

Minute of Meeting Council

Date	Time	Venue
Thursday, 25 June 2020	09:30	Skype Meeting,

Present

Councillor Jacqueline Cameron, Provost Lorraine Cameron, Councillor Eddie Devine, Councillor Andy Doig, Councillor Neill Graham, Councillor Jim Harte, Councillor John Hood, Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes, Councillor Karen Kennedy, Councillor Alistair Mackay, Councillor James MacLaren, Councillor Eileen McCartin, Councillor Cathy McEwan, Councillor Marie McGurk, Councillor John McNaughtan, Councillor Iain Nicolson, Councillor Jim Paterson, Councillor Jim Sharkey, Councillor John Shaw, Councillor James Sheridan, Councillor Andy Steel

Recording of Meeting

The Provost advised that this meeting would be recorded for subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site.

Chair

Provost Cameron 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 Marketing and Communications, A Morrison, Head of Regeneration and P Fara, Web & MultiMedia Editor, (all Chief Executive's); J Trainer, Head of Child Care & Criminal Justice (Children's Services); K Graham, Head of Corporate Governance, A MacArthur, Head of Finance, P Murray, Head of ICT, M Conaghan, Legal & Democratic Services Manager and L Belshaw and D Low, both Democratic Services Managers (all Finance & Resources); D Leese, Chief Officer and S Strachan, Acting Head of Health & Social Care (Paisley) (both Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership); and V Hollows, Chief Executive (Renfrewshire Leisure Limited).

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Provost referred to the procedural rules for the operation of the meeting of the Council by Skype which had been issued to members. Members confirmed that they were happy with the rules for the operation of the meeting, which are appended to this Minute.

The Provost referred to the recent fire at a house in the Gallowhill area of Paisley, which had resulted in the deaths of three children, extended her condolences on behalf of the Council to the Gibson family and offered the Council's support to the family and community. Elected members for the area and leaders of the political groups represented on the Council echoed the sentiments expressed. A minute's silence was then observed as a mark of respect to remember those who had died.

The Provost highlighted the impact, both nationally and locally, of the Covid-19 pandemic and made specific reference to the lives that had been lost, changes to the way people lived, local acts of kindness and the responses provided by the Council, partner organisations and members of the community. The opportunity was taken to extend condolences, on behalf of the Council, to all those who had lost a loved one as a result of the virus. Appreciation was also expressed to various Council services, partner organisations and members of the community for the support provided to those in need and the resilience displayed in the face of adversity.

In addition, reference was made to the Black Lives Matter campaign, recent worldwide events, the need to stand up against racism and hate crime and the desirability of undertaking future actions locally to ethically address the issues taking cognisance of all voices represented in the community. An outline of the research and work currently being undertaken, by Renfrewshire Leisure, in connection with the links between the Renfrewshire area and the slave trade was provided.

Additional Item

Councillor Sharkey intimated that he wished to table an emergency motion, seconded by Councillor Devine, which had not been included in the notice calling the meeting and requested that this be taken as an additional item. In terms of Standing Order 14(b), Provost Cameron ruled that the emergency motion by Councillors Sharkey and Devine be considered by the Council as a matter of urgency in order to ensure that the necessary arrangements could be made timeously. The emergency motion would be taken up as an additional item of business at the end of the meeting as agenda item 1.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hughes declared a non-financial interest in respect of items 2, 3 and 5 of the agenda as she was Chair of the Board of Renfrewshire Leisure Limited. Councillor Hughes indicated that as she had a general dispensation from the Standards Commission which allowed her to take part and to vote in relation to such matters it was her intention to remain in the meeting during consideration of these items.

Councillor McCartin declared a non-financial interest in respect of items 2, 3 and 5 of the agenda as she was a member of the Board of Renfrewshire Leisure Limited. Councillor McCartin indicated that as she had a general dispensation from the Standards Commission which allowed her to take part and to vote in relation to such matters it was her intention to remain in the meeting during consideration of these items.

Councillor Nicolson declared an interest in respect of items 2 and 3 of the agenda as he was a non-executive director of the Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board. Councillor Nicolson indicated that as he had a general dispensation from the Standards Commission which allowed him to take part and to vote in relation to such matters it was his intention to remain in the meeting during consideration of these items.

Apologies

Due to the closure of Renfrewshire House as a result of the pandemic it was not possible to hold this Council meeting in the Council Chamber. As a result, the meeting was being held remotely by Skype. At the meeting of the Emergencies Board held on 29 May 2020 it had been agreed that, due to the logistical challenges in holding a Skype meeting involving a large number of participants, that attendance be restricted to 21 members representing each political group and party on the Council. The political parties had intimated the names of those to attend and apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of those who were not be in attendance as a result of this arrangement: Councillors Adam-McGregor, Begg, Bibby, Binks, Brown, Burns, Campbell, Davidson, Audrey Doig, Don, Dowling, Grady, Kerr, Mack, K MacLaren, M MacLaren, McCulloch, McIntyre, Montgomery, Mylet, Rodden and Strang.

