

Scotland Excel

To: Executive Sub Committee

On: 27 March 2020

**Report
By**

Director of Scotland Excel

COVID-19 Emergency Governance Arrangements

1. Summary

- 1.1 The United Kingdom Government has this week issued detailed guidance in relation to measures that should be taken to restrict the spread of the COVID-19 virus.
- 1.2 These measures include restrictions on unnecessary travel and meetings and advice for specified groups of citizens who are seen as being at greater risk from infection.
- 1.3 In view of this guidance, and to support measures to prevent the spread of the virus, this report seeks approval for a delegation to the Director to enable decisions to be taken without there being a requirement for the Executive Sub Committee.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive Sub Committee:
 - Delegates to the Director in consultation with the Chair and/or Vice Chair of the Executive Sub Committee the power to cancel, if necessary, the planned meeting of the Executive Sub Committee on 29th May 2020 and any subsequent meeting;
 - Further delegates to the Director in consultation with the Chair and/or Vice Chair authority to make all decisions required relating to the functions of the Executive Sub Committee in advance of the next meeting of the Executive Sub Committee that takes place.
 - Agree to the temporary associate membership at no fee to any public

body or third sector organisation that the Director feels will benefit efforts to tackle the current crisis.

- Notes the actions taken to protect Scotland Excel staff, and to support councils at this time.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 Members of the Executive Sub Committee will be aware of the serious situation arising from the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Following recent announcements from the UK and Scottish Government and health advice from NHS-Scotland, the Executive Sub Committee needs to consider what measures it should take to protect its members and their families from risk of infection.
- 3.2 The advice is that members of the public should avoid unnecessary meetings and those in defined groups should take steps to self-isolate. It is proposed that members of the Executive Sub Committee follow the guidance available, and that arrangements are implemented to enable the business of the Executive Sub Committee to be carried on in circumstances where the Executive Sub Committee may not be able to meet. Given the uncertainty surrounding whether the next planned meeting on May 29th 2020 can take place, it is recommended that a delegation is given to the Director, in consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair, to cancel that meeting and to make any decisions that are required until the next meeting of the Executive Sub Committee can take place.
- 3.3 Scotland Excel is currently operating a full service via remote working for all employees in line with government guidance. Our specific focus is working with our suppliers to do everything we can to ensure that the goods and services required to support essential frontline services continue to be available to councils. Our teams are providing regular updates to councils in relation to supplier stock levels for essential items and advice on alternative sources of supply where possible. This is an ever-changing picture and our teams are doing everything they can to make sure council procurement teams have access to all information available at the time.
- 3.4 We have secured the approval of the Clerk of The Scotland Excel Joint Committee to dispense with one part of Scotland Excel's Standing Orders Relating to Contracts, namely condition 6.1(c) – as outline below. Condition 6.1(c) requires a signature to validate contract processes where the contract

is subject to those Standing Orders. Most commonly that affects award letters issued for and on behalf of Scotland Excel by Renfrewshire Council. Under Scotland Excel's Standing Orders, this condition can be dispensed with where the Director and the Clerk both agree in the particular circumstances. This change will allow award letters to be issued electronically and thereby facilitate staff working from home maintaining social distancing and self-isolation.

EXTRACT – Scotland Excel, Standing Orders Relating to Contracts:-

6. Form of Contract

6.1 Except in circumstances where the Director and the Clerk agree otherwise, every contract shall be:-

- (a) in the name of Renfrewshire Council as servicing and contracting authority for Scotland Excel;
- (b) in writing;
- (c) signed by the Director or the Clerk or other officer authorised to sign contracts; and
- (d) subject to the Laws of Scotland.

3.5 Authority is sought to agree to the temporary associate membership at no fee to any public body or third sector organisation that the Director feels will benefit efforts to tackle the current crisis. It is possible that some organisations will require to urgently procure goods and services to meet the demands that they face from COVID19. It would be appropriate for Scotland Excel to provide assistance to such organisations if requested.