

ELECTED MEMBER SOUNDING BOARD

Minute of Meeting of the Elected Member Sounding Board held virtually via Microsoft Teams on Monday 6 July 2020 at 11.00am.

Present: Councillors A Bailey, P Barrett, J Duff, C Purves and F Sarwar; K Reid, Chief Executive; S Devlin, Executive Director (Education and Children's Services); Z Robertson, Service Manager, Policy and Commissioning, Health and Social Care Partnership (for Item 3).

Apologies: B Renton, Gold Commander; G Paterson, Chief Officer/Director – Integrated Health and Social Care and K Donaldson, Interim Chief Operating Officer.

In Attendance: C Irons, Corporate and Democratic Services.

1. NOTE FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The note from the previous meeting of 29 June 2020 was submitted. It was noted that Cllr McDade's query on wild camping required to be added.

2. OPERATIONAL UPDATE

- KR advised that the projected funding from the recent UK govt funding announcement to support local government loss of income could result in c.£1.4m for PKC.
- KR referred to funding allocated from the UK Government (c.£97m for Scotland) and the £10m funding from Scottish Government for the Arts Industry and confirmation was awaited on any specific amount to be allocated to the venues in Perth and Kinross,
- Business grants continued to be paid.
- KR reported Non-Domestic Rates bills had been issued and that they have already deducted any relief applicable to tourism and hospitality sectors. KR noted that 'soft' reminders were to be issued for Council Tax payments with information on assistance available. A local taxes helpline had also been established.
- In respect of Governance, Corporate and Democratic Services were to issue guidance on virtual meetings. The same Code of Conduct for virtual and face to face meetings applies. Additional training would be made available for Conveners and one-to-one training was still available for all elected members.
- KR advised an Economic Bulletin would be issued today to Councillors which would include the information that with many businesses closing or making redundancies, 814 people were affected with 573 of those being Perth & Kinross residents. Economic Development were actively involved in supporting the business community. There were 4300 claimants for Universal Credit which had doubled from last year; there were 30% of the workforce in Perth & Kinross furloughed compared to the national average of 25%. There would therefore be a greater demand on Council Services as we move into recovery from Covid. It was important to have fortnightly

meetings of the Recovery & Renewal MOWG, immediately following the meeting of the Sounding Board, starting from next week.

- Some Public Toilets had opened from 3 July and the rest would open from 10 July. A risk assessment had been carried out at the Council's 13 toilets & comfort schemes with consideration of health and safety, PPE & cash handling. Not to charge would lead to a loss of income of £120,000.
- It was noted that 90 buildings had to be surveyed to ensure that they comply with ventilation standards to enable them to open. 72% had been identified as requiring work to comply. The surveys were being carried out by 19 Property Services staff safely & as quickly as possible.
- KR advised that Councillors' queries were now back to the normal timescale for dealing with by individual services now that staff who had been responding were returning to their usual role.
- SD advised that there had been confirmation of funding from the Scottish Government for purchasing digital devices for pupils and there would be talks with the Government and the Digital Office to best utilise the funds taking account of the investment made since easter.
- SD confirmed that funding had now been received for the provision of Free School Meals which were to be provided to those families in receipt of benefit and not to all P1-P3 children.
- In response to a question from Councillor Bailey, KR advised there was no guidance yet from Creative Scotland on the allocation of funding locally for culture and assistance for bodies such as Pitlochry Festival Theatre and Birnam Arts Centre but it would be shared with members when available.
- In response to a question from Councillor Barrett regarding the findings of a review of Butterstone School, SD advised a briefing had been produced for members advising of the key findings and providing links to the full report as well as recent media coverage. SD added there was a live referral to the professional association by the Council regarding a former member of staff at the school and the outcome of an investigation was awaited.
- Councillor Purves queried why decisions had been taken on car parking and school term dates under emergency powers a few days after the Council meeting without consultation with Councillors as previously agreed. KR confirmed that had it been possible to have the items considered at the Council meeting then they would have, however, changes were being made at such a rate that urgent decisions had been required, particularly to advise parents of the position as quickly as possible for the term dates and apologised if Councillors should have been consulted. SD added that changes had been made nationally which had to be acted on; the holiday dates had been discussed at a meeting of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff on 23 June, however, due to an announcement that day by the Scottish Government no decision had been made on an additional in-service day but it was important to provide clarity to staff and parents on the new term prior to the end of the current term. SD requested that queries from parents to elected members be forwarded to ECS to respond.
- In response to a question from Councillor Purves, KR confirmed a report on 1-5 High Street would be submitted to the Council meeting on 30 July.

