PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEMPORARY STAFF

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1. **Keynsham High Street**

(a) B&NES are closing Keynsham High Street between 9am and 5pm 7 days a week using temporary barriers. The Cycle lane will be kept open and DialARide will be allowed temporary access. Disabled parking bays however will be shut and they will need to use either Ashton Way or Back Lane.

(b) Following clarification from B&NES, the closure will be in operation for the duration of social distancing. This could be for a short period until a second lockdown with winter approaching, last for the duration the COVID Emergency regulations are in place (which expire in April 2021), or for the duration of the Temporary TRO which can be in place for a max time of 18 months.

(c) It has been noted that the operation of the barriers should be performed by the existing Town Council staff. The Clerk has informed the Council that there is not the staff capacity to do this, none of the existing staff when consulted wished to add this in to their hours/duties as a change to their contracts, and has referred the matter to the Personnel Committee for consideration.

(d) B&NES currently pay Safe and Sound security and stewarding services (who effect the road closures for the Town Council during Winter Festival), to man the barrier at the top of Milsom Street throughout the day in order to permit regular access of the Park and Ride buses. A similar proposal for Keynsham High Street was costed at £728 which, although this would be just to attend opening and closing, was high because there was a minimum 4hour hire charge for any services.

(e) The Personnel Cttee were provided with details at the meeting on 14th July that the effort required to implement the opening and closing of barriers on the Keynsham High Street was minimal because the barriers were very lightweight, were secured at the end of the day in the nearby local church and therefore time required was 10 minutes at the beginning and end of the day.

1.2. **Play areas**

(a) Government guidance on re-opening play areas and outdoor gyms is currently considered impractical for most Town and parish Councils. This is because there appears to be an impractical responsibility placed on the operators to provide not just appropriate signage but also hand sanitiser, cleaning of equipment in between each child, a one way system (if applicable) and other social distancing measures including ensuring numbers are limited (with marshalls/stewards if necessary to control crowds) in order to prevent a “Bournemouth Beach” effect. Most T and PC’s have therefore either decided to keep their play areas closed or to open with signage but no marshalling/cleaning/sanitisation measures, leaving the responsibility to the adults using the play area. Some insurers are content that as long as the Risk Assessment has been performed and all “reasonable” measures have been introduced then they are content to continue cover, others are not.

(b) Following the re-opening of 4 of the Councils’ play areas on Saturday 4th July it is regrettable to report that social distancing and capacity limits are not being followed in Upper Memorial Park. Furthermore Grounds Maintenance staff are being abused by members of the public when they ask them to move away so

bins can be emptied. They report feeling very intimidated, that tape to ensure only a certain number of children use equipment at any one time has been removed and that generally social distancing is not being observed at all.

(c) B&NES have apparently installed a one way system at Royal Victoria Park and provided Safe and Sound marshalls (10 am til 4.30pm) and hand sanitiser at the entry point to the play areas. However, last weekend all sanitiser stations were vandalised. Unless the Town Council takes some sort of action to limit numbers within the Upper Memorial Park play area and ensure social distancing can be maintained, the Town Council will need to shut the play area.

(d) If the Town Council were to employ new staff or contract for two people to marshall Upper Memorial Park play area 7 days per week, 10am to 5pm, the Annual costs would be around £65-70,000 per annum.

(e) If there is a second wave in the autumn/winter however, and lockdown reintroduced, then these resources would only be required for 4-6 months.

2.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

In addition the Committee were advised in the Town Clerk's report of two other pertinent pieces of information in respect of utilising Town Council resources to facilitate the temporary closures in the High Street .

2.1. SHOULD TOWN COUNCIL PAY?

There is however, the issue of whether the Town Council should be paying at all when the responsibility for temporary closure of the High Street rests with B&NES, who are already paying for the barrier operation at the top of Milsom Street. Any attempt by the Town Council to pay for additional resources to implement Keynsham High Street closures could be seen by Councillors and residents alike as dual taxation – and would in case need to go to Full Council for debate/decision.

2.2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

The Town Council's solicitor has advised that providing the Town Council does not join with B&NES in implementing the procedure, then any legal challenge to the decision to allow Dial A Ride access but not disabled parking as a breach of the Public Sector Equality Duty rests with B&NES to defend as the Highways and Traffic Regulation Authority and decision maker. At its last meeting, the Town Council merely supported a proposal – it has not made the actual decision to implement the closure**. However the solicitor has advised that there is case law that should the Town Council actively decide to participate in assisting with the closure, it could become a party/co-defendant with B&NES to any legal challenge.**

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Personnel Committee discussed the possible options to resource both the High Street barriers and introduce playground monitoring at length and have made the following recommendations for consideration by the Town Council.

(i) That it is not cost-effective to provide staff to monitor/steward Upper Memorial Play area and therefore an intensive social media and advertising campaign to encourage safe social distancing and safe play should be undertaken.

(ii) If there continues to be a complete lack of observance of safe play requirements in Upper Memorial Park then it would need to be closed.

(iii) That the Town Council consider the creation of a new temporary staff post of 1.5hours in the morning and 1.5hours in the evening 7 days per week to operate the barriers and litter pick in Memorial Park at National Living Wage for 6 months with view to extension if required.

(iv) That the Town Council consider how they wish to address the implications, specifically the issue of B&NES funding COVID-safe measures in Bath but expecting the Town Council (and Keynsham tax-payers) to fund similar services in Keynsham – a letter to B&NES was suggested.