1 Emergency Motion by Councillors Sharkey and Devine

There was submitted an emergency motion by Councillors Sharkey and Devine in the following terms:

“Council resolves to support Black History Month each year. Council recognises that that Black History is so much more than the slave trade and resolves to support both cultural and educational events outside the designated month and will consult with our Black community on how this is to be done.”

Councillor J MacLaren, seconded by Councillor Mackay, moved as an amendment “That the Council recognises the Black Lives Matter movement and the associated protests that have occurred since the appalling death of George Floyd. Calls on members to recognise that statues and buildings are part of our history and culture in our towns and we cannot change our history. Instead, there should be a renewed focus on educating ourselves and future generations on what has happened in Renfrewshire and a realisation that it is through education that we best deal with your history. Council agrees to bring forward a report as soon as possible on the history of Renfrewshire and consult local people on how they wish to proceed with statues, including suitable wording for plaques.”

On the roll being called, the following members voted for the amendment: Councillors Graham, J MacLaren and Mackay.

The following members voted for the motion: Councillor J Cameron, Provost L Cameron and Councillors Devine, Andy Doig, Harte, Hood, Hughes, Kennedy, McCartin, McEwan, McGurk, McNaughtan, Nicolson, Paterson, Sharkey, Shaw, Sheridan and Steel.

3 members having voted for the amendment and 18 members having voted for the motion, the motion was accordingly declared carried.

DECIDED: That Council resolves to support Black History Month each year. Council recognises that Black History is so much more than the slave trade and resolves to support both cultural and educational events outside the designated month and will consult with our Black community on how this is to be done.

2 Minutes of Meetings of Council, Boards and Panels (attached as separate document)

There were submitted the Minutes of the following meetings of the Council, Boards and Panels on the dates specified:

Council, 27 February 2020

Special Council, 9 March 2020

Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board, 10 March 2020 Regulatory Functions Board, 11 March 2020

Education and Children's Services Policy Board, 12 March 2020 Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board, 16 March 2020

Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board, 18 March 2020

Personnel Appeals & Applied Conditions of Service Appeals Panel, 19 March 2020

Emergencies Board, 20 and 27 March

Emergencies Board, 3, 9, 17 and 24 April

Emergencies Board, 1, 7, 15, 22 and 29 May and

Emergencies Board, 5, 12 and 18 June 2020

Under reference to Item 19 of the Minute of the Council meeting held on 27 February 2020, Councillor Kennedy asked for an update on the investigation agreed by Council. The Director of Children's Services advised that the investigation had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic but confirmed that it would be recommenced over the summer and that all members would be advised of the conclusion of the investigation.

DECIDED:

(a) That the Minutes of the Council and Boards held between 27 February and 19 March 2020 be approved; and

(b) That the Minutes of the Emergencies Board held between 20 March and 18 June 2020 be noted.

3 Update on Covid 19

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

The report highlighted that weekly updates had been submitted to the Council's Emergencies Board on all key matters in relation to the Covid-19 response, including key statistics relating to the transmission of the virus, updates to policy and guidance impacting service provision, and the operational position of services.

The current governance arrangements relating to the operation of the Emergencies Board, and the delegated authority provided to the Chief Executive to exercise in specific circumstances during the crisis were outlined. Appendix 1 of the report summarised reports approved, to date, by the Chief Executive using delegated authority.

An overview of the national and local situation in relation to Covid-19, specifically in terms of the number of cases and deaths, was provided, together with a summary of available data from the National Records of Scotland. Appendix 2 of the report detailed the key policy and legislative changes which had impacted the Council during the Covid-19 crisis while Appendix 3 provided details of the Renfrewshire Council submission made as at 12 June 2020 in respect of the Local Government Data Dashboard which detailed local data and information in areas such as support for vulnerable adults and children, shielding and housing and enabled local authorities to benchmark with activity levels at a national level. The report also outlined the impact of the changes resulting from Covid-19 on operational service delivery and provided an overview of recent activity to restart services in line with the Scottish Government's Routemap for Recovery guidance and Appendix 4 of the report summarised the position. The report intimated that the pandemic had, and would continue to have, a significant impact on the Council's financial position. An overview of the current position and future financial outlook was provided, within the report, together with a summary of the wider impacts being experienced across local businesses and communities, which the Council and its partners would require to work collectively to address. An update was also provided on the work being progressed with partners, to take forward local recovery planning arrangements.

