

MORAY COUNCIL

MINUTE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF MORAY COUNCIL

25 MARCH 2020

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ELGIN

PRESENT

Councillors Morrison (Chair), Leadbitter (Depute), Alexander, Divers, Feaver, Gatt and Ross

APOLOGIES

As a result of the Covid-19 virus pandemic, the attendance of Councillors at this meeting was restricted therefore apologies from those members not present are not being recorded.

IN ATTENDANCE

Chief Executive, Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance and Mrs L Rowan, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the Meeting.

1. DECLARATION OF GROUP DECISIONS AND MEMBER'S INTERESTS

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from Group Leaders or Spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Member's interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

2. EMERGENCY DECISION MAKING ARRANGEMENTS

A report by the Chief Executive sought approval for temporary decision making arrangements to reduce the need for face to face meetings during the current coronavirus (Covid 19) outbreak due to the long term nature of the restrictions as a result of this pandemic.

The Council Leader thanked the political groups for their support and the constructive way in which they had come together to deal with the challenging situation surrounding the Covid 19 outbreak. He further paid tribute to the significant amount of work currently being undertaken by Officers and other staff members across the Council and other public sector partners to ensure the continuation of vital services in Moray.

Councillor Gatt noted that the recommendations in the report stated that the proposed arrangements are to be reviewed on or before 17 June 2020 however within the body of the report the date for review was 17 July 2020 and sought clarification on the actual review date.

In response, the Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance advised that this was an administrative error and that the suggested date for review should read on or before 17 June 2020 as stated in the recommendations.

During discussion, clarification was sought as to how Elected Members would be advised of any decisions made by the Chief Executive under the revised arrangements.

In response, the Chief Executive advised that it was unlikely that there would be any Emergency Cabinet meetings during the current lock down period to Monday 13 April 2020.

He further stated that the Council's emergency Incident Management Team (IMT) were meeting frequently and these meetings were recorded and decisions logged for transparency. He stated that press releases and staff team briefs would be issued as and when required and that work on a schedule of Members questions and answers was being undertaken which would address frequently asked questions. In addition, a Members Brief was also planned for publication.

In terms of governance, details of the IMT, the regional Resilience Partnership and national Resilience framework would be circulated to the Emergency Cabinet for information.

The Chief Executive acknowledged the difficulties staff were facing as a result of the Covid crisis and thanked staff for their continued support during this time.

In relation to nominations required to sit on the Emergency Cabinet, the Council Leader proposed Councillors Eagle, Gatt, Divers, Ross and Alexander along with the Convener as Chair and himself as Depute Chair. This was unanimously agreed.

The Council joined the Chair in commending communities for their assistance in supporting some of the most vulnerable people in Moray and thereafter agreed:

- (i) to note the emergency powers delegated to the Chief Executive in terms of paragraph 4.1 (i) of Council's Scheme of Delegation detailed in paragraph 3.3 of the report;
- (ii) to suspend, on a temporary basis, all delegations to committees;
- (iii) to form a temporary Emergency Cabinet of 7 Councillors, reflecting political balance and allowing substitutes;
- (iv) to nominate the Convener as Chair of the Emergency Cabinet and the Leader as Depute Chair;
- (v) that Councillors Eagle, Gatt, Divers, Ross and Alexander sit on the Emergency Cabinet, reflecting political balance as outlined in para 4.1 of the report;
- (vi) to authorise the Emergency Cabinet to take any decisions which the Full Council are empowered to take;
- (vii) to authorise the Chief Executive, for lower risk business as outlined in paragraph 4.5 of the report, to exercise the delegated authority given to him in paragraph 5(7) of the Council's Scheme of Delegation (to take such executive actions as may be deemed necessary in the discharge of the Authority's functions) without the requirement for homologation;

- (viii) to note that the Emergency Cabinet will need to approve further temporary arrangements in relation to quasi-judicial decisions and regulated processes as outlined in paragraph 4.6 of the report;
- (ix) to note that it will not be possible to continue normal public access to meetings and that, where possible, live streaming will be maintained, failing which, agendas and minutes for meetings of the Emergency Cabinet will be made publicly available, subject to confidentiality provisions;
- (x) to review these arrangements (without the need to suspend standing orders) on or before 17 June 2020.