
Report To:	Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee	Date:	2 June 2020
Report By:	Head of Legal & Property Services	Report No:	GM/SL/LP/061/20
Contact Officer:	Gerard Malone	Contact No:	01475 712710
Subject:	Proposals for the Administrative Arrangements in the light of COVID-19: Cycle of Council, Committees, Sub-Committee and Board Meetings to June 2021		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose the administrative arrangements and provisional cycle of Council, Committee, Sub-Committee and Board meetings to June 2021 in the light of the COVID-19 emergency arrangements and the Scottish Government Route Map – Through the Crisis.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 24 March 2020 authorised the suspension of all Council, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings for the duration of the emergency and delegated full powers of all Committees to the Executive Sub-Committee, which has been meeting as an emergency business committee on a fortnightly basis since then.
- 2.2 This report plans for the re-introduction of the usual Council administrative arrangements for its Committee cycle and recognises the intended implementation of different phases in terms of the recently published Scottish Government Route Map – Through the Crisis. Given the uncertainties acknowledged within the Route Map, this report proposes flexibility in approving the future provisional timetable of meetings and requests Elected Members in the coming year to consider an extensive period of on-line or virtual meetings in the interests of public health protection.
- 2.3 The timetable thus proposed is, accordingly, provisional and is dependent on the successful public health outcomes promoted by the Route Map. The arrangements radically alter existing practices for Elected Member participation and makes provision for new ways of working for the Council's judicial tribunals.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Sub-Committee:-

- 3.1 considers the terms of this report;
- 3.2 approves the principles of the revised administrative arrangements for the Council's Committee Cycle 2020/21 together with the provisional dates set out in the timetable (**Appendix 1**);
- 3.3 remits it to the Head of Legal & Property Services to implement the principles of the revised arrangements and to amend and edit the Council's Standing Orders in suitable terms to reflect and support on-line Member participation; and
- 3.4 Approves that until such time as all reasonable public health assurances are able to be made, all meetings of the Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Boards will be held online only.

Gerard Malone
Head of Legal & Property Services

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Executive Sub-Committee has been meeting fortnightly since 7 April 2020 as an emergency business committee with the full powers of the Council's Committees. These meetings provide Elected Members with a formal opportunity for review and scrutiny of all key actions in this period of the emergency.
- 4.2 This report plans for the re-introduction of the usual cycle of Committee meetings for the Council's Committees, Sub-Committees and Boards. On 21 May 2020 the Scottish Government published its Route Map – Through the Crisis and this proposes a phased approach to the lessening of restrictions imposed for the protection of public health. This phasing in the Route Map is necessarily flexible given the uncertainties relative to progress. It remains critical to focus on the safety of the public, and including employees of the Council and Elected Members, in the resumption of "normal" working arrangements and meetings. The public health restrictions of the emergency have affected all forms of gatherings, including the meetings of the Council's Committees, Sub-Committees and Boards. These arrangements have all been held in suspension at this stage of the emergency with the Executive Sub-Committee being the only formal meeting of Elected Members in this period.