DECIDED:

(a) That the update provided on the Council's response to the Covid-19 crisis and the associated impact in terms of local communities and service provision be noted; and

(b) That the work being undertaken by officers, jointly with partners, businesses and communities, to restart and recover services in line with national guidance be noted.

4 Covid 19 Recovery Planning

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to the proposed Covid-19 Recovery Plan. The report stated that the emergence of the Covid-19 virus and the resulting pandemic, represented the biggest single event and challenge ever to face the Council. Services had worked in partnership with local and national organisations to respond to the crisis, ensuring that critical frontline services continued to be provided and that vulnerable people were supported. The provision of Council services had been impacted significantly with no service areas being untouched by the lockdown measures and associated national guidance put into place. New services had also been introduced at pace in response to emerging national requirements, such as for individuals who had been required to shield the Scottish Government had published a Routemap to support the country to come through the crisis, which detailed key phases by which lockdown measures could be eased and services and functions could be restarted in line with national guidance. The Council had commenced work to support the short, medium and long-term recovery of services. There were three key stages to this process, namely, Restart, incrementally restarting service provision in line with national guidance; Recovery, rebuilding levels of service capacity, confidence and resilience and supporting reconnection with communities and residents; and Renew, re-imagining building better and re-setting Renfrewshire's ambition and vision for the future.

In progressing the planning arrangements, it was recognised that whilst the commitment of staff had ensured that core services had continued to be delivered during the crisis, it might not be possible for services to restart fully or be delivered as they were prior to the crisis. In addition, it was noted that the presumption was that home working would remain a default position for most employees as set out in the Scottish Government's Routemap;

Services would require to comply with current and emerging guidance in terms of physical distancing and use of personal protective equipment; Services might have to respond to a potential second wave of cases and changes to lockdown measures at a national and local level; Services would need to respond to the changing needs of local citizens and communities impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, including employability and/or vulnerability; the impact on the Council's financial position was unprecedented and the delivery of services would require to be closely managed in terms of the resources available to the Council. It was highlighted that there remained significant uncertainty in terms of the timeframe associated with working through the phases of the Scottish Government's Routemap, as this was dependent on the suppression of the virus. For planning purposes, Services were working on the basis that Restart and Recovery phases would continue to be the focus for the Council until at least the end of the calendar year, assuming a second wave of the virus did not emerge. Seven key workstreams had been established to drive forward recovery, each of which was led by a Director or Head of Service. Specific details of each workstream was provided within the report. The report indicated that it might be possible, during 2021/22, to progress the Renewal phase in a comprehensive way, with the capacity and stability in place within the Council to undertake further transformation and change work to meet the future needs of local residents, communities and businesses within available resources. It was noted that officers would continue to consolidate and build on the Right for Renfrewshire programme and take full account of the changing context in which the Council now operated. Regular progress reports on recovery planning arrangements would be submitted to the Emergencies Board over the summer period, with more detailed plans brought forward for elected members thereafter.

DECIDED:

(a) That the work being undertaken to develop and take forward recovery planning arrangements for the Council be noted; and

(b) That it be noted that regular reports would be submitted to the Emergencies Board over the summer period, as Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Government's routemap were actioned.

5 Governance Arrangements until 24 September 2020

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to proposed governance arrangements for the period to 24 September 2020.

The report reminded members that the Council had instigated emergency governance arrangements to enable oversight of the Council's functions and services during the Covid-19 emergency, when it had not been considered possible for physical meetings of the Council's Boards to take place safely. These emergency arrangements, which had been in operation since 20 March 2020, included weekly meetings of the Emergencies Board, held remotely by Skype, extended emergency delegations to the Chief Executive and the cancellation of all Council and Board meetings up to 24 June 2020.

It was highlighted that, in normal circumstances, the Council would go into recess after the Council meeting held during June, with no meetings taking place until the first Board meetings in the August/September cycle of meetings. Due to the ongoing pandemic and its implications for Renfrewshire, it was proposed that this year, the Emergencies Board continue to meet remotely, every fortnight, during the recess. In addition, it was proposed that, as temporary measures, the membership of the Emergencies Board be expanded,

the role of the Board clarified in anticipation of the resumption of Policy Board meetings and the extended delegated authority to the Chief Executive and remit of the Emergencies Board be continued. Full details of the proposed remit and political composition of the Board were provided. The report indicated that the temporary measures would be reviewed at the Council meeting on 24 September 2020.

