



Covid-19

Public version of report from the Town Clerk (financially sensitive tenant information redacted)

Full Council 24 March 2020

Purpose of this Report

This Report provides information on current and recommended actions for consideration by Lowestoft Town Council in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Legal Context

Lowestoft Town Council has the General Power of Competence as set out in the Localism Act 2011 and under the conditions prescribed in the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012.

Consideration of this issue and statements and proposed actions within this Report are within the powers set by this legal framework.

Practical Context

The Council began life on 1 April 2017 and has many challenges remain related to the transfer of assets and services. However, the Council has moved rapidly to establish itself as a local authority able to deal with business as usual and able to respond to emergency situations, such as the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Council has 4 members of staff (who work in conjunction with the Council's contractor East Suffolk Norse) and is governed by corporate decisions (through 20 councillors acting collectively).

Background

COVID-19 has an international impact and its impact is increasing within the UK with a small number of cases currently reported within Suffolk; the understanding of the illness is also increasing and there are official sources of advice which guide the UK population and organisations including:

- [The UK Government](#)
- [The NHS](#)
- [The World Health Organisation](#)

A proportionate, rapid and policy-led approach

The Council is guided by the UK Government in its response to COVID-19. This includes changing many aspects of how we operate and being flexible to changing conditions and needs.

The Clerk has provided a Pandemic Contingency and Recovery Policy which is recommended for urgent adoption.

The Council recognises that there is and will continue to be disruption to its business and that its risk management will be regularly reviewed and updated as needed by the Clerk with updates to Council as needed.

The main areas of concern in relation to matters within the Council's control, in light of the current Covid-19 pandemic, are:

- Adapting to challenges and remaining operational and effective
- Health and safety of councillors, contractors, staff, volunteers and members of public
- The longer-term impacts of COVID-19 and measures needed to assist social, environmental and economic recovery

Facilities, services and events

The Council operates a number of events, facilities and services, some through tenants. Although there is a broad delegation to the Clerk requested to deal with urgent and necessary business during the period where social distancing and emergency measures are in place, Council is advised of the current position and recommendations in relation to specific assets:

Issue	Tenant	Advice issued	Considerations and recommendations
Town Hall	No	Vacant property with limited social contact risk. Norse manage their employees.	Norse vacant property checks continue. Norse are also keyholders. Security arrangements in place.
Public conveniences, parks and play equipment.	No	Norse contacted and instructed that these should close if they consider the risk to cleaning staff is too high.	As this paper is written, news is coming through that on top of other authorities who have already closed their facilities, Babergh and Mid Suffolk have announced that they are doing so today. The virus is thought to live for some time on hard surfaces, which creates risks for the public and cleaning staff. Toilet paper is being stolen and Norse indicate that it might become unavailable. Soap supplies have been reported as being stolen in some public conveniences in some areas. Hand-washing facilities, good lighting, the availability of toilet paper and other health and safety aspects of our toilets cannot be

			<p>guaranteed.</p> <p>Children do not heed social distancing measures, including on play equipment. Government is encouraging outside activities where social distancing is respected (other than for those in self-isolation as vulnerable or ill).</p> <p>The public appear not to be heeding social distancing measures when it comes to public spaces.</p> <p>Some local authorities are closing their parks and public conveniences.</p> <p>Not all of our parks and play areas can be locked.</p> <p>In the event that Norse contractors cannot attend site, maintenance will not be conducted, vandalism might not be picked up and any buildings on site become more vulnerable.</p> <p>Recommendations: That the Clerk has delegated authority in relation to these matters and should consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the parks and public conveniences remain open until such time as a large number of public authorities close their parks and play areas or Government dictates that they close (or in the case of public conveniences, Norse can no longer attend or supplies are exhausted), in which case they will be secured where possible and signs will be erected stating: “SAFETY WARNING: This area is closed to the public owing to risks to public health from the COVID-19 virus” or similar. 2. If there is any reasonable time to do so, that in advance of any Government direction to close, signs are put up, where reasonably possible, at the entrances to parks and play areas stating: “SAFETY WARNING: Enjoy this area only where you can comply with Government advice and maintain at least 2 metres distance from other people. This area may be subject to closure at short notice. 3. That in advance of any Government direction to close, signs are put up, where reasonably possible, at the entrances to public conveniences stating: “SAFETY WARNING: These toilets should be used with caution owing to the COVID-19 virus. Ensure you have access to toilet paper and
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			handwashing facilities before use.”
Leisure clubs, friends of groups, museums etc	Yes or established user group	Advised regarding social distancing and the potential for closure of parks.	Should parks close, these groups will be informed.
Health and Safety, compliance, maintenance and repairs	No	All ongoing with some adaptations and risk management where necessary	No additional action.
Tenant income	Yes	See recommendations	Recommendations: Four confidential recommendations for the Council to consider
Marina Theatre	Yes	Closed to the public. Staff working in compliant conditions	No additional action
Grants	N/A	The Town Council has a limited amount of funds which might be accessible for wider community work at a time of national emergency/recovery. Public money has been given to some organisations for events that are not now proceeding.	Recommendation: With delegation to the Clerk to action, where relevant: 1. That the normal grants programme is diverted to supporting community and other initiatives which respond to the local health, social or economic impact of COVID-19 and any recovery measures 2. That any grants which cannot now be used owing to COVID-19 are recovered with notice to recipient that they may reapply at a suitable future date
Events	1) No 2) Yes	1) All events where we manage booking are cancelled. 2) Relevant organisations operating their own booking systems within our buildings or on our land, such as community hall managers, advised of the latest Government advice and a recommendation that they operate their booking systems flexibly e.g. to enable dates to be deferred	N/A

		without charge.	
Links Road 'Car Park'	No	No action to date.	<p>Some authorities are closing car parks on the basis that they encourage use of towns and open spaces (something we would normally wish to encourage).</p> <p>Recommendation: If this becomes widespread practice and/or Government so instructs, Links Road might be among those areas that the Clerk will secure as closed.</p>

Recommendations

- To adopt this report and its recommendations
- To adopt the Pandemic Contingency and Recovery Policy