

Minute of Meeting Emergencies Board

Date	Time	Venue
Friday, 20 March 2020	11:00	Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

Present

Councillor Michelle Campbell, Councillor Eddie Devine, Councillor Alistair Mackay, Councillor Marie McGurk, Councillor Iain Nicolson

Chair

Councillor McGurk, Convener, presided.

In Attendance

S Black, Chief Executive; S Quinn, Director of Children's Services; M Crearie, Director of Communities, Housing & Planning Services; G McNeil, Director of Environment & Infrastructure; A Russell, Director of Finance & Resources; L McIntyre, Head of Policy & Commissioning and L Mahon, Head of Communications & Marketing (both Chief Executive's); O Reid, Head of Communities & Public Protection (Communities, Housing & Planning Services); J Trainer, Head of Childcare & Criminal Justice (Children's Services); and K Graham, Head of Corporate Governance and L Belshaw, Democratic Services Manager (both Finance & Resources); S Strachan, Acting Head of Health & Social Care (Paisley) (Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership) and V Hollows, Chief Executive (Renfrewshire Leisure).

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest intimated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

Order of Business

The Convener intimated that the report by the Director of Finance & Resources - First Meeting of the Emergencies Board - would deal with items 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7 of the agenda and that the report by the Chief Executive - Update on Covid 19 - would deal with items 4 and 5 of the agenda.

1 First Meeting of the Emergencies Board

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to proposed arrangements for the operation of the Emergencies Board, including the Board's membership, appointment of substitute members, and frequency and conduct of meetings. The report also considered arrangements for Council and Board meetings and the delegation of functions to officers.

The report intimated that the Emergencies Board, which was part of the Council's decision-making structure, had been convened in the context of an outbreak of the Covid-19 virus which had been classed as a global pandemic and which had caused significant consequences to the services provided by the Council. The report recognised that due to the impact of the pandemic, it would not be possible for the Council's existing decision-making arrangements to operate effectively and proposed that the Emergencies Board would operate in place of the Council and its Boards for the duration of the emergency to decide all major policy matters. All other decisions to be delegated to officers unless there was a statutory requirement that prevented such a delegation. The report proposed that all Council and Board meetings with effect from 27 March to 24 June be cancelled, with the Council meeting scheduled to be held on 25 June remaining available at present. The report noted that it was not possible to predict how long the current emergency would last.

It was proposed that in addition that the meeting of the Finance, Resources & Customer Services Policy Board scheduled to be held on 25 March 2020 be cancelled but that the meeting of the Regulatory Functions Board scheduled to be held on 26 March 2020 take place as planned. This was agreed.

In relation to the appointment of substitute members, Councillor Devine intimated that his substitutes would be Councillors Sheridan and Kennedy and that would be their order of priority.

DECIDED:

(a) That it be noted that the current membership of the Emergencies Board comprised Councillors McGurk (Convener); Campbell (Depute Convener); Nicolson, Devine and Mackay;

(b) That there be no changes to the Board's membership;

(c) That the appointment of up to two substitute members for each Board member be agreed to attend the Board should the Board member not be available with the substitutes being chosen in the order of priority intimated by the Board member. Board members to provide names of their substitutes who must be from the same political group as the original Board member, to the Head of Corporate Governance prior to the next meeting of the Board; noting that Councillor Devine's substitutes were Councillor Sheridan and Councillor Kennedy and that was their order of priority;

- (d) That it be agreed that the Board would meet weekly each Friday at 11 am in Renfrewshire House, Paisley or at such other time or venue as the Convener may decide;
- (e) That it be agreed that the quorum for Board meetings be at least three members or their substitutes and that members would be able to attend meetings of the Board remotely either through an audio or an audio/visual link to the meeting and that the ability to access meetings remotely would also be extended to any other Board meeting that took place;
- (f) That it be agreed that due to the sensitive nature of some of the information it might be asked to consider, that the Chair, in consultation with the Chief Executive, might decide that any item of business or part of an item should be considered in private;
- (g) That it be agreed that where a decision was required which could not wait until the next meeting of the Board, that the Convener might permit a decision to be taken by the majority written consent of the members of the Board or their substitutes where all members were invited to participate;
- (h) That it be agreed to waive the notice requirement in terms of the Council's Procedural Standing Orders to enable reports to be submitted to the Board at short notice, to reflect the rapidly changing circumstances of the emergency;
- (i) That it be noted that, except as expressly altered in the report, that the Procedural Standing Orders of the Council would continue to apply to meetings of the Emergencies Board;
- (j) That it be agreed to cancel all meetings of the Council and its Boards in the period from 20 March to 24 June 2020, with the exception of the meeting of the Regulatory Functions Board to be held on 26 March 2020 which would proceed as planned, and that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Provost to cancel the Council meeting on 25 June 2020 if, in the Provost's reasonable opinion, it would not be practicable for the meeting to take place or where there was no substantive business for the meeting to consider;
- (k) That it be noted that any major policy decisions would be made by the Emergencies Board and subject to paragraph (l) below; it be agreed to delegate to the Chief Executive or her nominee all decisions in relation to the functions of the Council throughout the duration of the emergency provided that they were in accordance with existing Council policy;
- (l) That it be agreed that in relation to regulatory and quasi-judicial matters the Head of Corporate Governance would develop a procedure involving the Conveners of the relevant Boards being consulted to enable the Board to consider whether it wished to decide the matter instead of officers; and
- (m) That it be noted that the Chief Executive would provide regular updates to the Board and to elected members more widely on the impact of Covid-19 and the actions being taken to minimise or restrict its consequences for Renfrewshire and its residents.

