

RECORD OF OFFICER DECISION

APPROVAL FOR PAUSE ON GROUP ACTIVITY IN LIBRARIES

Decision made

To suspend until further notice all group activities delivered in Wiltshire Council libraries.

Made by: Jess Gibbons, Director of Communities and Neighbourhood Services

Background

1. Pursuant to paragraph 4 of Part 3 Section D, the Directors of Wiltshire Council are empowered to take all necessary decisions in cases of emergency. This decision is being enacted by Jess Gibbons, Director of Communities and Neighbourhood Services, using these powers in circumstances where the Director concerned believes that there is a risk of damage to property, a threat to the health or wellbeing of an individual and/or that the interests of the Council may be compromised if this decision is not otherwise taken.

Reason for decision

2. This decision would in other circumstances be taken by Cabinet or the relevant Cabinet Member. However, in circumstances where Cabinet or the relevant Cabinet Member is unable to meet to expedite its functions in a timely manner during the COVID-19 pandemic, this decision is being taken in accordance with the power referred to in paragraph 1 above in consultation with Chief Executive Officers, other Directors and the relevant Cabinet Member. This decision will be reported to the next meeting of Cabinet.
3. The background to this decision is the COVID-19 pandemic. Pertinent to this decision is the impact of the advice from government on self-isolation and social distancing; and, in turn, the impact of these measures on participants, including staff (paid and voluntary). A large number of library volunteers are aged over 70 or have underlying health conditions and are required to self-isolate.
4. The national picture and decisions that local partners and stakeholders are already making is limiting our ability to continue delivery. Volunteers, staff and participants are querying whether activities should still be taking place and many are inevitably practicing self-isolation and social distancing themselves.
5. We will work closely with our teams on the ground, Communications, and partner organisations and customers to ensure the closedown plan is both coordinated and effectively communicated to all. We will put in place measures to move from face to face reading sessions and rhyme times to running these virtually and shared on social media.

6. I confirm that in making this decision I have considered the following in line with Wiltshire Council's Constitution:

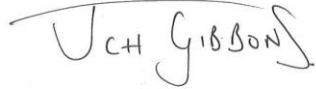
Key decision requirements	Yes
Views of relevant cabinet member(s), committee chairman, area board(s)	Yes
Consideration of the area boards and delegated decision checklist for officers on the issue of when and how to involve local councillors and area boards in decisions about local services	N/A – this decision applies county wide
Implication of any council policy, initiative, strategy or procedure	N/A
Consultation in accordance with requirements and expectations of consultation with the public	Consultation with the public was not possible in light of the urgency of the decision.
Range of options available	Y
Staffing, financial and legal implications	Y. Redeployment of staff will be explored.
Risk assessment	Y. The risks of maintaining sessions is considerable given public health implications, reduced staffing/volunteers and suspension of activities by others. As soon as we are able to deliver sessions in person again, we will.
Involvement of statutory officers and/or directors	All directors had an opportunity to comment following the gold meeting of 17 March where the potential need to suspend was discussed.
Regional or national guidance from other bodies	The decision was taken in light of national guidance from Public Health England
The council's constitution	Yes

Conflict of Interest

7. Not applicable

Other options considered

8. The other options considered were maintaining the existing provision of activities. This was rejected as impractical as well as being inconsistent with the advice from government on social distancing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "JCH GIBBONS". The signature is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Made by:

Jess Gibbons, Director of Housing and Commercial

Date: 17 March 2020