

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Moray Council Emergency Cabinet

Thursday, 21 May 2020

Council Chambers, Council Office, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX

PRESENT

Councillor George Alexander, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Tim Eagle, Councillor Donald Gatt, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor Derek Ross

APOLOGIES

IN ATTENDANCE

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Amy Taylor as substitute for Councillor Graham Leadbitter for Item 4, Councillor Claire Feaver replacing Councillor Donald Gatt and Councillor Sonya Warren replacing Councillor Graham Leadbitter for Item 5. Councillor Frank Brown replacing Councillor Donald Gatt for Items 6 and 7.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development), Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Head of Strategy, Performance and Governance, Head of Education, Head of Economic Growth and Development, Head of Education Resources and Communities, Chief Financial Officer, Legal Services Manager, the Senior Officer Economic Strategy and Development and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer.

1. Chair

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Shona Morrison.

2. Suspension of Standing Orders

In terms of Standing Orders, the Emergency Cabinet agreed to suspend Standing Order 75 to allow the meeting to begin at 11.00am.

3. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillor's 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.

4. Covid Response Report

Councillors Morrison, Leadbitter, Alexander, Divers, Eagle, Gatt and Ross took part in the consideration of this item.

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) informed the Cabinet of the services within Education, Communities and Organisational Development portfolio that have been developed and delivered during the Covid 19 pandemic to provide the response to the incident or to ensure continuity of critical council services.

During consideration of the report members sought updates on a number of the services currently being provided by the Council and partner agencies including:

- i) 56% of the residents in Moray who are being shielded have been contacted to check on them and services offered if required. It is hoped that all those on the list will have been contacted by the end of the week.
- ii) Food boxes are available to all those being shielded but it is necessary to register for this service.
- iii) Currently 331 laptops, 72 iPads and 30 Wi-Fi access dongles have been provided to families with school age children to assist with school work.

Following consideration the Cabinet agreed to note the services within the Education, Communities and Organisational Development portfolio that have been developed and delivered during the Covid 19 pandemic to provide the response to the incident or to ensure continuity of critical Council services.

5. Moray Local Review Body - Temporary Arrangements due to Covid-19

Councillors Morrison, Alexander, Divers, Eagle, Gatt, Ross and Taylor took part in the consideration of this item.

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) asked the Cabinet to consider and agree temporary arrangements to determine appeals submitted to the Moray Local Review Body (MLRB) during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Taylor proposed removing the wording 'where possible' from recommendation 2.1 (i) as she felt that it was possible to hold the meetings virtually.

In regard to the temporary suspension of site visits, Councillor Alexander sought clarification on whether it was permissible for a member of the MLRB to make a site visit as part of their daily exercise.

In response the Legal Services Manager advised against Members carrying out site visits if the Cabinet agreed to temporarily suspend site visits.

Following consideration and as there was no one other wise minded the Cabinet agreed to remove 'where possible' from recommendation 2.1 (i) and subsequently agreed:

- i) to re-instate the Moray Local Review Body and note that the meetings will be held virtually; and
- ii) that the requirement to carry out a site inspection for every Notice of Review be temporarily suspended.

6. Revised Education Plan Report

Councillors Morrison, Alexander, Divers, Eagle, Feaver, Ross and Warren took part in the consideration of this item.

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) updated the Cabinet on changes to the Education Strategic Plan to take account of Covid-19 impact on service delivery.

Following a lengthy discussion, Councillor Eagle, seconded by Councillor Ross moved replacing recommendation 2.1 (ii) in the report with:

Agrees the revised plan, but recognises that the delivery of the plan is unlikely to meet Council expectations on both wellbeing and attainment as key priorities without additional capacity and therefore requests that the department for Education working in partnership with Children's Services (where services overlap) bring back a paper to the appropriate Committee prior to the new school term which addresses this concern.

Councillor Warren, seconded by Councillor Morrison proposed agreeing the recommendations as printed in the report.

