

**MINUTE**

**of**

**JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (FIRST TIER)**

**Minute of Virtual Meeting held at 2.00pm on 10 September 2020.**

**Present:**

Councillor Tony Buchanan  
Councillor Caroline Bamforth

Councillor Paul O’Kane

**Union Representatives:**

Ms Karen Catlow (UNISON)  
Mr John Guidi (SSTA)  
Mr Steven Larkin (UNISON)

Mr Joe Lynch (UNISON)  
Mr Des Morris (EIS)  
Ms Kirsten Muat (GMB)

Councillor Tony Buchanan in the Chair

**Attending:**

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Sharon Dick, Head of HR and Corporate Services; Graeme Hay, Education Senior Manager; Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager; and Linda Hutchison, Senior Committee Services Officer.

**Apologies:**

Councillor Stewart Miller; and Ms Lisa Kennedy (EIS), Mr James O’Connell (UNITE) and Ms Lynne Rankin (UNISON).

**MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

1. The committee considered and approved as a correct record the Minute of the meeting held on 13 February 2020.

**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL COVID-19 RESPONSE**

2. Having confirmed that this issue had been raised by Mr O’Connell, Mr Larkin commended the extent of the dialogue between management and the Trade Unions on Covid-19 issues, which included weekly meetings, and asked elected Members if their experience had been positive also and regarding lessons learned.

Councillor Buchanan, having acknowledged that the current situation was difficult for everyone, referred to arrangements put in place prior to the lockdown in March to enable issues to be discussed by the Corporate Management Team and with elected Members.

Having cited the weekly meetings established between the Leader, Deputy Leader, Leader of the Opposition and Chief Executive as one example of good communication on Covid-19 matters, he expressed the view that elected Members were being kept well updated. He thanked all staff and the Trade Unions for their phenomenal help to progress issues in recent months in response to the pandemic, such as the support provided to those who were vulnerable and shielding, and done by volunteers undertaking tasks outwith their normal remits. Councillor Buchanan highlighted that the position on Covid-19 remained precarious and changed daily, referred to the recent concerning rise in cases, and expressed hope that the number would reduce, referring to the responsibility that fell to everyone to help control the number of cases emerging. He emphasised that the public sector had been at the forefront of the response, stressing the need to highlight the contribution made by local government to the Scottish Government. He added that the way the emergency was being handled within the authority stood it in good stead, and referred to the work of the Recovery and Renewal Member Officer Group in terms of moving issues forward, progress on which would be subject to how the pandemic was controlled.

Councillor O'Kane supported the comments made, during which he referred to the value the Emergencies Committee had placed on the regular reports on staffing issues it had received, including on those who were vulnerable and shielding, and stressed the paramount importance of staff to the Council. He commended all officers who had offered and provided support, highlighted that Conveners had also been updated regularly on Covid-19 related matters to complement other means of communication, as he has been on education issues, and expressed hope that the Trade Unions considered the approach taken to have been constructive. Councillor O'Kane also thanked both the Trade Unions and officers for raising issues that needed to be addressed to keep people safe and well, adding that he would be happy to hear of any further concerns that needed to be addressed. He also referred to the importance of continuing to be vigilant regarding the virus, and to the support provided by officers to community groups enabling them to do their work and related lessons learned, whilst highlighting that the relationship between the authority and such groups was already strong.

Having heard Mr Morris concur with the comments made and welcome the consultation and engagement there had been which he looked forward to continuing, Mr Larkin expressed the opinion that there had always been a good relationship within the Council between management, senior elected Members and the Trade Unions which had stood all in good stead and enabled difficult recent discussions to be progressed successfully. He stated that UNISON did not consider there to be any issues that remained outstanding to resolve at the current time on Covid-19, and referred to the role everyone had to disseminate important information.

Councillor Buchanan concurred that a good approach had been adopted both within the authority and between the Council and its community planning partners regarding Covid-19 issues which boded well for the future. Having expressed the view that this would not have been possible had a good working relationship not been in place already, he added that this had been particularly important when a quick response had been required on issues.

Councillor Bamforth was also heard in support of the comments made, during which she referred to her role in relation to the Health and Social Care Partnership. She thanked all staff working in HSCP services for their support, including those who had supported the home care service and humanitarian hub amongst others. She emphasised the extent to which people had gone well above and beyond what they had been expected to do to assist.