2 Update on Covid-19

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to an overview of the Council's current preparations and response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The report intimated that this was a rapidly-changing situation which was being monitored carefully by the World Health Organisation (WHO), UK and Scottish Governments, NHS and local authorities. WHO had declared a global pandemic with cases rising across the world on a daily basis. The UK Government had identified four phases to tackle the virus being contain/delay/research/mitigate and was currently in the delay phase. The report

outlined the national situation, current advice, issues in relation to vulnerable people and summarised the financial measures announced by the Scottish Government to support businesses and communities. The report highlighted the local situation, including mitigation measures in place, referred to numbers of staff who were currently self-isolating either because they had symptoms; had other people in their household with symptoms or because they had returned recently from a category 1 country. The report also detailed the numbers of staff who had been identified as vulnerable/at risk and who were being shielded from social contact for a period of time. The report referred to the recent decision to close schools and the pressure that this would put on some employees as they balanced their work requirements and family commitments and caring responsibilities, and how the Council's ICT service was responding to and supporting demand for large scale flexible/home working across services. The report provided details of business continuity arrangements for priority services and appendices 1 and 2 to the report highlighted prioritisation of services and the latest online information of service changes respectively.

The report referred to the support to public communications by sharing and signposting to information from the NHS and the Scottish Government and the channels by which this was being done.

The Chief Executive updated the numbers of confirmed cases and deaths across the UK which now stood at 3269 and 144 respectively. It was noted that there were 71 cases within the Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board area and that there would be an update on the Scottish position later today.

The Director of Children's Services gave an update on school closures, emphasising that the care and welfare of children and young people were priorities, and outlined the arrangements in place in terms of outreach, identification of key workers' children and vulnerable children; indicated that three primary schools, yet to be identified, and all 11 secondary schools would remain open, pupils who required to complete assessments/folios for SQA would be able to attend the secondary schools for this purpose next week. He indicated that head teachers continued to work daily with staff and their school communities and that teachers who were fit and able would be working in some capacity in terms of providing children with distance learning and on-line provision, and that home study packs had been provided. Nursery provision would also be available for key workers' children and for children in vulnerable groups. It was noted that a letter would be issued to all parents/guardians over the weekend advising of the arrangements that were being put in place.

It was proposed that all elected members be provided with a copy of the briefing by the Director of Children's Services; that there be single contact numbers within the Council for elected members and for members of the public; that consistent information be provided to all elected members and that members be kept as up to date as possible with the situation as it evolved. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the current national and local situation with regards to Covic-19 and the current plans and guidance from both the UK and Scottish Governments be noted;
- (b) That the current position and mitigation measures being put in place by the Council, including the prioritisation of services as highlighted in Appendix 1 to the report, and the latest on-line information on service changes highlighted in Appendix 2 to the report be noted;
- (c) That all elected members be provided with a copy of the briefing by the Director of Children's Services;

- (d) That there be single contact numbers within the Council for elected members and for members of the public; and
- (e) That consistent information be provided to all elected members and that members be kept as up to date as possible with the situation as it evolved.

Exclusion of Press and Public

The Board resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business as it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the press and public were present, there could be disclosure to them of confidential information.

3 Confidential Updates

The Board then considered confidential updates in relation to arrangements for schools and education; the provision of food support; critical care and care for the elderly; children's residential and protective services, homelessness and allocations and the Council's finances and delivery of Council services. Updates were provided on each of these areas by the Director of Children's Services; the Director of Infrastructure & Environment; the Acting Head of Health and Social Care (Paisley); the Head of Child Care & Criminal Justice; the Director of Finance & Resources and the Chief Executive respectively.

DECIDED: That the updates be noted.