

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Corporate Committee

Tuesday, 12 October 2021

Remote Locations via Video Conference,

PRESENT

Councillor George Alexander, Councillor James Allan, Councillor John Cowe, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Donald Gatt, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Aaron McLean, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor Amy Taylor, Councillor Sonya Warren

APOLOGIES

Councillor Frank Brown, Councillor Tim Eagle, Councillor Claire Feaver, Councillor Walter Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE

Also in attendance at the above meeting were the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development), Legal Services Manager, Sport and Culture Services Manager, Complaints Officer, Customer Services Development Manager, Paul Connor, Principal Accountant and Lindsey Robinson, Committee Services Officer as clerk to the meeting.

1. Chair

Councillor A McLean, as Chair of the Corporate Committee, chaired the meeting.

2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, the meeting noted the following declarations and further noted all Members who declared an interest had stated they would remain in the meeting:

Councillor Taylor declared an interest in item 12 as a Council appointed member of the Moray Leisure Centre Board.

Councillor Leadbitter declared an interest in item 5 as a Council appointed member of the Elgin BID working group.

Councillor Divers declared an interest in item 5 as the Council's representative of Elgin BID.

On behalf of the Scottish National Party, Councillor Leadbitter declared that the Group Members had discussed item 6 but confirmed that no whip had been given on how the group should vote.

There were no further declarations from Group Leaders or Spokespersons in regards to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or declarations of member's interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

3. Resolution

The meeting resolved that under Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the public and media representatives be excluded from the meeting for items 11 and 12 of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the relevant Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Paragraph Number of Minute	Paragraph Number of Schedule 7a and Reason
11	1 - Information relating to staffing matters
12	6 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person(s)

4. Written Questions **

The Committee noted that no written questions had been submitted.

5. Plantinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition City Status Bid

A report by the Chief Executive invited the Committee to agree to make an application for a grant of city status for Elgin.

During consideration the Chief Executive stated that the information contained in Section 4 (e) should have read the Council will lead the application with support from Elgin Community Council and Elgin BID and apologised for the mistake.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to make an application for a grant of city status for Elgin.

6. Charging for Services

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asked the Council to agree the default increase for fees and charges for Council services for 2022/23.

During consideration Councillor Leadbitter moved that due to the current financial climate it would be appropriate to freeze the charges at the current level. This was seconded by Councillor Warren.

Councillor Gatt advised that the Conservative group would not oppose the motion but was of the opinion that it was unwise to freeze the charges at this stage when the Council budget is not yet known. The Legal Services Manager sought clarification from Councillor Gatt as to whether this was a personal opinion or a group decision. Councillor Gatt confirmed that it was a group decision, but had omitted to mention it earlier due to the absence of Councillor Eagle from the meeting and apologised for the oversight.

Councillor Alexander expressed concern that the members of the public may see freezing of these charges as a precursor to a potential freeze of Council Tax and Council house rents in February 2022 and clearly that is a separate issue.

In response, the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) confirmed that there would be clear communication to show that any decision taken by the Committee at this meeting was separate from any decisions taken on council tax and council house rent in the future.

As there was no one otherwise minded the Committee agreed to:

- (i) freeze the charges at the current level; and
- (ii) request that the Moray Integration Joint Board (MIJB) recommend to the Council charges for services delivered under the aegis of MIJB.

7. Flu Vaccination Programme 2021

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) invited the Committee to note the content of the report and approve piloting a flu vaccination programme for identified groups of staff.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:

- (i) approve the introduction of a flu vaccination programme for 2021 at an anticipated cost of £12,050 to be funded from free general reserves; and
- (ii) note that a further report will be brought back that reviews the impact of the pilot on sickness absence figures for the relevant periods with a view to considering the benefits of a longer term programme of flu vaccination.

8. Complaints Annual Report 2020-21

A report by the Chief Executive asked the Committee to consider the Complaints Annual Report 2020-21.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:

- (i) note the contents of the Complaints Annual Report;
- (ii) welcome performance as indicated in the report; and
- (iii) approve the report for submission to the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO)

9. Test and Protect Temporary Staff

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) asked the Committee to authorise the use of Covid-19 funds to appoint a temporary member of staff to meet demand for test and protect calls in the contact centre.

