

# **ELECTED MEMBER SOUNDING BOARD**

Minute of Meeting of the Elected Member Sounding Board held virtually via Microsoft Teams on Friday 17 April 2020 at 2.30pm.

Present: Councillors A Bailey, P Barrett, J Duff (substituting for M Lyle), G Laing and C Purves; K Reid, Chief Executive; S Devlin, Gold Command.

In Attendance: L Brown, Corporate and Democratic Services.

## **1. NOTE FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

The note from the previous meeting of 10 April 2020 was submitted and approved as a correct record.

## **2. OPERATIONAL UPDATE BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND S DEVLIN, GOLD COMMAND**

KR / SD advised members of the following in relation to the latest position on the response to the Coronavirus situation:

- The issue of business grants only being given out per business and not per premises had now been addressed. Funding was also coming in for those who registered as self employed after April 2019. This would come into effect from the beginning of May.
- Concerns relating to lack of flexibility of Non-Domestic Rates cut-off at 17 March for rates relief had been raised with the Deputy First Minister. A response is awaited.
- The Council has provided updated guidance on PPE for all staff. This includes a flow chart and tool kit which reflects national guidance. Liaison has also taken place with Trade Unions.
- The re-tasking of staff predominantly to health and social care continues and training is now underway. A clarification has been issued to elected members that the training will take place in the Gleneagles Day Centre, not at the Gleneagles Hotel. A buddy system has also been introduced for those individuals moving into health and social care so that they are not working on their own and are very clear about the tasks that they are undertaking.
- The storage unit to support Cremation and Burial Services at Inveralmond Industrial Estate is now in place should it be required.
- The video recording of services at Perth Crematorium has been tested and is now in situ. This is a webcast which will allow families to participate.
- The Registrars Service is now operating 7 days a week.
- The National Helpline for non-Shielding Vulnerable Groups is now in place.
- Over 900 volunteers are now formally registered to offer support across Perth and Kinross. Perth and Kinross, Dundee City and Angus Councils are working with a group of businesses pan-Tayside on how they might

support us in terms of some of the essential services we need to deliver and are offering their staff in a volunteering capacity.

In responding to a question from Councillor Purves on how the Council is responding to the various individuals and volunteers who have offered support, KR advised that the Welfare and Volunteering Group together with PKAVS have responded to all volunteers and community groups. People have received at least one communication and early adopters have received two formal written communications from the Council thanking them for what they are doing and asking them what additional support they need. KR added that the Welfare and Volunteering Group are looking at where volunteers are needed, how they will be deployed and when their help will be required. KR noted that there are also CEX videos online thanking community groups and volunteers. Although there had been a lot of communication with community groups KR acknowledged there may be an issue of timing in terms of communication and she agreed to take this issue back to the Welfare and Volunteering Group for further discussion.

SD added that Gold Command were very aware that volunteers were keen to get involved as soon as possible and in acknowledgement of that David Stokoe had undertaken to contact people directly to make sure that they are being kept up to date. Discussion had also taken place around elected members awareness of particular issues within their own wards where individuals or small groups of people might require additional support at particular times. SD suggested if members are aware of any individuals or groups in their area who would benefit from support from volunteers to make this know to the Welfare and Volunteering Group and the group will respond to that in a very bespoke and direct way rather than through a homogenous group of volunteering. She advised that Gold Command will be looking to establish a single conduit for that as soon as possible.

Councillor Purves enquired how can the Council be proactive and ensure that it is providing assistance to everyone who needs it given that some people, for a variety of reasons, may feel uncomfortable about coming forward and asking for support. In response SD advised that Gold Command were very aware that some people may be taking SG guidance very literally in ways that they might not have to do and that is where the input and local knowledge of elected members will be critical to getting that information back to the Welfare and Volunteering Group who would then be able to mobilise bespoke support through the banks of volunteers, if that is not already covered within the localised volunteers.

