

**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL****EMERGENCIES COMMITTEE****14 May 2020****Report by Deputy Chief Executive****RECOMMENCING MEETINGS****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To outline and seek agreement for proposals to recommence formal meetings.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. That the committee:-
  - (a) approve the lifting of the suspension of delegations to committees and the proposals to recommence meetings as outlined in the report;
  - (b) agree that the temporary extension of delegated powers to officers be withdrawn on 30 June 2020; and
  - (c) agree that the withdrawal of the temporary extension of delegated powers be with the exception of licensing matters in respect of which the Chief Officer - Legal & Procurement will continue to take decisions until arrangements to recommence meetings of the Licensing Committee have been put in place.

**BACKGROUND**

3. At the meeting of the Council on 23 March, in response to the developing Covid-19 pandemic, the following was agreed:-
  - (a) to suspend on a temporary basis all delegations to committees with the exception of the Emergencies Committee referred to in (d) below;
  - (b) that delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive all directors and heads of service, and the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement to take operational decisions in respect of matters within their respective areas of operation that would normally require Council/committee approval;
  - (c) that if the proposed decision would be contrary to existing Council policy, would be seeking an amendment to an existing policy, or for any other reason would require political approval, the matter be referred to the Emergencies Committee for a decision;
  - (d) that an Emergencies Committee be established, the membership of which comprises the Leader and Depute Leader of the Administration and the Leader of the main Opposition Group or substitutes, with the terms of reference as set out in the report; and

- (e) that the temporary extension of the delegated authority be kept under review in order that it may be revoked at the appropriate time.

## REPORT

4. At the time of this meeting it will have been approximately 8 weeks since the temporary decision-making arrangements were introduced. This introduced flexibility to enable officers to take decisions at short notice in a rapidly changing landscape. Over that period significant efforts have been required across all Council services not only to continue to deliver services but also to deliver new services associated with tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite the additional work required, a degree of relative stability has now been reached enabling the recommencement of formal meetings to be considered.

5. The list of proposed reconvened meetings is as follows:-

- Planning Applications Committee 10 June
- Education Committee – 11 June
- Council – 24 June
- Audit & Scrutiny Committee – 25 June

6. Planners are currently preparing a report in relation to Application 2018/0302/TP - Erection of neighbourhood commercial centre including Class 1 (Retail), Class 3 (Food and Drink)/Sui Generis (Pub/Restaurant and drive throughs) with potential supporting uses (Class 2, Financial, Professional or Other Services, Class 10 Non-Residential Institutions, Class 11 Assembly and Leisure and Sui Generis) and associated access, parking and landscaping (Major). on the Site To North Of Crossmill Industrial Estate Glasgow Road Barrhead. This report will not be ready for consideration until toward the end of June at the earliest although there is still some doubt if the report will be ready, but the Head of Environment hopes to be clearer by the time of this meeting. In view of this it is proposed that in the event the report will not be ready, the meeting proceed on 10 June as scheduled. However if the report is ready it is proposed to cancel the meeting and to reschedule it towards the end of the month on a date to be agreed.

7. In terms of the meetings calendar, meetings of the Cabinet were scheduled to be held on 4 and 18 June. At this stage it is proposed that these meetings take place only if required. The Chief Executive will consult with the Corporate Management Team to identify potential meeting items and meetings will be convened thereafter if considered necessary. There were 2 scheduled meetings of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee in June – one on 18 June to consider routine business, and one on 25 June to scrutinise the draft accounts before publication. It is proposed to combine these into a single meeting on 25 June.

8. Due to the involvement of third parties in meetings of the Licensing Committee (licence applicants and their agents and the police, and the need to resolve issues around visiting application sites and appropriate social distancing in respect of the Local Review Body, work is ongoing to introduce arrangements to recommence meetings of both as soon as possible.

9. It is hoped that the normal calendar of meetings can be reintroduced in full following the summer recess. All meetings held will be virtual meetings until government guidance dictates otherwise. IT are currently carrying out an audit to ensure that all Elected Members have the appropriate equipment, either Council provided or personal, to enable them to participate. A connection guide is also being developed to ensure that whatever equipment Members have, they will be able to connect to and participate in meetings. This should enable Members to join meetings without assistance, but support will be available to assist Members if required. Some testing will also be carried out in advance to ensure that arrangements are operating satisfactorily and that Members are able to connect.

10. The connection guide and the opportunity to test will be also made available to the religious representatives and teachers' representative on the Education Committee. As they do not have Council provided equipment it is important that their ability to participate in the meeting is confirmed.

**Withdrawal of extended delegated powers.**

11. At the meeting of the Council on 23 March when the temporary arrangements were introduced, it was also be agreed that the temporary extension of delegated powers to officers be kept under review in order that it may be withdrawn at an appropriate time. With the recommencement of meetings it is proposed that the temporary extension of delegated powers cease on 30 June 2020. This will be with the exception of licensing matters where the Chief Officer - Legal and Procurement to exercise delegations in relation to licensing matters until arrangements are in place for the committee to recommence.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

12. That the committee:-

- (a) approve the lifting of the suspension of delegations to committees and the proposals to recommence meetings as outlined in the report;
- (b) agree that the temporary extension of delegated powers to officers be withdrawn on 30 June 2020; and
- (c) agree that the withdrawal of the temporary extension of delegated powers be with the exception of licensing matters in respect of which the Chief Officer - Legal & Procurement will continue to take decisions until arrangements to recommence meetings of the Licensing Committee have been put in place.

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