The meeting of the Council held on 26 September 2019 had agreed dates for meetings of the Council and Boards for the period August 2020 to June 2021. An appendix to the report listed the dates of meetings previously agreed between 18 August and 24 September. The report requested that the Council determine whether, in light of government guidance and legislation to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic currently in force, the previously agreed August/September cycle of meetings take place, and if so, the format of these meetings. The report proposed that the planned meetings take place remotely using video or audio links. It was also recognised that holding meetings in this way meant that the public were excluded from the meetings and could not watch proceedings as they occurred. To partly address this issue, it was proposed that the meetings be recorded and broadcast as soon as possible after the meeting had finished and that ways of enabling public attendance at meetings held by video/audio link and at the potential for streaming each meeting as it happened continue to be investigated. The arrangements for future Council and Board meetings would continue to be reviewed and be the subject of a report to the meeting of the Council to be held on 24 September 2020.

It was proposed that in relation to suggested future meetings of the Emergencies Board, that the dates and timings of these meetings be considered to ensure that there was no clash with the CoSLA Leaders' meetings and that consultation be undertaken with the Leaders of the political groups and Board Members. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

(a) That the temporary governance arrangements for Summer 2020, detailed in section 4 of the report, which included arrangements for the Emergencies Board to meet every two weeks and for the membership and remit of the Emergencies Board to be revised, be approved;

(b) That the proposed timetable for dates and times of future meetings of the Emergencies Board be subject to further discussion between Leaders of the Political Groups and members of the Board and be intimated to the Head of Corporate Governance;

(c) That the arrangements for the next cycle of Council and Board meetings as detailed in section 5 of the report be approved; and

(d) That it be noted that the arrangements for subsequent Board cycles would be the subject of a report to the meeting of the Council to be held on 24 September 2020; and

(e) That it be agreed that for the purposes of Section 35 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, where an elected member had been unable to attend a meeting of a Council or Board because it had been cancelled or attendance had been reduced due to the Council's response to the Covid-19 emergency, that would be regarded as an approved reason for not attending by the Council.

6 Annual Accounts 2019/20

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Council's Accounts and Group Accounts for 2019/20, which were appended to the report, and which would be submitted for audit by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2020.

The unaudited accounts and associated working papers would, subject to approval, be passed to the external auditor (Audit Scotland) for review. Their report on the accounts would be submitted to a future meeting of the Audit, Risk & Scrutiny Board for consideration prior to the audited accounts being presented to Council for approval. The report intimated that as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, flexibility in terms of the timescales for approval of the audited annual accounts had been provided under the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020. However Scottish Ministers had indicated their expectation that audited annual accounts would be published by 30 November 2020.

The Annual Governance Statement had been incorporated into the annual accounts document and this also required specific approval by Council.

In compliance with charity accounting requirements, the Council's accounts did not incorporate statements relating to Common Good Funds and the Charitable Trust fFnds which the Council controlled. Separate accounts had been prepared to meet with these requirements.

DECIDED:

(a) That, subject to audit, the Renfrewshire Council Annual Accounts 2019/20 be approved;

(b) That the Director of Finance & Resources be authorised to submit the Group accounts, once completed as outlined in paragraph 7 of the report and modified to reflect typographical errors identified, to the Auditor within the relevant timescales;

(c) That the Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20 be approved;

(d) That it be noted that Audit Scotland would endeavor to complete the audit of the annual accounts in line with the timescales indicated by Scottish Ministers and that an update on this position would be submitted to the next meeting of the Council;

(e) That the revenue outturn position for the Council be noted and that the sums earmarked within the General Fund reserves and Housing Revenue Account reserves, as outlined in paragraph 3.3 of the report, be approved;

(f) That the deployment of unallocated reserves to support costs incurred in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic be approved and that it be noted that a planned actions/plan of action, to rebuild unallocated reserves, would require to be developed, as part of a revised financial strategy, for the Council and be considered as part of a report to be submitted to the meeting of the Council to be held on 24 September 2020;

(g) That the transfer of resources as outlined in Table 1 of the report be approved:

(h) That, subject to audit, the annual accounts for the Renfrew, Paisley and Johnstone Common Good Funds and the Coats Observatory Trust Fund, copies of which were attached, which under accounting regulations required to be prepared and audited separately from the Council's accounts, be approved; and

(i) That the findings of the Accounts Commission in relation to the 2019/20 annual accounts as outlined in paragraph 9.2 of the report be noted.

7 Treasury Management Annual Report 2019/20

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Treasury Management Annual Report 2019/20 submitted in accordance with the Local Government Investments (Scotland) Regulations 2010 and outlining treasury management activity over the year.

The report intimated that during 2019/20 all aspects of the Treasury Policy Statement were complied with and provided an overview of Treasury activities, including the Treasury Portfolio Position as at 31 March 2020, reviews of borrowing and investment outturn, borrowing strategy and new borrowing, investment strategy and investment outturn. Details of debt rescheduling and compliance with Treasury limits was also provided.

DECIDED: That the Treasury Management Annual Report 2019/20 be approved.