5.0 RESUMPTION OF COUNCIL COMMITTEE CYCLE

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Committee, Sub-Committee and Board meetings as set out in the Committee timetable (**Appendix 1**) be approved as provisional dates for meetings. The approval of the provisional timetable will permit Elected Members, Officers and the public to plan diaries for the forthcoming year. The provisional timetable will only be made formal by decision of the Executive Sub-Committee at a time it considers the public health issues are such to justify this resumption of business. It would be intended to resume Committee meetings as from the September cycle but this is a matter that will be formally decided upon by the Executive Sub-Committee.
- 5.2 In the light of continuing uncertainties as to progress of the Route Map, it is essential for Members to reflect upon and to commit to processes of online or virtual meetings for the coming year. Until such time as all reasonable assurances are able to be made, it is proposed that all meetings of the Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Board will be held online.
- 5.3 The above general principle is crucial for purposes of fairness and inclusivity amongst Elected Members as some are within groups in the community that cannot attend meetings because of shielding requirements. Additionally, the spatial restrictions that are necessary in order to achieve current 2 metres social distancing mean that the capacities of available meeting rooms are severely restricted. The capacity, for example, of the Council Chambers in its present configuration permits only a maximum of 8 persons in attendance if social distancing is to be guaranteed. A number of our Members require to be shielded and, in compliance with the current restrictions, are unable to attend formal meetings within the Municipal Buildings. For this purpose, and in recognition of fairness and inclusivity for all Members, it is requested that online participation at Committees be the norm through its video-conferencing platform.
- 5.4 The video-conferencing platform is available to all Elected Members and it is being trialled and used more frequently on a developing day-to-day basis within the Council in order to facilitate meetings. Further tests are in hand with all Elected Members in order to provide training and familiarity with the platform and its means of use during Committees. It is fair to observe that from experience to date Member protocols have very easily been adopted. However, there are some technical issues in respect of audio quality that are receiving attention. Certainly, a conclusion of the more recent tests is that the platform meets all of the requirements of the Council if the vast majority of participants are remote from the Council Chambers. For this reason, it is proposed that the current practice of a significant number of Elected Members attending the Council Chambers be changed so that remote access is utilised and encouraged as the norm. It is suggested that the trials to date can provide Elected Members with the assurances and confidence in the system that is needed and this

will be further supported by the developing of protocols for Member engagement in online meetings (e.g. early log-on to the video-conference, the ease and means of asking of questions and achieving participation at the meetings - by Members raising their hand to indicate onscreen and also by the messaging format - and assurances on the platform's ability to support the provision of relevant information to the meeting by officers and the taking of legal advice through the Committee's legal officer). The platform allows for the necessary privacy in the consideration and discussion of exempt or private items.

- 5.5 It is accepted that Elected Member confidence is necessary in all aspects of online meetings and there will be further trials with Member participation over the course of the summer in order to prepare for the provisional autumn cycle of meetings.

6.0 RESTRICTIONS ON PUBLIC ACCESS TO COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- 6.1 Protocols will also be developed in relation to public access to or recording of meetings. Public access to Committee meetings has been restricted by the terms of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

- 6.2 With commitment to online meetings, it will not be possible to guarantee public access to the meetings set out in the provisional timetable. The health restrictions must apply for the duration of relevant guidance to ensure safety of the public, officers and Elected Members in the conduct of this business through Committees. Accordingly, the ongoing process of the Route Map will be constantly reviewed so that public access can be restored at the earliest opportunity. Pending that, and provided that there is full compliance with any developing legislative requirements, the following actions will be undertaken:-

- (1) all online meetings will be recorded and will be made available through the Inverclyde Council website for purposes of public record for all relevant items and business. The capacity of archives for retention will be monitored and reviewed in order to provide a reasonable and relevant amount of archive material but any capacity of the system will be focused on the relevant up-to-date cycle of meetings;
- (2) press representation at any scheduled meetings will be offered and made available online to local and national representatives if at all possible; and
- (3) Corporate Communications will continue with the practices adopted at the earlier stages of the emergency to summarise and make available for public access and notice the actions from the draft minutes of all Committees and in this way there will be timely reporting of key issues on the prominent Coronavirus page of the Council website.

7.0 QUASI-JUDICIAL TRIBUNALS – MEETINGS OF THE PLANNING BOARD, LOCAL REVIEW BODY AND GENERAL PURPOSES BOARD ETC.

- 7.1 At the early stages of the emergency, the Policy & Resources Committee took the decision to manage the business for all Boards as far as possible but not to suspend meetings. It will be impracticable to postpone Boards further than the September 2020 cycle of meetings, although business is of course being monitored in order to ensure there is no inequity in the provision of these important functions. As the Executive Sub-Committee knows, the Coronavirus Act has made allowances for the continuation of relevant renewals and licences in order to mitigate the effects on applicants or licence holders.

- 7.2 It is proposed that where business requires, the quasi-judicial tribunals of the Council will recommence as from September 2020. These meetings will be conducted online and in compliance with the relaxations prescribed through the various legislative responses to the emergency.

