

To: Council

On: 13 May 2021

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: Governance Arrangements until 24 June 2021

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for arrangements for the next cycle of Board meetings up to and including the next full Council meeting on 24 June 2021 and to provide an update on the installation of the Public-i system that will enable livestreamed hybrid meetings to take place as restrictions to combat the Covid-19 pandemic are eased.
 - 1.2 The proposal is to continue the arrangements that have been in place for Board and Council meetings since August 2020 for one further cycle of meetings to enable the Public-i system to be fully tested and for elected members and officers to receive training on the system prior to it going live.
 - 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 but also beginning to move away from governance arrangements that were created as a response to an 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 the position in relation to the installation of the Public-i system and the proposals for mobilising the system;
 - c) note that the arrangements for subsequent Board cycles will be the subject of a report to Council on 24 June 2021;
 - d) agree that the current temporary arrangements for the Emergencies Board be brought to an end.
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3. Background

- 3.1 Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Council has had in place emergency governance arrangements to enable oversight of its functions and services in circumstances where it has not been possible for meetings of the Council's Boards to take place safely in Renfrewshire House.
 - 3.2 These arrangements initially involved weekly meetings of the Emergencies Board, held remotely, 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 Several full cycles of Board meetings have now taken place with remote access for members. These arrangements had to be continued due to resurgence of the Coronavirus over the Winter and the imposition of further lockdown restrictions.
 - 3.4 However, due to recent announcements regarding a planned easing of lockdown restrictions it is now possible to begin planning for the eventual return of Board meetings at Renfrewshire House and to consider whether the current arrangements for the Emergencies Board should continue.
 - 3.5 The current guidance in relation to office-based working which applies where Level 3 protection levels are in place is that you should only travel to work if you cannot do your job from home. We have demonstrated that it is possible to successfully hold meetings remotely on the Teams platform. The first level where a limited and phased return to offices is possible is Level 0 which according to the published timetable will not be achieved until late June 2021. In addition, there has been no change to the guidance in relation to social distancing in the workplace which means that the participants in any meetings in Renfrewshire House would have to remain 2 metres apart at all times. Until these restrictions are eased, it would still not be possible to re-introduce Board meetings at Renfrewshire House where all members and supporting officers are able to be physically present.
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4. Arrangements for the May to June 2021 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 meetings during the May to June 2021 Board cycle, have remained in place as scheduled and are listed in the appendix to this report.
 - 4.2 It is proposed that, subject to paragraph 4.6 below, the planned meetings in the May to June 2021 Board cycle continue to take place remotely using video or audio links with the same arrangements as previously approved for the last cycle of meetings.
 - 4.3 However, because the position in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on the possibility of holding physical meetings in Renfrewshire House is changing, it is possible to begin planning for the return of meetings in the Council Chamber in Renfrewshire House in accordance with government guidance.
 - 4.4 As indicated to Council in previous reports, a system has been purchased from Public-i that would allow hybrid meetings to take place with some members present in the Council Chamber and others accessing the meeting remotely.
 - 4.5 The system has now been installed although it has not yet been possible to arrange for elected members and officers to be trained on the use of the system. It is anticipated that this training will take place during May and June 2021 and that the system will be available for use at formal Board and Council meetings after the summer recess, assuming no further imposition of Covid-19 related restrictions.
 - 4.6 In any event, it is proposed to continue the discretion given at previous Council meetings to each Convener in consultation with the Chief Executive and the representatives of the other political groups on the Board to agree to use the new system for a Board meeting once the system has been successfully tested.
 - 4.7 The Council's Policy Boards have now been meeting regularly since August 2020 and the last meeting of the Emergencies Board took place on 18 September 2020. From information now available regarding the Covid-19 outbreak and measures put in place in Renfrewshire to sufficiently keep it under control, it seems unlikely that the Emergencies Board will require to meet again in the foreseeable future. Accordingly, it is proposed that the current temporary arrangements for the Emergencies Board approved by Council on 25 June 2020, which included an expanded membership and remit for the Board are brought to an end.
 - 4.8 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 24 June 2021.
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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

List of Background Papers –

- 1) Minute of the Council meeting on 25 June 2020.

Author: Ken Graham, Head of Corporate Governance.

May 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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2 - 6/4	3 Public Holiday	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13 – 9.30am: Council	14	15
16 - 1/5	17	18 – 1pm: Communities, Housing & Planning 3pm: Police and Fire & Rescue Scrutiny	19 – 10am: Regulatory Functions	20 – 1pm: Education & Children’s Services	21	22
23 - 2/5	24 – 10am: Audit, Risk & Scrutiny	25	26 - 1pm: Infrastructure, Land & Environment	27 – 9.30am Appeals	28	29
30 - 3/5	31 Public Holiday					
June 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 - 2pm: Local Review Body	2 - 2pm: Finance, Resources & Customer Services	3 – 10am: Regulatory Functions	4	5
6 - 4/5	7 – 2pm: Petitions	8 – 2pm: JNC	9 – 11am: Investment Review	10	11	12
13 - 5/5	14	15	16 – 1pm: Leadership	17	18	19
20 - 6/5	21	22	23	24 – 9.30 am Council	25	26
27	28 recess	29 recess	30 recess			