

Cabinet

Thursday, 26 March 2020

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Thursday, 26 March 2020, 10.00 am, County Hall, Worcester

Membership: Mr S E Geraghty (Chairman), Mr A T Amos, Mr A I Hardman, Mr M J Hart, Mrs L C Hodgson, Ms K J May, Mr A P Miller, Dr K A Pollock, Mr A C Roberts and Mr J H Smith

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NOTES

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Agenda item 6 – Resources Report – Update to paragraph 16 – Coronavirus Bid for Initial Costs

The Government have made several announcements since the Chancellor's Budget Statement on 11 March relating to funding for local government in light of the current coronavirus situation. To date the County Council have been informed that of the £1.6 billion allocated nationally as an un-ringfenced grant to support local responses £14.9 million has been allocated to Worcestershire County Council. Further grants have been provided to our local districts in support of business rates and council tax hardship, as well as to support homeless and rough sleepers. A further £1.3 billion is being allocated to support the discharge of patients in hospital to social care. This fund will come through CCGs and we are still awaiting the details of this funding.

As such these sums and responses sit outside the current budgetary framework set by Council in February 2020. In accordance with the constitution, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board has been consulted and agreed that this decision can be considered as a matter of urgency. In doing so he has asked that all members are made aware on an ongoing basis of decisions made about the spend of the government grant. This can be achieved through the usual publication of records of officer decisions and CMR decisions. It is also likely that the Overview and Scrutiny function will carry out a review of events once the pandemic has concluded. Officers have been and are continuing to record all expenditure incurred or income lost arising directly from work on the Covid-19 outbreak in order that this can be tracked through the usual budget monitoring process and data captured will support any bids for additional support from Central Government. This will in part be offset by the sums already announced by Government, but it is highly likely that more funding will be required and the Council continues to raise these issues with Government.

In addition, the Government is setting out and adopting new legislation, the Coronavirus Bill, that will change requirements for certain service delivery (particularly adult social care) potentially impacting on finances and changing current policy approaches. Legal advice has been sought about application of these. The constitution allows for changes to the Council's policy framework if resulting from a change in the law.

In order to respond quickly to the impact of the virus in the community and be able to use funds in a timely way during the coronavirus pandemic, Cabinet is recommended to:

(e) note the current situation regarding the development of the Covid-19 virus and the Council's response to this,

(f) Note the receipt of un-ringfenced grant for dealing with the impact of coronavirus in the county, and the Chief Financial Officer be authorised to include in the revenue budget

(g) delegate authority to the relevant Strategic Director, or in their absence Assistant Director or in their absence the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and relevant CMR, to take appropriate action in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, including authorising expenditure and making temporary changes to Council policies arising from the

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Coronavirus bill, once enacted, and any other legislation, national guidelines and Government directions and report back to Cabinet.