

ELECTED MEMBER SOUNDING BOARD

Minute of Meeting of the Elected Member Sounding Board held virtually via Microsoft Teams on Monday 11 May 2020 at 11.00am.

Present: Councillors M Lyle, P Barrett, C Purves, X McDade and G Laing; K Reid, Chief Executive; B Renton, Gold Commander; S Devlin, Executive Director (Education and Children's Services); K Donaldson, Interim Chief Operating Officer.

In Attendance: S Hendry, Corporate and Democratic Services.

1. NOTE FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The note from the previous meeting of 4 May 2020 was submitted and approved as a correct record.

Following a query by Councillor Laing on corporate communications for any reimbursements on charging services as appropriate, KR agreed to discuss this further with the Communications Team.

2. OPERATIONAL UPDATE BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GOLD COMMANDER

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

- KR advised that in terms of charging and invoicing for relevant services, Gold command were continuing to discuss the charging element.
- KR advised that in terms of test, trace, isolate and support, this was being developed by the Scottish Government on a national basis.
- KR reported that there had been a considerable rise in applications and payments for welfare crisis grants.
- KR advised that 1136 responses had been received for the recent staff survey and the Executive Officer Team were taking forward any issues identified.
- KR informed members that work was continuing on recovery and renewal and "building back an even better Council".

3. ABERNYTE PRIMARY SCHOOL – JUDICIAL REVIEW

SD advised members of the outcome of the judicial review, where the ruling had gone in favour of the Scottish Government and the School Closure Review Panel would now be commencing the review.

The Council were in communication with the panel to seek clarity on timescales and information requests. Once clarity was provided on timescales then the closure date for the school could then be reviewed. Following a query by Councillor Purves on the reasons behind the judicial review, SD confirmed that a number of factors were involved including

examining the process, procedure and reasons for the call in, as well as examining similar procedures in other local authorities. Following a suggestion by Councillor McDade, SD agreed that a report on lessons learned could be brought forward following the current pandemic crisis.

4. FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

There was submitted a briefing report by the Chief Social Work Officer on family support services and the response from Children, Young People and Families.

KR reported that Perth and Kinross Council has been recognised for its work in this area in the joint inspection of services for children.

Members noted the contents of the report.

5. NON-DOMESTIC RATES RELIEF AND COMMERCIAL RENT RELIEF

There was submitted a report by the Head of Finance that considered the Council's position in relation to non-domestic rates relief and commercial rent relief.

KD provided a summary of the report. In response to a query from Councillor Purves regarding the cost to the Council in terms of the UK Government paying 75% of the cost for additional properties, KD confirmed that she would investigate this further.

The Board noted the report.

6. FINANCE UPDATE

There was submitted and noted 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. The report also provided an update on the financial implications and consequences to date.

In response to a query from Councillor McDade, KR confirmed that local authorities were awaiting further guidance from the Scottish Government on their individual shares of the additional £155 million of Barnett consequentials.

In response to a query from Councillor Barrett regarding the specific benefits financially in terms of council tax relief from a national point of view, KD agreed to look further into this.

7. RE-OPENING HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES

There was submitted a report by the Head of Environment and Consumer Services providing a briefing in relation to the strategy for re-opening

household waste recycling centres and an update on re-instating special (bulky) uplifts.

In response to a query from Councillor Laing, BR agreed to look into any additional support available to private landowners who had been subject to illegal dumping of any waste on their land.

Following a query by Councillor Purves on traffic management options and the option of special bulky uplifts, BR confirmed that this was being looked into and that the opening of recycling centres would be prioritised over bulky uplifts during any opening in the future.

The Board endorsed the contents of the report.

8. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION – FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION MAKING

There was submitted and noted a current consultation by the Scottish Government, a framework for decision making, available via: <https://consult.gov.scot/covid-19/dialogue/>.

9. DECISION MAKING AND COMMUNICATION ARRANGEMENTS

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive that briefed members on the current decision making structure and elected member engagement in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19), as well as outlining arrangements for continued decision making during the response, recovery and renewal periods. The report was a draft version of a report that was intended to be submitted to the special Council meeting proposed for 20 May 2020.

Councillor Purves endorsed the report and suggested that a target be set to get some other committees up and running after the summer recess. Councillor McDade echoed these comments and also suggested that financial briefings be arranged for all members prior to the setting of any interim budget.

The Board otherwise endorsed the report for submission to full Council.

10. EMERGENCY POWERS – RECORD OF DECISIONS

There was submitted and noted record of decisions taken under emergency powers as of 11 May 2020.

11. LATEST GUIDANCE / LEGISLATION CONSIDERED BY GOLD COMMAND

There was submitted and noted the latest guidance / legislation considered by Gold Command as of 11 May 2020.

12. LATEST STATISTICS

The latest statistics as of 11 May 2020 were submitted and noted.

13. MEMBERS Q AND A

Following a concern raised by Councillor Laing on the correct social distancing rules being applied by Bloom Groups, BR agreed to investigate this further.