would like the question to be asked at Committee, and I want a written response also.

(L) From Bruce Field, by email

As a vulnerable person on a 3 month lockdown I would be prepared to pay whatever additional cost the committee deem necessary to re-establish collections and also reopening recycling centres would also greatly reduce the huge backlog. I do not expect people with no gardens to subsidise this and a way to achieve this must be found.

(M) From Jacky Brown, by email

Bin collection has very much been appreciated but is there any chance you could bring back every week collection on food bins? I am not a person to waste food but peelings and egg shells soon mount up along with the carcass of chickens. My bin was attacked by something this week, not sure if it was rats or cats.

Thanking you for your attention to this matter and look forward to the return of weekly collections.

(N) From Roger Morton by email

A comment: I would very much welcome the return of collections, even if at monthly intervals. The fruits of my spring clean-up just missed the last collection and have been rotting down in the bin ever since, but we could all be asked not to put grass cuttings in the bin wherever possible, which I am currently letting lie where cut.

(O) From Mrs B Clifton by email

I am among the vulnerable category, my green garden bin is full. Can you confirm that additional garden waste bagged up will also be collected? I have no means of getting to tip. It is just green clippings, weeds etc.

The following responses were given by Councillor Garry Purdy:

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 Government's Social Distancing guidance has reduced Serco's capacity to deliver a full service. Our Officers 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 an 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.

361/19 – GARDEN WASTE SERVICE

The Committee considered a report presenting the options available to the District Council for reinstating the garden waste collection service during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Director of Community and Environmental Services updated his report prior to the meeting to include Option 8, which reflected the latest discussions with the contractor on the day of the meeting.

On 10 May 2020 the Government announced the easing of lockdown measures, but reaffirmed the need to retain the necessary social distancing measures. This meant that the collection contract continued to require extra resources just to maintain the current level of service and further funds to achieve the restoration of the garden waste collection service.

Discussions with Serco had taken place throughout the lockdown period, as set out in the report, based on their Agreement with the District Council and in line with the current Covid-19 situation. At the time of writing the report, a preferred option (Option 7) had become possible, for the reasons set out in the report, enabling the service to resume on Monday 1 June.

However, prior to the virtual meeting it was announced that this option was no longer viable, as Waterswallows, the disposal point in Buxton, did not have capacity at this time to accept the amount of garden waste Serco intended to deposit. Therefore, following discussions with Serco throughout the day, the following recommendation was put to the Committee:

Option 8: The District Council hires a Refuse Collection Vehicle (RCV), in addition to the extra one Serco have hired specifically to help clear up the back log of garden waste; the District Council provides an appropriately qualified and experience driver, who will undertake driver training and checks with Serco next week; Serco to hire additional staff to support the vehicle and Council meets these costs; the District Council covers the fuel costs for the vehicle.

This option meant that the District Council would retain the Recycling Credits but was required to cover the cost of additional resources in the sum of £2,829 per week, as follows:

Hire of a Refuse Collection Vehicle	£1,100
Hire of appropriate staff	£1,300
Fuel	£429
TOTAL	£2,829

Should approval be given to reinstate the service, it was anticipated that the additional RCV could be secured in time for a 1 June recommencement.

It was reported that due to the expected backlog of garden waste, it could take up to three full cycles of collections before the backlog was cleared and normal service was resumed. Furthermore, it was also likely that in the first weeks of the service recommencing, some rounds may not be completed due to this backlog. For the reasons set out in the report, missed bins would not be collected during this period; nor would side waste be collected from properties which had received three cycles of garden waste collections.

In an attempt to expedite the collection of the backlog of garden waste, it was recommended that the temporary arrangement of fortnightly food waste collection remain in place until the backlog was cleared.

The situation and additional funding would be constantly monitored and discussed at the monthly contract meeting between Serco and the District Council unless Government issued guidance which enabled a change in working practices, in which case an urgent meeting would be convened between the two parties.

It was moved by Councillor Susan Hobson, seconded by Councillor Chris Furness and

RESOLVED (unanimously) That the reinstatement of the garden waste collection service on 1 June, as outlined at Option 8 above, is approved, with the loss of revenue and possible additional revenue expenditure and its financing by use of government grant.

362/19 – UPDATE ON OPERATIONAL DECISIONS REGARDING PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Chief Executive updated the Committee on the background to the operational decisions taken in not re-opening the public toilets at this stage of the lockdown.

The Government had now advised that people may drive to outdoor open spaces (including National Parks), irrespective of distance so long as they respected social distancing guidelines while they were there. People could also exercise as many times each day as they wished and spend time outdoors subject to not meeting up with any more than one person from outside their household.

However, despite requests 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 were powerless to restrict the number of visitors or enforce social distancing, as it was not an offence not to social distance. This position had not changed since last weekend and was unlikely to change for the coming Bank Holiday weekend.

The Council therefore faced a significant dilemma.

The District Council retained 11 public toilets across the district. The original decision to close public toilets at the start of the coronavirus lockdown was taken as an operational decision on the grounds that, as an organisation:

- There was 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 were in uncontrolled environments, with open access. Queueing systems to manage crowds would need to be installed, and managed, at peak times. Portaloos posed 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 would have to clean such facilities in terms of PPE, hygiene etc.;
- We collectively thought that in sync with other partner agencies, keeping them closed and publicising it might emphasise that contrary to the Governments message, the Derbyshire Dales was not open for business as normal.

The Council employed 2 part-time toilet cleaners. With the best will in the world, there was no way that our current resources could be deployed to maintain to a Covid-19 standard the cleanliness of 11 facilities spread across the whole of the district, notwithstanding that the considerations that led to the decision to close the facilities in the first instance continued to apply.

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

In the circumstances, it was considered that it would be premature to re-open public toilet facilities as we could not guarantee the safety of the public or our workforce.

Risk assessments were in progress to consider the measures that would need to be put in place to re-open any toilets. In addition, the costs of employing agency staff to conduct deep cleaning and provide crowd control were being assessed. This was with a view to re-opening some of our public conveniences at a point when we could SAFELY do so. That could not, however, be this weekend.

The Chief Executive then took questions from the floor.

MEETING CLOSED 7.22PM

CHAIRMAN