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.

ZR advised there was 1 confirmed Covid case (a member of staff) in a care home which was 1 of the homes rated as amber and there were 32 homes rated as green. There would be enhanced testing in that particular home. There were no issues with PPE.

ZR added that 1 home had received a Care Inspection visit last week and improvements were to be made in infection control.

On 25 June, the Scottish Government had published a plan for a phased return to visiting. Half of all risk assessments and visiting protocols had been approved and it was noted that homes with an outbreak would suspend visiting for 28 days which is double the incubation period. Measures such as distancing, signage, hand-washing and face masks were all being addressed.

ZR advised there had been many areas of good practice identified, some of which were not prompted by the issue of guidance.

On the testing in homes, ZR advised that between 22 – 28 June, 818 staff had been tested. 1150 test kits have been ordered. Staff were getting used to the testing process and had ways to manage it.

In addition to the 23 reported deaths, there had been 1 recent death but it had yet to be confirmed whether it was covid related.

Councillor Purves asked about the testing of Care at Home staff and ZR advised there was not 100% testing but random testing carried out but staff could also use a home testing kit or attend the Perth College site for testing. Guidance required 2 members of staff from each agency be tested each week but more can be undertaken if wished.

Councillor Duff asked if it was known how many Care Home staff had never been tested and ZR advised that information was not available as each home was dealing with the testing and it could vary who was available for testing due to shift-working so not all staff would be tested each week. ZR added that 6 staff in Perth & Kinross had declined the testing. KR requested that the Partnership be asked to contact the care providers to confirm numbers of staff tested & not tested and the number which should be. In addition, information should be gathered on Care at Home testing where possible.

4. 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.

KR summarised the report, highlighting the following points:

- Loss of income - £10.4m
- Savings of £3.887m had been identified
- £1.159m pressure on the Housing Revenue Account
- £36m of the £45m allocation for Business Grants paid
- Information was required from the UK & Scottish Governments on borrowing and deferral of prudential borrowing

It was also noted that briefings had been arranged by Finance for all Councillors on Revenue; Capital and the impact of the pandemic on the budget with mitigating proposals although it was very difficult to predict the full impact due to continuing changes.

Councillor Sarwar queried reference in the report to a saving on schools meals and SD advised savings had been made during the lockdown period with some services not provided or not needed, such as energy costs from not using buildings and it had been previously agreed this saving be separated from the overall expenditure.

Councillor Duff queried the reference to almost £1m of savings that will not be achieved and KR confirmed further information would be made available on this.

5. EMERGENCY POWERS – RECORD OF DECISIONS

There was submitted and noted the record of decisions taken under emergency powers as of 6 July 2020.

6. LATEST GUIDANCE / LEGISLATION CONSIDERED BY GOLD COMMAND

There was submitted and noted the latest guidance / legislation considered by Gold Command as of 6 July 2020.

7. LG COVID -19 DASHBOARD SUMMARY

There was submitted and noted the latest statistics as of week ending 26 June 2020.

8. MEMBERS Q AND A

- (i) Councillor Duff asked for an update on the Spaces For People and KR advised she would check the current position and advise members.
- (ii) Councillor Barrett advised there had been no update on the trends for adult protection referrals and KR suggested the information may now be available for passing to members.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted there would be a Sounding Board next Monday 13 July, followed by a meeting of the Recovery and Renewal MOWG to consider the report on the Recovery & Renewal Framework which is to be submitted to the Council meeting on 30 July and also to consider a draft Economic Recovery Strategy.