

**MINUTES of MEETING of BUSINESS CONTINUITY COMMITTEE held in the BY SKYPE
on THURSDAY, 14 MAY 2020**

Present:

Councillor Aileen Morton (Chair)

Councillor Rory Colville
Councillor Robin Currie
Councillor Lorna Douglas
Councillor Kieron Green

Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Councillor Gary Mulvaney
Councillor Douglas Philand
Councillor Sandy Taylor

Attending:

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence intimated.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated.

3. MINUTES

The Minute of the Business Continuity Committee held on 16 April 2020 was approved as a correct record.

4. COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATE

The Committee considered a report which provided a high level overview of some of the key decisions and actions that have been taken across Council services in response to the pandemic, incorporating emergency legislation, government guidance and working in partnership with other responding agencies.

Decision

The Committee noted the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and noted the range of actions that have been taken across Council services in response to the pandemic.

(Ref: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support dated 12 May 2020, submitted)

5. BUDGET:

(a) BUDGET OUTLOOK 2021-22 TO 2025-2026

The Committee gave consideration to a report summarising the budget outlook covering the period 2021-22 to 2025-26, taking into consideration the budget decisions taken at the Council Budget meeting held on 27 February 2020.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee agreed to note the current estimated budget

outlook position for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.

(Ref: Report by Section 95 Officer, dated 4 May 2020, submitted.)

(b) BUDGET UPDATE

Consideration was given to a paper presenting the estimated impact of COVID on the delivery of previously agreed savings options and the additional cost pressures and savings arising. The paper also provided an update on progress to identify possible areas for service redesign to deliver future savings.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee agreed:-

1. to note the estimated budget gap for the period 2021/22 – 2025/26 before the potential impact of COVID on savings and cost pressures;
2. to note the impact COVID may have on the delivery of agreed savings options up until the end of June 2020 and the anticipated cost pressures and potential savings created by COVID up till the end of June 2020;
3. to note there is an assumption that all additional costs incurred by the Council as a consequence of COVID-19 will be fully funded by the Scottish Government; and
4. to note that officers are considering areas for potential service redesign and agree that progress will be reported to future meetings of the Business Continuity Committee/Policy and Resources Committee with final proposals to be presented to Members in December 2020 to enable these to be reflected in budget consultation.

(Ref: Report by Section 95 Officer, dated 6 May 2020, submitted.)

(c) HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE YEAR END AND OVERSPEND 2019-2020

The Committee gave consideration to a request from the Chief Financial Officer of the IJB that consideration is given to payback arrangements relating to the overspend on Social Work services within the HSCP for 2019/20. The final year end outturn for Social Work is an overspend of £1.165m.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee agreed to approve that the repayment of 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 Social Work overspends are deducted from the Council's payment to the HSCP on a five year phased basis.

(Ref: Report by Section 95 Officer, dated 5 May 2020, submitted.)

(d) CAPITAL BUDGET POSITION

Consideration was given to a report following up on an action in relation to the Capital budget agreed at the Council's Budget meeting in February that stated "due

to the scale of risk to capital programme funding in future years, request that officers provide an overview report to the Policy and Resources Committee in May 2020”.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee agreed:

1. to note that there is a risk as to the funding of the capital programme in future years; and
2. that a decision on how to address the funding gap is deferred until there is confirmation as to whether a funding announcement will be made in the Spring and further note that this decision would allow officers time to estimate the impact of COVID-19 on the current capital programme.

(Ref: Report by Section 95 Officer, dated 27 April 2020, submitted.)

6. COUNCIL TAX ON EMPTY PROPERTIES - TEMPORARY AMENDMENT DUE TO COVID-19

The Committee gave consideration to a report seeking a temporary amendment to the policy for charging double Council Tax on long-term empty dwellings under regulation 4 The Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, relating to the impact Covid-19 has had on the local economy in respect of both the housing market and the availability of licensed trade persons to undertake works that would bring properties back into circulation.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee agreed:

1. to approve a temporary policy amendment to allow management the discretion to remove the double charge of Council Tax for a maximum of 6 months between 1 April 2020 and 30 September 2020 where there is conclusive evidence that efforts have been made, or are being made, to bring the empty properties back into use and that the homeowners' ability to bring the home back into use is affected by Covid-19;
2. to approve a temporary policy amendment to allow management the discretion to remove the double charge of Council Tax for a maximum of 6 months between 1 April 2020 and 30 September 2020 in exceptional circumstances where there is conclusive evidence of financial hardship of the taxpayer caused by Covid-19; and
3. to approve a temporary policy amendment that the Council does not apply any new double charges of Council Tax on long-term empty dwellings where it becomes long-term empty between 1 April 2020 and 30 September 2020 and that a charge equal to the normal level of Council Tax charged is applied to the property until 30 September 2020.

