

ELECTED MEMBER SOUNDING BOARD

Minute of Meeting of the Elected Member Sounding Board held virtually via Microsoft Teams on Monday 17 August 2020 at 11.00am.

Present: Councillors A Bailey, J Duff, G Laing, C Stewart and W Wilson; K Reid, Chief Executive; B Renton, Gold Commander; S Devlin, Executive Director (Education and Children's Services); K Donaldson, Interim Chief Operating Officer and G Paterson, Chief Officer/Director – Integrated Health and Social Care.

In Attendance: C Irons, Corporate and Democratic Services.

1. NOTE FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The note from the previous meeting of 10 August 2020 was submitted.

2. OPERATIONAL UPDATE

- KR referred to the live Covid situation in Coupar Angus where 4 people had tested positive at the 2 Sisters chicken factory and gave a summary of the current situation advising the Incident Management Team had met twice since being made aware of the outbreak to discuss concerns and risks; PKC Environmental Health Team had undertaken an assessment to identify risks and were working with the owners who had taken the decision to close the factory; there was a discrete local police presence in the area; staff being in the area from 5am had ensured a smooth handling of the situation. A further meeting would be held later today to consider how best to support the owners, employees and local community and ensure all necessary guidance was adhered to. Plans were already in place to have all staff tested within the next 2 days and it was hoped the factory could resume operation shortly when public health advise it is safe to do so.
- Other activity noted included:
 - Police Scotland and the Community Safety team were monitoring and supporting the community
 - Plans in place in terms of test, track and trace
 - Support was to be available in relation to welfare rights, and food distribution
 - Ongoing discussions with the factory in terms of payment to their employees
 - Information provided to the parents/pupils and staff of schools in the area
 - Local Resilience Partnership would be involved as many staff lived outwith P&K
 - Public Health would lead on all communications
 - Elected members were to be kept informed about any issues
- With regard to flooding the previous week, KR advised that Perth Leisure Pool had experienced flooding in their plant room which would result in them being unable to open until Easter next year.

- KR advised there had been a 148% increase in unemployment in the Perth and Kinross area with a large increase in 18-24 year olds, and for women.

3. CARE HOMES UPDATE

There was submitted and noted a report by the Chief Officer / Director – Integrated Health and Social Care providing an update on activity within care homes and a summary of the key information and themes reported to the Scottish Government.

GP advised that support continued to be provided to care homes and focussed discussion had taken place to deal with any concerns; there had been good progress on testing and support would be provided to progress increased visiting, including indoor visiting, subject to risk assessments.

In response to a question from Councillor Wilson, GP confirmed that testing was going very well and if there were any positive results a retest would be arranged. GP also advised there had been a small number of staff who had refused the test which may be due to health issues. GP added that as the testing was a rolling programme the percentage of tests undertaken depended on the number being carried out in each week so the percentage varied. The testing was being embraced by all care homes which would enable residents to have visitors.

4. MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 INFECTIONS AND OUTBREAKS

There was submitted and noted a briefing note by K McNamara, Depute Director (Housing and Environment) on the management of covid-19 infections and outbreaks and explaining the actions of the Council and the Local Resilience Partnership to anticipate, protect, manage and control infection in order to minimise the likelihood and impacts of a local lockdown as has been experienced in other areas of the UK.

KR stated the role of the Council and the LRP had been shown in practice today in dealing with the local outbreak.

BR highlighted there had been a workbook produced by the Scottish Government which had been based on other local outbreaks and there would be lessons learned from the situation in Coupar Angus. The LRP had undertaken scenario planning and that had been put into practice. While the Council was not the lead partner, the Council had played a significant part in the last 24hours.

BR advised the Environmental Health Team had inspected over 400 premises to ensure compliance with legislation/guidance and also responded to over 500 enquiries and complaints. The Environmental Health staff also deal with health protection and have been involved in the Test and Protect scheme. If necessary, Housing colleagues would be involved as there was a duty to provide accommodation if required due to self-isolating.

