

Date: 1st April 2020

Title: Emergency Plan Update 2

By: Mike Keller

Purpose of Report: To advise Councillors of progress since the last report on 15th March 2020

Recommendations: To note the report

In my report to you on 15th March, I said that it was not possible to look beyond getting essential information, in the form of a photocopied leaflet, out with the Parish Magazine. Thanks to the efforts of Christine Jeffery, the magazine printers, Jerry Gottlieb and the team of deliverers, that information managed to reach every household by Tuesday 17th March, most importantly including those who do not have internet connection. The leaflet included information on which businesses were still open and which were closed, contact details for Community Watch (with an indication of the services their volunteers could offer) and a reminder of the Government's current health advice at that time. Getting the correct information out was a challenge as the government guidelines and business response seemed to change hourly and, as a result some of the information was still out of date, but most of it held good. We were extremely fortunate (or possibly had the good foresight) to get this information out just before the restriction on movements were announced by central government.

Since then, information updates have continued online via the PC website and email alerts. Bob Salmon at the Residents Association has also been echoing our email alerts to his circulation list. Some limited information has been posted on the PC notice board but it is doubtful that this has had much effect with the current restrictions on movement. My thanks here are due to Katrina and Debbie, who have managed to carry on their functions despite being in lockdown.

On the volunteer front, Christine Jeffery has confirmed that Community Watch now have plenty of willing workers who are mostly providing a service getting prescriptions for those in self-isolation. I have had a few phone calls, mostly enquiring about the government restrictions, and whether they apply to gardeners, tree surgeons etc.

Christine Jeffery has also indicated to me that it will no longer be possible to distribute information leaflets with the Parish Magazine, firstly because the printers are closed and secondly, because the delivery volunteers are no longer able or willing to carry out that task. I am aware of suggestions from some residents that the Parish Council should consider doing a mail shot to all households. This, I believe, would not be effective or even possible under the present restrictions. It would not be effective because we are unable to use the full register of electors for addressing purposes, due to GDPR restrictions. We could only use the publicly available list of addresses held by Wealden Council and thus all material would have to be addressed to "The Occupier", placing it in the same "Junk Mail" category as adverts for double glazing or boiler insurance. Equally, it would not be possible due to the cost involved. The postage alone for 950 mail shots (the same number as magazines

delivered) would be some £428 at business rate, to which would be added the cost of printing, envelopes and address labels (this is of course ignoring the question of the huge amount of time and effort required). The Parish Emergency Plan, last ratified in 2018, authorised the plan co-ordinator to spend up to £500 without reference back to the council. The cost of a single mail shot would breach that limit and, since the council cannot make new resolutions or authorise new expenditure without holding a physical meeting, it is not possible to proceed with this at present, even if thought desirable.

I now regard the first phase of our emergency response as over. However, the original emergency plan, although it recognised disease as one of the triggers, was never drawn up with a long-term crisis in mind. We now need to consider how we proceed during the weeks and months ahead. What should be the Parish Council's role be now that Community Watch are organising volunteer help and, together with members of the Church's Pastoral Care team, are organising telephone check-ups and morale boosts to people in isolation?

Individuals are also looking after their neighbours in a quite amazing way.

Going forward, I see changes in restriction of movement and health information being the responsibility of central government and these are now communicated effectively via TV and radio as well as online. I believe that the Parish Council should continue to provide online local information and communication and to liaise with local businesses and volunteer groups, but that our formal role is now limited.