(Ref: Report by Section 95 Officer, dated 27 April 2020, submitted.)

7. EMPLOYABILITY FINANCIAL UPDATE

A report providing an update on the current financial position of the Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team was considered by the Committee.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee agreed:

1. to note the content of the report;
2. to note that based on the in-year 2019/20 financial outturn, it is likely that there will be a deficit in 2020/21 and that due to the current pandemic, less job outcomes will be realised during 2020/21 and this will also adversely affect the financial position; and
3. that once the new delivery arrangements are in place in April 2021, under the No One Left Behind (NOLB) policy direction, a detailed review of the affordability of employability service provision across Argyll and Bute will be conducted. This review will need to take into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, associated financial support packages and the flexibility to repurpose the Argyll and Bute Council allocation of Phases 2 and 3 of the NOLB to support economic recovery.

(Ref: Report by Interim Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, dated 29 April 2020, submitted.)

8. SECONDMENT POLICY

Consideration was given to a report presenting a Secondment Policy for approval.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee agreed to approve the Secondment Policy for implementation.

(Ref: Report by Interim Executive Director with responsibility for Customer and Support Services, dated 30 April 2020, submitted.)

9. TEMPORARY DEPARTURE FROM SCHEME FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS

The Committee gave consideration to a report seeking a temporary departure from the Scheme for the establishment of Community Councils in light of the current Covid-19 pandemic to facilitate Community Council's in continuing to fulfil the important role of representing and supporting local communities at this time.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee agreed:

1. a temporary departure from the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils within Argyll and Bute, as outlined at paragraph 3.1 of the report, in relation to Annual General Meetings, Meetings, Decision Making and Membership; and
2. that such departures will be kept under review and any requirement for further or revised measures will be subject to a further report to Members.

(Ref: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support, dated 23 April 2020, submitted.)

10. REMOTE LEARNING AND SQA

A report providing details of how our primary and secondary establishments are delivering learning and teaching through digital resources in response to the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic was considered. An update on current SQA arrangements for all qualifications that were to be undertaken by young people in the 2020 examination diet which has been cancelled due to COVID-19 was also provided.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee agreed to note the contents of the report and attached appendix. The Committee also welcomed the scale of support from parents and pupils with regard to remote learning in the current climate due to Covid-19.

(Ref: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Education, dated 14 April 2020, submitted.)

11. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT TOWN CENTRE CAPITAL FUND - PROJECT UPDATE

The Committee were asked to note the work undertaken on the eleven Town Centre Fund Projects which are supported by the £1.24m Town Centre Capital Funding from Scottish Government for 2019-20.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

(Ref: Report by the Interim Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, dated 30 March 2020, submitted.)

12. PLANNING AND REGULATORY ARRANGEMENTS - COVID-19

The Committee were asked to note the arrangements being put in place for the operation of the functions of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing (PPSL) and the Licensing Board on an interim basis during the response period to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee noted the arrangements for the functions of the PPSL Committee and the Licensing Board on an interim basis during the response period to the Covid-19 pandemic.

(Ref: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support, dated 5 May 2020, submitted.)

The Committee resolved in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the press and public for the following two items of business on the grounds that they were likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 6 & 9 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

E1 13. COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF ABSENCE

The Committee considered a report which advised that in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, Section 35, if a Councillor fails to attend a meeting for a continuous period of 6 months then they cease to be a Councillor unless prior approval to the absence has been taken by Council.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee approved the absence from Council business of a Councillor due to health related issues until 18 December 2020, or until their return to business, whichever is the earlier.

(Ref: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support dated 23 April 2020, submitted)

E2 14. STRATEGIC HOUSING FUND - ASSOCIATED FUNDING REQUEST

Consideration was given to a report outlining a request from Colonsay Community Development Company for additional funding from the Strategic Housing Fund (SHF) in order to enable an affordable housing project in Argyll and Bute.

Decision:

The Business Continuity Committee agreed to the recommendation, as outlined at section 3.1 of the report.

(Ref: Report by Interim Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, dated 14 May 2020, submitted.)