- 7.3 Notwithstanding this, there is a recognition that the formal business of the quasi-judicial tribunals requires formal protocols to be in place to ensure fairness and transparency in all aspects and to minimise the risk of any challenges for any procedural irregularities. These meetings will also require to ensure there is a fairness of access by electronic means to all applicants so that no party is disadvantaged either in putting their case or in putting forward a representation (whether of support or objection).

7.4 Officers will develop these protocols in the period to September and will ensure there is provision from a private and secure location within the Municipal Buildings Complex, Greenock for any applicant (and/or legal representative) so that online participation can take place effectively for those who need it. These steps will require detailed work to be undertaken in meeting arrangements and also in the provision of a secure location within the Council buildings for those applicants who seek such assistance with participation.

8.0 PROPOSED PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS

8.1 The Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee has been meeting fortnightly since 7 April 2020 as an emergency business committee. In the period leading up to the commencement of the provisional timetable, below, the Executive Sub-Committee will be able to review its own schedule and frequency of meetings and be able to consider the date it wishes to cease to meet as an emergency business committee and transfer relevant authority back to the Committees.

8.2 The provisional timetable is based on a cycle of five meetings of Thematic Committees, the Audit Committee, the Police & Fire Scrutiny Committee and the Council. The Planning Board and the General Purposes Board, as Regulatory Committees, have dates set aside each month for the determination of applications and associated business.

8.3 In line with previous years' arrangements, the provisional timetable has been designed to avoid, as far as is practicable, the holding of Council and Committee meetings during school holidays.

8.4 As in previous years, a number of pre-agenda meetings, the August Policy & Resources Committee and a number of Planning and General Purposes Board meetings are scheduled to take place during the school holidays and it is not proposed to make any changes to the dates of these for the following reasons:

- (a) The pre-agenda meetings are an integral part of the Committee process and cannot be altered without changing the dates of the Committee meetings themselves which would have a knock-on effect on the rest of the provisional timetable;
- (b) The additional Policy & Resources Committee held in August is arranged with the specific purpose of dealing with items arising during the recess period which cannot wait until the resumption of the Committee provisional timetable;
- (c) The Planning and General Purposes Boards have a date set aside each month for the determination of applications and associated business and it is necessary to continue to hold these meetings on the dates set out to allow the business to be disposed of.

8.5 The provisional timetable therefore runs as follows:

- (a) The Planning Board will meet on the first Wednesday and the General Purposes Board on the second Wednesday respectively of each month with the exception of July;
- (b) All ordinary meetings of the Thematic Committees (excepting the Education & Communities Committee), the Audit Committee, Local Police & Fire Committee, Planning Board and General Purposes Board will normally be held at 3pm;
- (c) The ordinary meetings of the Council will take place at 4pm.

8.6 It is not proposed this year to schedule a meeting of the Audit Committee in August as it is not anticipated that there will be sufficient business to justify the holding of a meeting at that time. However, as in previous years a meeting of the Audit Committee will be held at the end of June to review the draft annual report and accounts. There therefore remain 5 Audit Committee meetings in the Committee cycle.

8.7 The Inverclyde Integration Joint Board (IJJB) will be asked on 23 June to agree to convene six meetings of the Board and three meetings of the IJB Audit Committee in the period to June 2021 and the proposed dates are included in the provisional timetable.

8.8 The provisional timetable again also includes proposed dates for the Petitions Committee

established by the Council in October 2015 although these meetings will, of course, only be convened when there is relevant business to consider.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The proposals within this report require the consideration of all Elected Members and, if approved, need the commitment for online and remote access rather than attendance in person at Committee and Council meetings. This is a significant change for the Council's operating procedures.
- 9.2 The proposals provide a focus on online participation for the duration of the phased response to the emergency and reflect the phased approach of the Route Map. All steps will require to be continuously reviewed by officers to ensure compliance with legislation throughout the coming year. The provisional timetable provides a structure to reflect the return to more normal working arrangements but pending future assessments and assurances relative to the health of all likely participants whether the public, officers or Members, there will be a strong focus by the Council on online participation only. There will be detailed work undertaken for protocols and means of access for the quasi-judicial tribunals for a re-commencement of meetings at the September 2020 cycle.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Finance

