

Record of decisions taken by an officer under Standing Order 54 – urgent decision making



Title:	COVID-19 Surrey County Council Response to Covid: Refunds and charges policy
Divisions Affected:	All
Key Decision:	Yes
Reason Key:	Affects two or more Divisions
Decision taken under delegation by virtue of:	Standing order 54 – urgent decision making
Meeting date/time	23 March 2020 13:00-15:00
Meeting title	CLT meeting

Summary

The Council is responding to the Covid-19 major incident and therefore needs to make urgent decisions to ensure that residents are protected. Urgent decisions taken at the above named meeting are listed below with reasons.

Decision made

Decision made:

It was AGREED that:

1. The following principles to be applied to cancellations of bookings for SCC facilities:
 1. Encourage postponement rather than cancellation
 2. Waive any admin fees charged for making changes to bookings.
 3. Honour 19/20 prices for bookings which need to be rearranged in 20/21 year at higher prices.
 4. Amend cancellation policies, particularly those that would not honour a refund for short notice cancellation
 5. Provide a full refund with no cancellation fee.

Reasons for Decision:

1. The council is committed to supporting the government's [guidance](#) to the public to avoid all unnecessary gatherings to help reduce the spread of the

virus and reduce the mounting pressure on our National Health Service. On 22 March, the Government issued [new instructions](#) to businesses and other venues across the United Kingdom to close as soon as they reasonably can, and not to open for trade from Saturday 21 March in order to ensure that the public avoids unnecessary social contact. Councils were made responsible for enforcing regulations requiring those businesses asked to close. In order to be consistent with the expectations of businesses, the council is also closing all sites and facilities that could facilitate or encourage non-essential contact.

2. Even before these strictures came into place, the council had started to receive an increasing number of requests to cancel or postpone existing bookings of council facilities as a result of COVID19. The main areas affected are
 - Registrars – ceremonies
 - Property – weddings & filming at County Hall
 - Outdoor Learning Centres
 - Libraries
 - Adult Education*
3. Ordinarily, such cancellations or postponements would be subject to penalties or charges made clear in the terms and conditions of the original booking. In light of both our commitment to prevent non-essential contact and on compassionate grounds recognising the tremendous uncertainty and disruption currently facing residents, the Corporate Leadership Team agreed the new policy on refunds and charges.
4. It is recognised that this policy could result in a material loss of income for the council. One potential mitigation to the loss of income could be to draw on the new emergency funding being made available to councils, of which Surrey County Council's allocation is £25 million.

Decisions taken by:	Joanna Killian Chief Executive
Decisions taken on:	23 March 2020
To be implemented on:	23 March 2020

Decision taken in consultation with

Leigh Whitehouse
Michael Coughlin
Simon White
Katie Stewart
Patricia Denney
Hannah Futter
Piali Das Gupta