

Minute of Meeting Emergencies Board

Date	Time	Venue
Thursday, 09 April 2020	11:00	Skype meeting,

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); J Trainer, Head of Childcare & Criminal Justice (Children's Services); O Reid, Head of Communities & Public Protection and C Dalrymple, Communities & Regulatory Manager (both Communities, Housing & Planning Services); K Graham, Head of Corporate Governance, L Neary, Head of Transformation, HR & OD, P Murray, Head of ICT, M Conaghan, Legal & Democratic Services Manager and D Low, Democratic Services Manager (all Finance & Resources); D Leese, Chief Officer and S Strachan, Acting Head of Health & Social Care (Paisley) (both Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership); V Hollows Chief Executive (Renfrewshire Leisure); and D Mair, Civil Contingencies Officer, Civil Contingencies Service.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Campbell declared an interest in item 2 on the agenda as she was an employee with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde but not in the Council's area and intimated that she would remain in the meeting during consideration of the item.

1 Minute of Previous Meeting

There was submitted the Minute of meeting of the Emergencies Board held on 3 April 2020.

DECIDED: That the Minute be approved.

2 Update on COVID 19

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to the Council's current arrangements and response to the ongoing international Coronavirus, Covid-19 pandemic.

The report intimated that there were now 55,242 confirmed cases of Covid – 19 in the UK up from 33,718 reported on 3 April 2020. There had been 6,159 deaths across the UK (up from 2,921 in the last report). In Scotland there were now 4,565 confirmed cases (up from 2,602) and 366 deaths (up from 126). Of these, 1,166 cases were within the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board Area (up from 682). In GGCHB area there were 555 people in hospital at midnight on Tuesday night (62 in intensive care) as either confirmed or suspected cases.

In response to this rapidly developing position, the Government had continued the “lock down” for the population. A number of nationally driven operational issues have been focused on over the past week as a key part of the Council and partners' response to the pandemic and to protect and support local residents. This included the extension of the death registration service from five days a week to seven days a week including the forthcoming Easter bank holiday; continued support for 'shielded' residents; the redeployment of staff; the introduction of the Food Fund and other assistance; and volunteering.

The report provided a focus on two specific areas: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Covid-19 testing. The Acting Head of Health and Social Care (Paisley), Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership provided an update on the provision off PPE to HSCP employees in accordance with national guidance issued on 2 April 2020. The Chief Officer, Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership, provided information on the development of a testing system in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS area which had been rolled out to constituent CHPs. The testing was designed for employees who were not displaying symptoms but were isolating because they resided with someone who was self-isolating. This testing regime was quite different to the testing station established at Glasgow Airport by the Scottish and UK governments and which was intended for use by Scottish Ambulance Service and NHS 24 staff.

The report provided service updates and highlighted a reduction in the number of Renfrewshire Council employees who were self-isolating.

DECIDED:

(a) That the current national and local situation with regards to Covid-19 and the current plans and guidance from both the UK and Scottish Governments be noted; and

(b) That the current position and response measures being put in place by the Council and partners be noted.

3 Licensing Contingency Measures

Under reference to item 3 of the Minute of the meeting of the Board held on 3 April 2020, when the Board had considered the terms of a report on Licensing Contingency Measures and had decided that the report be continued for further consideration of appropriate delegations to officers, there was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to a revised process in relation to consideration of some licensing applications.

The report intimated that since the last meeting of this Board, the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 had received Royal Assent and the licensing provisions of that Act were now in force. The Act made a number of changes to licensing practice under the terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. However, a number of other emergency measures still remained to be implemented to ensure that the Council was able to meet its statutory obligations in relation to the determination of licence applications. This report outlined proposals to change policies and procedures for dealing with some licensing applications in the absence of meetings of the Regulatory Functions Board.

The report advised that the majority of licensing applications could already be determined by officers using delegated powers, as they had not resulted in any objection and sought a licence in accordance with the licensing policies of the Council. The Licensing Service would continue to deal with and process those licensing applications already received but new licence applications would not be accepted. With the provisions of the 2020 Act now in force, the Council had an additional three months to determine most applications made under the terms of the 1982 Act. Following investigation, officers had ascertained that most applications which could not be granted by officers would be able to be considered by Board following the Council's summer recess, due to the additional three-month extension period allowed by the 2020 Act. However, it was considered necessary to temporarily change the Scheme of Delegated Functions to authorise officers to grant HMO licences for a restricted period of 6 months in limited circumstances.

Many of the licences which came under the remit of the Regulatory Functions Board expired after either a one, two or three-year period. In order to relieve pressure on both licence holders/applicants and the Licensing team, the report recommended that the Council's policy on the period of grant of licences be varied, and that the officers specified at paragraph 3.9 of the report also be given power to extend any licence which was otherwise to expire on or before 30 June 2020 for a period of three calendar months. A record of such decisions would be retained and reported to the next meeting of the Regulatory Functions Board.

The report intimated that a number of requests had been made by taxi and private hire operators seeking that, due to the downturn in trade, they be allowed to reduce their current insurance cover to social, domestic and pleasure use on the basis that they would, on a temporary basis, no longer undertake public or private hire. This was not permitted under current Council Policy and officers had been unable to agree to such requests. Accordingly, the report recommended that officers be allowed to authorise a temporary cessation of the licence upon receipt of a request in writing from the licence holder. The licence holder would be required to remove their plates upon granting of the cessation and this would then permit the licence holder to use their vehicle for personal use only.

Police Scotland would be notified of the temporary cessation and operation of the Licence could only resume upon public or private hire insurance being exhibited.

DECIDED:

(a) That authority be delegated to the Head of Corporate Governance, Legal and Democratic Services Manager and Assistant Managing Solicitor (Licensing), in consultation with the Convener (or Depute Convener) of the Regulatory Functions Board and one member from each other political grouping represented on that Board, to grant applications for House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licences for a period of six months in limited circumstances where reports could not be completed in relation to the suitability of the premises, provided no other adverse representations had been received;

(b) That powers be delegated to the officers specified at paragraph 2.1.1 of the report to extend the duration of any licence falling within the remit of the Regulatory Functions Board, which would otherwise expire on or before 30 June 2020, for a period of three months;

(c) That a temporary policy be introduced permitting the temporary cessation of Taxi and Private Hire Car Licences where requested by the vehicle operator; and

(d) That it be noted that any other application that was contrary to an existing policy of the Council or subject to objections would continue to be referred to Board in line with existing practice.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Board resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following item 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.

4 Confidential Updates

The Chief Executive gave the Board an update in relation to national and local issues arising from the Covid-19 emergency and the Board heard from the Communities and Regulatory Manager.

DECIDED: That the update be noted.