

Minute of Meeting Emergencies Board

Date	Time	Venue
Friday, 15 May 2020	15:00	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, L Mahon, Head of Communications & Marketing and P Fara, Web & Multi-media Editor (all Chief Executive's); J Trainer, Head of Childcare & Criminal Justice and Chief Social Work Officer (Children's Services); F Carlin, Head of Planning & Housing, O Reid, Head of Communities & Public Protection, C Dalrymple, Communities & Regulatory Manager and L Muirhead, Planning & Housing Manager (all Communities, Housing & Planning Services); K Graham, Head of Corporate Governance, P Murray, Head of ICT; L Neary, Head of Transformation, HR & OD, M Conaghan, Legal & Democratic Services Manager and L Belshaw, 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.

Recording of Meeting

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Convener intimated that this meeting of the Board would be recorded and that the recording would be available to watch on the Council's website.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Campbell declared an interest in item 2 on the agenda as she was an employee of 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 the meeting of the Board held on 7 May 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 provided information on the national position including the number of cases and deaths at both Scottish and UK levels. The recent publication of updated figures and analysis from the National Records of Scotland was also included which showed that the rate of increase in deaths from COVID-19 was beginning to slow. A summary was also given of policy and guidance updates that had been released since the previous meeting of the Board on 7 May 2020.

It was noted that as at 14 May 2020 there were 233,151 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in hospitals in the UK up from 194,990 reported on 7 May 2020. In Scotland there were now 14,117 confirmed hospital cases, up from 12,709 reported on 7 May 2020. Of these, 3,628 cases were within the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board area, up from 3,203 reported on 7 May 2020. In the GGCHB area there were 473 people in hospital, and 26 in intensive care, down from 509 and 30 reported on 7 May 2020 respectively, as either confirmed or suspected cases.

The report intimated that the UK now had more deaths than any other country except for the United States. However a more accurate comparison was to consider the number of deaths in relation to population size and on this measure (when removing countries with very small populations) the UK currently ranked 4th with 495 deaths per million population, behind Belgium (768 deaths per million population), Spain (584 deaths per million population) and Italy (514 deaths per million population). It was noted that the National Records of Scotland had now published its 6th weekly report which indicated the numbers of deaths registered in Scotland that noted COVID-19 as a factor in the death. As at 10 May 2020, there had been a total of 3,213 deaths registered in Scotland where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate, up from 2,795 deaths registered up to 3 May 2020.

The report highlighted the support being provided for communities and provided information in relation to Care Homes and safeguarding and supporting vulnerable residents being looked after in their own homes; included up to date figures on the numbers and types of support being provided to some of the most vulnerable residents in Renfrewshire; an update on the support being provided to Council Housing Tenants and an overview of the impact of COVID-19 on the work of the service; a workforce planning update for the Council, including the current position in relation to availability of PPE; on employee testing procedures; the current position in relation to the impact of

absence on the availability of employees; redeployment of staff into priority front-line roles; and information on work undertaken to support businesses to comply with the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020.

The report also sought approval for the previously scheduled Renfrewshire Council Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff (JNC) to be arranged and held remotely on 2 June 2020.

The Board heard from the Chief Executive in relation to the report in general and in particular to the situation in Renfrewshire where deaths involving COVID-19 were above the national average, and more so in areas of deprivation, and the work that was ongoing by officers to determine if further analysis could be undertaken on this; on the recovery arrangements and union consultation; from the Acting Head of Health & Social Care (Paisley) in relation to the situation within care homes and care at home services; from the Head of Communities, Housing & Planning in relation to support for housing tenants, including allocations and homelessness; sheltered housing and gas servicing works; from the Director of Infrastructure & Environment in relation to street cleaning; and civic amenity sites and from the Communities & Regulatory Manager in relation to the deployment of wardens.

Officers responded to members' questions and it was noted that if members had queries in relation to volunteers who had not been contacted, that these should be raised directly with the Head of Policy & Commissioning in the first instance. It was proposed that the Chief Executive examine whether there was any opportunity for volunteers to help in the recovery phase or in other roles. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the current national and local situation with regards to COVID-19 and the impact on communities, businesses and the Council and its partners be noted;
- (b) That the response measures being put in place by the Council and its partners be noted;
- (c) That it be agreed that a remotely-held meeting of the Renfrewshire Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff (JNC) be held on 2 June 2020; and
- (d) That the Chief Executive examine whether there was any opportunity for volunteers to help in the recovery phase or in other roles.

3 Financial Update

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the current estimated financial impact on the Council arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. It was noted that the financial implications for the Council continued to emerge and develop as the impact and consequences of the pandemic both for Council services and for communities across Renfrewshire evolved. The report intimated that the overall net financial impact on the Council's revenue budget, at this stage, was estimated to be circa £26-27 million in 2020/21 based on existing assumptions and the continuation of the lockdown period to the end of June 2020. If the lockdown period continued beyond the end of June or if there was a need for the Council to continue to provide significantly enhanced ongoing support arrangements as part of the Test, Trace, Isolate and Support phase and the recovery phase it was expected that these estimated costs would increase further. These costs did not include other costs the Council was incurring in supporting the Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership on the basis that these costs would be recoverable from the Scottish Government.