KR advised that at present the Welfare Group is cross referencing everyone on the Shielding list against the information data held both within the social work teams and within health and social care to ensure that no-one slips through the net. Scottish Government will be sending a letter out to every household in Scotland in the near future setting out clearly what people need to do and how to access support if they need food etc. This will then divert through the national helplines to the Council locally and will be picked up by the Welfare and Volunteering Group and Distribution Hub. It will be at this

point that elected members and other volunteers will be asked to support that distribution. Once clarity is received on the lists details will be sent out and the Council will then be in a position to mobilise more volunteers/community groups.

Councillor Bailey enquired if the Council intended to proactively follow up on the letters once issued by SG given that some of the elderly and vulnerable members within the community may not be reading the information leaflets on the help and support which is out there and there may be a number of people in the community who are going without the food and/or medical care they need as they believe they cannot access it. He enquired, if the Council has the data which would help identify those people, could the volunteer / community groups be used to make contact with these vulnerable members within our communities.

KR agreed to take the concerns raised back to Gold Command for further discussion. She added that the Council's Chief Social Worker, Jacquie Pepper, was very aware of the need to explain to the older people in our communities, some of whom experienced dementia or had sensory impairment, that if they receive a food parcel or if they need help this is how they access it. In addition, the housing teams had carried out over 5,000 welfare checks on individuals across Perth and Kinross over the last 2 weeks checking in on people and making sure they are ok and that they have the food and medication they need. KR agreed to look at how to strengthen the work ongoing to make sure people knew how to access help.

KR advised that Gold Command would share a position statement with members once available and this could in turn be shared by elected members across their networks.

### **3. EMERGENCY POWERS – RECORD OF DECISIONS**

KR reported that there had been no additional decisions made in terms of the use of emergency powers by Gold Command or the Chief Executive over the previous 7 days.

### **4. GOVERNANCE PROCESS**

KR confirmed that she had written to the EMB advising of the intention to hold a by-election for the vacancy in Ward 10 by 26 November 2020.

A virtual meeting of the Planning and Development Management Committee will take place on 29 April 2020. Training had been provided to the Committee Convener and Vice Convener and IT would be offering 1 to 1 training for the elected members on the Committee to ensure everyone is conversant with the technology. There would also be further training sessions to address any concerns members might have. KR confirmed that the Cross Tay Link Road application would not be on the agenda for the April meeting.

KR reported it is also proposed to hold a meeting on 20 May 2020 of the new single committee which will consider all urgent business and provide a level of scrutiny during the Covid-19 period. As part of the reporting it is proposed to share all the papers that have come before the Sounding Board to provide an update in terms of all the decisions and the actions that have been taken. It is also proposed to hold an open question and answer session with all elected members to allow them the opportunity to raise any issues they need to know. Thereafter, depending upon what happens in relation to lock down and what happens in relation to testing out a larger committee structure with elected members on 20 May 2020 it is proposed to hold another meeting on 24 June 2020.

In response to a question from Councillor Purvis, KR advised that members of the Planning and Development Committee (P&DM) will be emailed with confirmation that the P&DM will take place on 29 April 2020.

KR advised that the Chief Officer of the Health and Social Care Partnership has been asked to liaise with the IJB Chair regarding holding a virtual IJB meeting in May 2020, once the technology has been tested out for the Planning and Development Management Committee.

KR reported that a small group is currently working on “Building Back an Even Better Council” looking forward to the stages of recovery; what is currently happening that the Council would wish to retain; what it would want to go back to doing; what new things it would want to do; how the transition would be managed and how to establish our new normal. The constraints on the operating environment would be around the economy, employment, inequalities such as homelessness etc. The intention would be to set out some starter thoughts to present to the meeting on 24 June 2020 to get a steer from members on the strategic thinking around this.

In response to a question from Councillor Barrett, KR confirmed that the group is being led by Mark Butterworth and reports in to Gold Command. She advised it is intended that the group will have service representation.

The Steering Group noted the position.

## **5. LATEST GUIDANCE / LEGISLATION CONSIDERED BY GOLD COMMAND**

There was submitted the latest guidance and legislation considered by Gold Command as of 17 April 2020.

In response to a query regarding the increase in fly-tipping and the possibility of re-opening recycling centres if appropriate social distancing measures were to be introduced, KR advised that the Council was following SG advice on what is considered an essential journey. If the recycling centres were to be reopened those visiting might well be at risk of receiving a fine from Police Scotland as this would not be considered an essential journey. In addition, the staff in the recycling centres had been redeployed to assist with domestic waste collections.

