

EAST BUDLEIGH with BICTON PARISH COUNCIL

COVID 19 INTERIM REVIEW

When news of the virus began to affect the UK and the Government announced there might be an order for citizens to isolate indoors, three Councillors and the Clerk held an initial meeting to discuss how to keep residents informed. A second meeting was held with members of the Shop Committee. It was agreed that a poster be circulated to all households, giving the Shop as a source for phoning in orders, which would be delivered, plus contact number for the Parish Clerk as Co-ordinator and the Parish Council website as a resource for information. Cllr Walters held a meeting with the Budleigh Medical Centre management team on 5th March to introduce, and make available, the East Budleigh volunteer support team should future need arise.

The whole Parish Council held an Emergency General Meeting in order to put delegated powers in place for the duration of the lockdown. The Clerk was authorised to pay bills after approval by two Councillors and it was agreed that decisions would be made via email, to be ratified at the first opportunity. Online banking was already in place.

Activities:

1. The Clerk paid bills in accordance with delegated powers
2. The Clerk prepared and circulated end of year accounts, obtained verification by the Internal Auditor and emailed final documents to the External Auditors, following their new arrangements for digital communication.
3. On the advice of the Government, the toilets were locked and the electricity switched off.
4. The Parish Path volunteer was instructed by EDDC to cease work, as essential clearance would be carried out by specific covid-trained members of staff.
5. Councillors and Residents were updated on the situation via information from all sources, which was placed on the website, as well as an article with Emergency Numbers, which was placed in the Church Magazine and delivered to all residents.
6. The Clerk liaised with Cllr. Walters over preparing a list of Volunteers who were willing to deliver food and medicines. Advice on safety measures was sent to all Volunteers which they individually agreed to. A reminder was again given to each Volunteer before they carried out any tasks.
7. Cllr. Walters applied for and obtained a Prompt Action Fund to provide food parcels to vulnerable and elderly people in the village. Being mindful of residents' mental health, cakes and biscuits, plus small photo albums were delivered to vulnerable residents at Easter and on VE Day. Volunteers with food Hygiene certificates did the baking.

8. The Clerk obtained further Prompt Action Funds, gathered a team of sewers and provided over 100 sets of Scrubs to local Care homes.

Although residents are slowly being permitted to return to normal life, the Parish Council is continuing to monitor the situation. Council Meetings are being held by online video conferencing until such time as face to face meetings are permitted again. Further food gifts may be delivered to the most vulnerable people who are still advised to stay at home. The Shop is now planning to open to walk-in customers after suitable processes have been put in place to protect everyone.

Conclusions

The early action of preparing posters and delivering leaflets to residents was key in assisting everyone to cope with the Lockdown. Appointing the Clerk as co-ordinator for the Parish ensured that residents were kept informed of local and Government activities, business grants and other assistance.

Areas for improvement:

It was found to be very difficult to identify those in need, outside of the very vulnerable people who received direct assistance from Government.

Early close co-operation should be established with other groups in the area, such as the Church, Salem Chapel, Pub, Friends of All Saints and the Village Hall to enable a shared approach on caring for and informing residents. Greater use could perhaps be made of social media platforms such as Whats App..

Clerk to East Budleigh with Bicton Parish Council.

Approved by Council at a Meeting on:-