



Renfrewshire Council

To: Council

On: 24 September 2020

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: Governance Arrangements until 17 December 2020

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the arrangements for the next cycle of Board meetings up to and including the next full Council meeting on 17 December 2020.
 - 1.2 At the meeting on 25 June 2020 the Council approved governance arrangements over the summer recess and to cover the cycle of Board meetings up to and including today's Council meeting. The purpose of those arrangements was to provide a decision-making framework for the Council as it continued to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and the phased removal of lockdown restrictions.
 - 1.3 The arrangements set out in the report aim to allow the next cycle of Board meetings to take place as efficiently as possible in the current circumstances as well as enabling the Council to continue to respond to any urgent issues arising from the continuing Covid-19 pandemic and to address any changes in guidance or legislation relating to the Covid-19 emergency.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Council is asked to:
 - a) approve the arrangements for the next cycle of Council and Board meetings set out in section 4 of this report;

- b) note that the arrangements for subsequent Board cycles will be the subject of a report to Council on 17 December 2020;
 - c) continue the temporary changes to the membership and remit of the Emergencies Board approved by Council on 25 June 2020.
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3. Background

- 3.1 The Council has put in place emergency governance arrangements to enable oversight of the Council's functions and services during the Covid-19 emergency, in circumstances where it was not possible for meetings of the Council's Boards to take place safely in Renfrewshire House.
 - 3.2 These emergency arrangements which have been in place since 20 March 2020, initially involved 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 the Council meeting on 25 June 2020.
 - 3.3 Following the Council meeting on 25 June 2020, a full cycle of Board meetings has taken place with remote access for members and the Emergencies Board continued to meet regularly. The chief executive's emergency delegated powers also continued until the first Board meeting on 18 August 2020.
 - 3.4 During that period the platform used for remote meetings moved from Skype to Microsoft Teams. Teams was used for all of the Policy Board meetings during August and September 2020.
 - 3.5 Although there has been a gradual easing of lockdown restrictions, there are still restrictions in place, including the requirement for 2 metre distancing and restrictions on public gatherings which prevent a return to the pre Covid-19 arrangements for Council and Board meetings. Officers continue to investigate ways of enabling socially distanced meetings to take place safely in the Council Chamber.
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4. Arrangements for the October/December Cycle of Meetings

- 4.1 The dates for meetings of the Council and Boards from October 2020 to June 2021 were approved by Council on 26 September 2019. Those dates, including those for the meetings during the October to December 2020 Board cycle, have remained in place as scheduled and are listed in the appendix to this report.
- 4.2 The Council therefore needs to consider what format those meetings should take, in light of government guidance and legislation to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic currently in force.

- 4.3 It is proposed that the planned meetings in the October to December 2020 Board cycle continue to take place remotely using video or audio links. The reason for the meetings taking place in this way is that although there is no specific guidance relating to formal meetings of bodies such as local authorities, there is a range of government guidance relating to work places, social distancing and restrictions on public gatherings which means that until the position is clarified, it is not possible at this time to arrange meetings in the Council Chamber or any of the committee rooms in Renfrewshire House or any other indoor venue in a way that is in accordance with government guidance.
- 4.4 It is recognised that since the use of remote meetings was approved all councillors have had the opportunity to participate in such meetings and have had the necessary equipment made available to them to enable them to participate.
- 4.5 It continues to be the case that the public are excluded from the meetings and cannot watch proceedings as they occur. To partly address this issue, it is proposed that the meetings will continue to be recorded and broadcast as soon as possible after the meeting has finished. Members of the press are also invited to attend the meetings.
- 4.6 Officers will also continue to investigate ways of enabling public attendance at meetings held by video/audio link and at the potential for streaming each meeting as it happens.
- 4.7 A system that would allow a meeting to take place with a limited number of members and officers to be present in the Chamber while also enabling others to participate remotely has been identified and is currently being tested. The system also allows for the meetings to be streamed live. At this time, it isn't possible to give a firm date when the system could be used for a formal meeting of one of the Council's Boards. However, it is proposed to give each Convener the discretion in consultation with the chief executive and the representatives of the other political groups on the Board agree to use that system for a Board meeting once the system has been successfully tested
- 4.8 Although the Policy Boards have begun to meet again from August, the governance of the Council still needs to be sufficiently flexible to respond to the rapidly changing situation during the pandemic. Accordingly, it is proposed that the revised remit and extended membership for the Emergencies Board will continue although no meetings will be programmed at this time. Should any matters relating to Covid-19 require urgent decisions to be taken that can't wait until the next meeting of the relevant Board or Council the Emergencies Board can be reconvened quickly.
- 4.9 Although it is not possible to predict how long the current emergency will last, it is hoped that guidance may change as the relaxation of lockdown restrictions continues through the phases of the route-map issued by the Scottish Government.

Therefore, the arrangements for future Council and Board meetings will continue to be reviewed and will be the subject of a further report to Council on 17 December 2020.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None
 2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None.
 3. **Community/Council Planning** – None
 4. **Legal** – As detailed in the report.
 5. **Property/Assets** – None
 6. **Information Technology** – None
 7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
 8. **Health & Safety** – The proposals in the report recognise that it is not currently possible for formal council and board meetings to take place safely in Renfrewshire House.
 9. **Risk - None**
 10. **Privacy Impact** – None
 11. **Cosla Policy Position** - None
 12. **Climate Risk** - None
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List of Background Papers –

- 1) Minute of the meeting of the Emergencies Board on 20 March 2020.
 - 2) Report to the Emergencies Board on 29 May 2020 headed "Arrangements for the Council meeting on 25 June 2020."
 - 3) Minute of the Council meeting on 25 June 2020.
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Author: Ken Graham, Head of Corporate Governance.

October 2020						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5 recess	6 recess	7 recess	8 recess	9 recess	10
11	12 recess	13 recess	14 recess	15 recess	16 recess	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 - 1/2	26	27– 1pm: Communities, Housing & Planning 3pm: - Police and Fire & Rescue Scrutiny	28 - 10am: Regulatory Functions	29 - 1pm: Education & Children's Services	30	31
November 2020						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
1 - 2/2	2 - 10am: Audit Risk & Scrutiny	3	4 – 1pm: Infrastructure, Land & Environment	5 – 9.30am: Appeals	6	7
8 - 3/2	9 – 2pm: Petitions	10 – 2pm: JNC	11 – 2pm: Finance, Resources & Customer Services	12 – 10am: Regulatory Functions	13	14
15 - 4/2	16	17 – 2pm: Local Review Body	18 – 11am: Investment Review Board	19	20	21
22 - 5/2	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 - 6/2	30					
December 2020						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
		1	2 – 1pm: Leadership	3	4	5
6 - 7/2	7	8	9		11	12
13 - 8/2	14	15	16	17 – 9.30am Council	18	19
20	21 recess	22 recess	23 recess	24 recess	25 public holiday	26
27	28 public holiday	29 recess	30 recess	31 recess		