It was noted that the Right for Renfrewshire (RfR) programme had been paused and it was not clear when the programme would be able to recommence; therefore there would be no material delivery of savings in this financial year. In relation to capital investment plans it was noted that the full impact would not be understood fully for some months. However, it was anticipated that there would be significant risk of substantial additional costs arising from live projects as the closedown and social distancing restrictions drove up the costs of live construction sites and built in unavoidable time delays and costs into the completion of projects.

The report highlighted that the financial and economic consequences of the pandemic were expected to be significant in the short term, with unprecedented financial interventions made by national governments to support the immediate COVID-19 response, the economy and businesses. However, despite this the report intimated that the economy across the UK and Scotland would experience the sharpest and deepest downturn in modern history and there was a growing concern that the period of recovery, although sharp would not be as immediate as was first considered a possibility and could be more drawn out with some industries and sectors being more significantly affected and taking longer to recover than others.

The report outlined that this unprecedented economic turbulence and scale of required state intervention would have both short and longer term implications for public finances across the UK and Scotland which would require the Council to reconsider its existing 2020/21 budget and fundamentally reassess its medium and longer-term financial planning and investment programme as the full financial, economic and fiscal impact of the pandemic became clearer and as the Council in response re-shaped its priorities moving forward.

In relation to the impact on the Council's 2020/21 budget, the report proposed that the Corporate Management Team begin to process detailed preparatory work to develop a range of options that would support the Council's considerations for a revised budget for 2020/21 and actions that would support a re-framed medium-term financial outlook.

The report indicated that Renfrewshire Leisure (RL), an arms length organisation, wholly owned by the Council and which was responsible for managing its own financial affairs on a not-for-profit basis, was reliant on a service payment from the Council in respect of leisure and cultural services in order to cover its operating costs which could not be fully met through commercial operations. However, due to the current lockdown the majority of RL operations and facilities were closed and providing ongoing financial support was recognised as part of the exceptional costs being experienced by the Council as a result of COVID-19 and this was expected to continue beyond when facilities re-opened. RL was actively seeking to make savings wherever possible in order to offset losses, including the furloughing of relevant staff and mitigate the overall financial support requested from the Council. The report intimated that in preparing their 2019/20 financial accounts the impact of COVID-19 on the organisation would require to be disclosed and their external auditor would seek assurances over the financial going concern of the Trust over the 12-month period 2020/21. In order to meet this requirement the Council would need to provide a letter of support providing assurance that RL would over the course of 2020/21 be financially supported by the Council to offset the loss of commercial income to allow the 2019/20 accounts to be completed on a continued going concern basis.

The Board heard from the Director of Finance & Resources in relation to the report and in response to members' questions.

DECIDED:

(a) That the initial financial assessment completed of the potential revenue and capital consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and emergency response along with the

anticipated disruption to the Council's planned savings in 2020/21 as outlined in sections 4-6 of the report be noted;

(b) That the update provided at section 7 of the report of the funding that had been confirmed by the Scottish Government to support local government's response to COVID-19 and wider financial interventions made by the Scottish Government, some of which were being administered and delivered by local authorities on the Government's behalf, be noted;

(c) That it be noted that the funding confirmed to date along with anticipated shares of as yet undistributed funding for the Council was significantly less than the estimated net additional costs to the Council; and that it be noted that in this current context it was expected that the Council's existing un-allocated reserves would require to be fully deployed as part of the wider financial strategy developed in response to the COVID-19 emergency;

(d) That it be noted that the Council was continuing to work actively with CoSLA to support consistent financial reporting of the net additional costs to local authorities nationally of responding to the current pandemic to inform ongoing engagement with the Scottish Government over the requirement for further additional funding support;

(e) That it be noted that it was expected that the net financial impact of responding to the pandemic would continue to increase and develop more fully over coming months as the national response continued to place demands on Council services for support to local communities and that this would continue through to and during the eventual recovery phase;

(f) That the proposed actions outlined in section 8 of the report be agreed to prepare the Council for a mid-year reconsideration and revision of the 2020/21 budget and medium-term financial strategy and that it be noted that it would be intended that a full report be targeted for September 2020 in this regard;

(g) That it be agreed as outlined in section 9 of the report that a letter of financial support is provided to Renfrewshire Leisure from the Council as part of providing the necessary level of assurance to external audit as part of the closure of its 2019/20 accounts; and

(h) That it be noted that further updates on the developing financial position and outlook would be provided to the Board on a regular basis over the coming weeks and months as material developments emerged.

4 Items for Decision by the Board

It was noted that there were no items for decision by the Board.

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.

5 Confidential Updates

The Chief Executive provided a confidential update to members,.

DECIDED: That the update be noted.