The Committee joined the Chair in commending the excellent work already undertaken in the support of the core response to the pandemic.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:

- (i) authorise the allocation of Scottish Government pandemic funding to recruit one temporary post of Customer Service Advisor on Grade 3 for a period of 5 months to support the ongoing requirements in the contact centre to support Scottish Government Test and Protect to be funded from state grant funding in support of covid-related expenditure; and
- (ii) note the work that continues as a result of Test and Protect and the impact on other customer service day to day activities.

10. Question Time ***

The Committee noted that there were no further questions.

11. Customer Contact Arrangements [Para1]

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) asked the Committee to consider and approve the policy position for Council customer contact and, based on that, the future of Council access points in preparation for staff returning to the office.

During consideration Councillor Allan sought clarification on why Lossiemouth had not been included in the list of potential locations and moved that it be added to recommendation 3.1 (ii).

In response the Customer Service Development Manager advised that the list was not exhaustive and other locations would be considered.

Following further discussion Councillor Leadbitter proposed as an amendment adding a further bullet point to recommendation 3.1 to ensure there are no compulsory redundancies as a result of the change process and any cost implications to be reported back to Committee.

In response the Legal Services Manager sought clarification from Councillor Leadbitter as to whether he was focussing on the report at hand or on wider policy.

Councillor Leadbitter confirmed he was only focussing on the report being discussed. He advised that the SNP group had expressed their support for a No Compulsory Redundancies policy previously and that had to be a consideration for them in this report. Whilst they lost a vote previously on no compulsory redundancies, this report raises the possibility within the context of this service redesign and they will test that position again. He further stated that he was happy to include as part of his amendment Councillor Allan's motion to include Lossiemouth in the list of potential locations. In moving that there should be no compulsory redundancies as a result of this change process he accepted that if this gave rise to any financial implications this would require to be brought back to the Council/appropriate committee This was seconded by Councillor McLean.

Following further discussion Councillor Allan stated that he was happy to add his proposal to that of Councillor Leadbitter and withdrew his motion.

Councillor Alexander stated that it was important to stick to current Council policy and proposed as an amendment the recommendations as written but with the

inclusion of Lossiemouth as a potential location. This was seconded by Councillor Gatt.

On a division there voted:

For the Motion (5)	Councillors Leadbitter, A McLean, Divers, Morrison, and Warren
For the Amendment (5)	Councillors Alexander, Gatt, Allan, Cowe, and Taylor
Abstentions (0)	

There being an equality of votes the Chair, in terms of Standing Order 65 (e), cast his casting vote in favour of the Motion.

Accordingly the motion became the finding of the meeting and the Committee agreed to approve the following design principles for shaping the future of customer contact as the Council emerges from the pandemic:

- (i) Access Points are renamed Information Hubs and consideration is given to locating them in libraries or other suitable public buildings;
- (ii) Access Points in Buckie, Elgin and Keith follow the approach in Forres with Information Hubs established in Elgin, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth libraries or other suitable public buildings;
- (iii) investigate opportunities to expand Information Hubs to other towns in Moray using existing libraries or other suitable public buildings including Aberlour, Cullen, Dufftown and Tomintoul;
- (iv) continue to develop a digital first approach where appropriate for service delivery;
- (v) build on the success made during the pandemic and continue to increase the number of services available online, ensuring that they are easily accessible, well designed, simple to use and meet accessibility standards;
- (vi) review and update the customer charter based on this approach;
- (vii) encourage and promote the benefits Moray citizens of online access to council services;
- (viii) to measure customer satisfaction and identify opportunities for continuous improvement; and
- (ix) ensure that there are no compulsory redundancies as a result of the change process and any financial implications resulting from that be reported back.

The Committee also agreed to the following arrangements for customer access as staff return to Council offices:

- (i) HQ Annexe in Elgin reopens to the public for appointment only once staff numbers increase to 30%.
- (ii) general walk-in enquiries are transferred to Elgin library.

- (iii) access points do not reopen in Buckie and Keith as we transition to Information Hubs.

12. Moray Leisure Centre Lift Replacement [Para 6]

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) sought approval from the Committee to fund the costs of a replacement lift at Moray Leisure Centre.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:

- (i) fund £35,000 for a replacement lift at Moray Leisure Centre; and
- (ii) note that a further report will be presented to this Committee in November 2021 which will include an update on progress towards the development of long term asset management plans for the sport and culture estate.