The Chief Executive added her thanks to the Trade Unions for their commitment in support of their members and the common good. Having also thanked all officers for their hard work on behalf of the local community, she referred to the challenges that still lay ahead, the need to plan for those, and the related discussions required which would be challenging as people

learned to work and live safely. She confirmed that both management and elected Members were committed to working with the Trade Unions.

The committee noted the comments made and that the views of the Trade Unions on issues being considered by the Recovery and Renewal Member Officer Group would be welcomed.

### **EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT 2019/20**

3. Under reference to the Minute of meeting of 13 February 2020 (Item 4 refers) when it had been noted that a health and safety report on Education would be submitted to this meeting, the committee considered the Education Department Annual Health, Safety and Security Report 2019/20.

The report highlighted the Department's commitment to health, safety, welfare and security improvement. It related directly to the Corporate Health and Safety objectives and how these were supported. More specifically, issues referred to in more detail included progress made achieving objectives during 2019/20; health and safety training; the monitoring and review of health and safety; risk exposure and strategies for risk control; and how consultation on various matters was carried out. Others issues commented on included enforcement related activities; accidents and incident statistics; the cost of accidents and ill health; and objectives set for 2020/21.

Whilst referring to key aspects of the report, the Education Senior Manager commented on progress made on meeting the objectives set, but confirmed that a small number had been deferred to 2020/21. She also referred to the number of staff completing health and safety training, clarifying that promoting such training remained high on the department's agenda.

Regarding fire risk assessments carried out, it was confirmed that in premises where a reduction in overall risk rating had not been found, this was largely due to building fabric issues that complied with legislation at the time of build now needing further investment.

The Education Senior Manager commented that the number of incidents of violence to staff had reduced significantly to 420 compared to 592 for 2018/19, adding that a significant number of these related to pupils with additional support needs or pupils posing challenging behaviour. As a result of discussions with union colleagues it had been agreed to establish a staff working group to look at the numbers in detail and continue to identify good practice and solutions to issues.

Mr Morris commented that, following their introduction several years ago, the number of joint health and safety inspections undertaken by head teachers, managers and local health and safety representatives, which helped to raise standards, had reduced for various reasons, adding that he understood that the checklist used to identify issues was to be amended to reflect Covid-19. He stated that an increase in the inspections and the revision of the checklist in this way would be welcomed. He also welcomed the reduction in violent incidents, endorsed efforts to reduce these further as the number remaining was still high, and confirmed that the Trade Unions would be happy to contribute to such work. For clarity, he also confirmed that all staff could access and input data on the on-line Accident Incident Reporting System (AIRS). Mr Larkin referred to lessons being learned from various incidents which was helpful in trying to reduce the number of these further.

Councillor Buchanan welcomed the report, the information within it and what was being done to address issues, following which Councillor Bamforth also welcomed the related transparency. In response to various questions from her, the Senior Education Manager confirmed that it was highly likely that school trips would not proceed for the foreseeable future and that parents would be made aware of this. She also clarified that a rolling

programme of audits of schools was carried out over a number of years taking account of the capacity of the team undertaking these; and that she was confident that the reported completion rate of reviews of safety in outdoor education under Review Standard Circular 33 would be far higher in the 2020/21 report. Regarding the current Fire Risk Assessment rating for Kirkhill Primary School which was still to be reviewed, she explained that the delay was attributable to the need to prioritise other issues. However, she expressed confidence that there were no significant issues to be addressed, undertaking to confirm the position to Councillor Bamforth following the meeting.

Mr Larkin reported that UNISON now had a number of Covid-19 Health and Safety champions with a further number being trained shortly which was useful for seeking feedback on any issues at properties for example.

The committee noted:-

- (a) that the Education Senior Manager would confirm the position on the Fire Risk Assessment for Kirkhill Primary School to Councillor Bamforth; and
- (b) otherwise, the report and related comments made.

#### **COUNCIL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

4. The committee considered the Minute of the meeting of the Council's Health and Safety Committee held on 21 January 2020.

The Head of Environment (Strategic Services) confirmed that the meeting scheduled for April had not been able to proceed for reasons linked to the Covid-19 emergency, but that the committee was now scheduled to be convened in October at which Covid-19 and non-Covid issues would be reviewed. The position on the implementation of the new Safety Management System, which had been delayed by a few months and regarding which a meeting with the provider had taken place recently, would be amongst issues discussed.

The committee noted the Minutes and related comments made.

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

5. It was noted that the next meeting of the committee was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 11 February 2021.