

FC24. Decision Making Arrangements

Council considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which presented proposals for decision making in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and new ways of working. It also presented a programme of meetings for 2021 for consideration by Council.

Council previously agreed to reintroduce its programme of meetings for 2020 with slight amendments to incorporate the operation of the Emergency Executive. Council was now asked to reintroduce the Executives as contained in the draft programme of meetings for the remainder of 2020 which was provided as an appendix to the report.

A draft programme of meetings for 2021 was provided as an appendix to the report, and was based on three weekly meetings of the Executive with one in three meetings being the Education, Children & Young People Executive along with bi-monthly alternating meetings of the Scrutiny Committees.

In addition to the programme of meetings agreed by Council a number of bodies set their own meeting dates. These included the Licensing Board, Community Planning Strategic Board, Integration Joint Board, Falkirk Community Trust Board and Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board.

Further to the formal programme of meetings it was proposed to reserve Thursday afternoons for meetings of policy development panels and scrutiny panels as was done for 2020. This gave consistency in the meeting arrangements for both bodies.

In order to provide resilience to the Council's decision making structure in the event of a second wave of the Covid-19 virus Council was asked to agree that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders, was given authority to reinstate the Emergency Executive and suspend other elements of the decision making structure should the public health situation require it in his opinion. This provision would ensure that the Council was able to protect its communities while maintaining an effective decision making process that involved elected members.

At such a time as the Scottish Government announced that the country was moving into Phase 4 of the route map out of lockdown it would be reasonable to introduce 'blended' meetings. Blended meetings would involve, initially, a small number of members being physically present in a meeting room with the remaining members and most officers attending remotely. When the public health situation allows for this approach to be implemented it was recommended that this was adopted as the default method of conducting committee meetings.

Decision

Council:-

- (1) agreed to revert to the full committee structure;**
- (2) agreed the revised timetable of meetings for the remainder of 2020 with immediate effect;**

- (3) agreed the meeting dates for 2021;**
- (4) agreed to retain remote meetings at present and to introduce blended meetings as the preferred method of conducting committee meetings at Phase 4 of the Route Map for Moving out of Lockdown, and**
- (5) agreed that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders, is given authority to reinstate the Emergency Executive and suspend such elements of the decision making structure that the public health situation requires in his opinion.**