On the division there voted:

For the Motion (3) Councillors Eagle, Ross and Feaver

For the Amendment (4) Councillors Warren, Morrison, Alexander and Divers

Abstentions (0)

Accordingly the amendment became the finding of the meeting and the Emergency Cabinet agreed:

- i) to acknowledge the changing position due to Covid-19 pandemic;
- ii) the revised plan which will be subject to further review and development;
- iii) acknowledge the impact of remote learning on learners and expected outcomes; and

that a further paper is presented to Children and Young People's Services
iv) Committee once all Committees reconvene to update on progress, or to the Emergency Cabinet should an urgent issue arise before then.

7. Financial Monitoring Report

Councillors Morrison, Leadbitter, Alexander, Brown, Divers, Eagle and Ross took part in the consideration of this item.

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informed the Cabinet of the current estimate of the financial impact of the Council's response to the Covid-19 outbreak, as reported to COSLA on 15 May 2020 for remission to Scottish Government as part of an overview of the estimated impact on Scottish Local Authorities and to raise other issues which will impact on the Council's finances.

Following consideration the Cabinet agreed to note:

- i) the current estimated financial position for the initial lockdown period; and
- ii) the longer term issues which will impact on the Council's finances.

8. Economy Report

Councillors Morrison, Leadbitter, Alexander, Brown, Divers, Eagle and Ross took part in the consideration of this item.

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informed the Cabinet of the impact on the economy as a result of Covid-19 pandemic, the support announced to date for businesses and employees and the preparations being made to plan for recovery and renewal of the Moray economy.

The Senior Officer Economic Strategy and Development updated the Committee on the following points:

- i) 2 additional reports on the economy have been received, the first was the Bank of England Monetary report on the impact of COVID-19 and the second the treasury analysis discussing how the costs associated with COVID 19 would be repaid.¹
- ii) claimant count statistics for Moray for April stated that there has been an increase of 970 claimants, 57% of which are male, 67% female and that the worst hit group are those in the 25-49 category.
- iii) the Scottish Government household survey which found that 41% of households have had their finances negatively affected. This rises to 55% for people with three or more children and is greater for those in lower skilled jobs. 48% of people in semi-skilled occupations compared to 34% in managerial occupations
- iv) the Non Domestic Rates Grant Scheme of £10,000 and £25,000 has, to date, paid out £13,945,000 in grants to Moray businesses;
- v) the grants for newly self employed which is administered by Business Gateway has paid out £164,000 paid out.

Several members proposed membership for the Moray Economic Partnership however the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) proposed that as this was not requested in the recommendations of the report, the discussion should take place outwith the meeting and for Group Leaders to discuss with the Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance should there be more than 3 nominations..

Following consideration the Cabinet agreed to note the potential economic implications of Covid-19 on the UK, Scottish and Moray economies based on the latest analysis as well as the local, Scottish and UK responses, and endorse the preparations being made to plan for recovery and renewal of the Moray economy.

9. Question Time ***

Councillor Alexander raised concerns about companies from outwith the area carrying out building work on the base at RAF Lossiemouth and staying locally.

In response the Head of Economic Growth and Development advised that Environmental Health are in contact with the accommodation providers to seek assurance that they are taking appropriate social distancing measures in their properties.

Councillor Alexander further raised an issue regarding the Pilot Boat in Buckie and the temporary commission of a replacement.

In response the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) confirmed that a report had been presented to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee outlining the reasons that the pilot boat was deemed to be at the end of its workable life and confirmed that a report will be coming to Committee on proposals in the near future.

Councillor Ross sought an update on governance and the plan going forward to re-instate Committees.

In response the Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance confirmed that a report is being drafted for CMT to look at proposals going forward which would then be taken to a meeting of the Emergency Cabinet or Moray Council on or before 17 June 2020 when the current arrangements will be reviewed.

The Emergency Cabinet joined the Convener in congratulating the newly appointed Depute Lord Lieutenants for Moray, namely Mrs Joan Cowe, Ms Margaret Stenton, Mr Alan James and Mr John Stuart. The Convener further congratulation John and Joan Cowe on the birth of their grandchild.