SD advised that all schools had been advised they will be subject to spot-checks by HSE over the phone to ensure relevant guidance was being followed.

5. FOOD POVERTY

There was submitted and noted a briefing note by D Stokoe on addressing food poverty in the area.

KR advised the Council was in discussion with communities to consider future needs for vulnerable groups.

BR stated there was stock of approximately £82,000 made available by local businesses and the Food Share Network and members would be advised of where the stock would be moved to, enabling Bell's Sports Centre to re-open.

Councillor Wilson suggested there would be further difficulties for families and that there was a role for the voluntary sector in providing education in communities on eating more cheaply. KR advised there had been classes and opportunities offered in the past, such as parents learning cooking skills and that future education would be raised with the Community Planning Partnership on providing better support for families from the beginning of October at the end of the furlough scheme, to cook and eat as well as they can. BR added that some work had been done on the Food Share Network approach and a number of local businesses and restaurants had expressed an interest in teaching people to cook across all cultures.

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.

KD summarised the report, highlighting the following points:

- £50m had been made available for the social care sector – approximately £687,000 for Perth & Kinross
- Information was being gathered by all Directors of Finance for the release of a further £25m by end of August
- Council Tax collection figures were down by around 1.26% compared with last year. While this was better than anticipated it was expected the collection would be impacted by the end of the furlough scheme
- A total of 3,405 business grants had been paid and there were 67 being processed. Now that the scheme was closed there would be a review and comments made on the payment rate being low compared to other areas would be addressed with the outcome shared with members
- The overall financial position would be reported to Council in September

SD advised a further £30m had been made available for staff in schools for the provision of facilities management and PPE.

KR advised there was no clarity yet on the loss of income scheme and whether the Council's opportunity to reclaim their loss would include figures for the ALEO's. KR also referred to the programme of Councillors briefings which had been arranged ahead of the next Council meeting.

7. EMERGENCY POWERS – RECORD OF DECISIONS

There was submitted and noted the record of decisions taken under emergency powers as of 17 August 2020.

Councillor Bailey queried if a decision had been made under emergency powers on the Winter Festival as the press had reported it had been cancelled. BR confirmed a report was being submitted to the E&I Committee on the Festival.

8. LATEST GUIDANCE / LEGISLATION CONSIDERED BY GOLD COMMAND

There was submitted and noted the latest guidance / legislation considered by Gold Command as of 13 August 2020.

9. LG COVID -19 DASHBOARD SUMMARY

There was submitted and noted the latest statistics as of week ending 7 August 2020.

10. MEMBERS Q AND A

- (i) Councillor Wilson asked if there were plans to review traffic lights being on automatic as some of his constituents had expressed their frustration with this. BR advised this was being reviewed and the outcome of consultation was awaited together with the preparation of signage.
- (ii) In response to a question from Councillor Stewart on Mental Health Officers, GP confirmed there was no shortage of staff in Perth and Kinross and there was no waiting list. It was acknowledged there were shortages in other Local Authority areas.
- (iii) BR provided a summary of the flooding in Perth & Kinross on 11/12 August when there was significant rainfall and thunderstorms and a months rain fell within 2-3 hours. There had been a number of properties affected throughout the area and temporary accommodation had been provided.
BR advised the Scottish Government had been contacted to trigger the Bellwin scheme; arrangements had been made for communications to be dealt with and a meeting had been arranged with Scottish Water to discuss the incident and look at lessons learned.
Councillor Laing commended the response by officers to the flooding.

Councillor Stewart expressed concern regarding flooding in Alyth and requested a meeting previously scheduled be rearranged to discuss a flood plan for Alyth.

KR stated the contract for provision of the emergency call service would be examined to determine if in extreme conditions Council staff could also respond to calls.

- (iv) KR confirmed this was the last meeting of the Sounding Board and thanked members for their support throughout the last 5 months and hoped that all groups were pleased with the emergency response provided to the pandemic. Councillor Wilson added thanks to all staff involved in supporting the Sounding Board.