Following a request for an update on testing, KR advised that NHS Tayside had been commended by SG for undertaking more testing of health and social care and other essential workers than any other health board combined. A small group is looking at testing across Scotland. It is intended this group will consider options other than drive-through testing such as sending tests kits out by post.

The Sounding Board noted the position.

## **6. FINANCIAL UPDATE**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Finance updating members on any significant financial issues arising from the Scottish Government's, or Council's, response to COVID 19 since the last meeting of the Board, together with any financial actions taken under delegated authority.

Members noted the contents of the report.

## **7. MEDIA RELEASE – ELECTED MEMBERS THANK COMMUNITIES**

There was submitted a draft media release to be issued on behalf of all elected members expressing their thanks to the communities around Perth and Kinross for volunteering to support others in need.

The Sounding Board agreed the terms of the media release for publication.

## **8. LATEST STATISTICS**

There was submitted and noted the latest statistics as at 17 April 2020.

## **11. MEMBERS Q & A**

The following questions were raised by members arising from the Q&A response emailed to the Sounding Board on 16 April 2020:-

Councillor Barrett asked whether the guidance on PPE in residential care homes had changed. In response KR reported that changes had recently been announced by the Cabinet Secretary in terms of the distribution of PPE out directly from NSS to care homes. All care homes across Scotland now receive their PPE direct rather than going through the local hub.

She advised it was her understanding that clarity had been given following the Chief Nursing Officer's letter in relation to risk assessments for specific tasks, however, the guidance had not changed. Public Health Scotland had also issued a revision to the non-health care settings on Wednesday but the understanding was it was still the same situation.

Councillor Barrett advised that it was his understanding that Forth Valley had issued an instruction that face masks should be worn at all times for all tasks in care homes. KR advised that visors were only required when doing surgery

or dentistry. The wearing of face masks would be a matter for individual workers making their own risk assessment in terms of the task they were undertaking.

Councillor Purves reported that a member of the community in Kinross-shire was making face shields at home using a 3D printer. This individual had been contacted by 3 NHS Boards regarding the production of face shields. He enquired if there was a concern locally with the supply of visors. In response KR advised concerns had been raised at the Chief Executive Group meeting that people are manufacturing the visors on 3-D printers with the best intent, however, this was not the most cost-effective way. She advised that clarity around the requirements of the NHS was needed from SG and, in particular, the NSS around visors. She agreed to provide an update to the Sounding Board once more information was available.

Councillor Purves referred to a query raised by Councillor Stewart at the last meeting of the Sounding Board seeking clarity on whether the decision taken in relation to the Local Action Partnerships was in fact a deviation from usual governance arrangements. KR agreed that the decision taken be recorded under Emergency Powers.

In response to a further question KR agreed to provide an update to the Sounding Board on what measures have been put in place should a worker develop COVID-19 symptoms.

KR in response to a question from Councillor Laing advised that the ALEOS are a Council provision and need to be supported and this is being looked at in terms of financial planning. She advised that it is proposed this will be a matter for discussion at the June 2020 Council meeting.

In response to an enquiry for an update on the Tay Cities Deal and the Stone of Destiny, KR advised negotiations continued on the Tay Cities Deal. Scottish Government had set out a 10 year deal but the deal remained unsigned. Work was continuing with the UK Government looking at a 15 year profile. Both governments had agreed for funding to be released in 2021 for the City Hall and the Eden Campus. KR advised it was her understanding that in terms of the Stone of Destiny matters were now between the Commissioners and Her Majesty the Queen.

In response to a question on how the financial implications of COVID-19 on the Council are being reported, KR advised the Gold Command is monitoring cash-flow projections, however, it is too early to predict what the impact might be on the Council.

KR agreed to provide some high level projections on income and expenditure to the next meeting of the Sounding Board,

In response to a question on PPE, KR advised she was not aware of any significant issues across Perth and Kinross. There is a dashboard which is

monitoring across health and social care and other Council services on what supply is available and what the need is likely to be.