Upgrades in the infrastructure needed for online participation will be met in the short term (until March, 2021) from Council budgets and COVID-19 earmarked reserve. Should Members decide to continue with this approach for Committee meetings there will be ongoing licensing costs. Any necessary items or improved visuals or audio performance will be met in the first instance from Council budgets as practices develop.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

10.2 Legal

The relevant legal issues are addressed within this report. The phased progress of the Route Map means that officers will require to review all of the steps proposed in this report to ensure compliance with the law and any developing legislative requirements. It is a fundamental approach of all Committee meetings to ensure public access and the online participation cannot, in itself, provide that previous level of unhindered transparency and entitlement to attend. All steps will be taken to ensure openness and transparency at all the meetings set out in the provisional timetable.

10.3 Human Resources

There are no Human Resources implications arising from this report.

10.4 Equalities

There are no equalities implications arising from this report. All steps will be taken to ensure that the meetings and their decisions and minutes are available to the public just as soon as practicable.

Equalities

- (a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES (see attached appendix)
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

- (b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO

- (c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO

10.5 Repopulation

There are no repopulation implications arising from this report

11.0 CONSULTATIONS

11.1 This report has been endorsed by the Corporate Management Team.

12.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None.

	August/September 2020				October/November 2020			
Committee/Inverclyde Council	Submission Date - 9am	Pre- Agenda Date	Issue Agenda	Date of Meeting	Submission Date - 9am	Pre- Agenda Date	Issue Agenda	Date of Meeting
Policy & Resources Committee	17 July	Tues 28 July - 12 noon	31 July	11 Aug - 3pm	-	-	-	-
Audit Committee	NO MEETING				25 Sept	Mon 5 Oct - 10am	9 Oct	20 Oct - 3pm
Health & Social Care Committee	24 July	Tues 4 Aug - 3pm	7 Aug	20 Aug - 3pm	25 Sept	Tues 6 Oct - 3pm	9 Oct	22 Oct - 3pm
Environment & Regeneration Committee	31 July	Tues 11 Aug - 1pm	14 Aug	27 Aug - 3pm	2 Oct	Tues 13 Oct - 2pm	16 Oct	29 Oct - 3pm
Education & Communities Committee	7 Aug	Mon 17 Aug - 3pm	21 Aug	1 Sept - 2pm	9 Oct	Tues 20 Oct - 12 noon	23 Oct	3 Nov - 2pm
IJB Audit Committee (Date and time to be agreed by IJB)	28 Aug	Mon 7 Sept - 2.15pm	11 Sept	21 Sept - 12 noon	NO MEETING			
Inverclyde Integration Joint Board (Dates and times to be agreed by IJB)	28 Aug	Mon 7 Sept - 3pm	11 Sept	21 Sept - 2pm	9 Oct	Mon 19 Oct - 3pm	23 Oct	2 Nov - 2pm
Petitions Committee	-	-	-	10 Sept - 3pm	-	-	-	12 Nov - 3pm
Policy & Resources Committee	21 Aug	Tues 1 Sept - 12 noon	4 Sept	15 Sept - 3pm	23 Oct	Tues 3 Nov - 12 noon	6 Nov	17 Nov - 3pm
Local Police & Fire Scrutiny Committee	21 Aug	Mon 31 Aug - 10am	4 Sept	17 Sept - 3pm	23 Oct	Mon 2 Nov - 10am	6 Nov	19 Nov - 3pm
Inverclyde Council	7 Sept	Mon 14 Sept - 2pm	17 Sept	24 Sept - 4pm	16 Nov	Mon 23 Nov - 2pm	26 Nov	3 Dec - 4pm

Committee/Inverclyde Council	January/February 2021				February/March/April 2021			
	Submission Date - 9am	Pre- Agenda Date	Issue Agenda	Date of Meeting	Submission Date - 9am	Pre- Agenda Date	Issue Agenda	Date of Meeting
Audit Committee	27 Nov	Mon 14 Dec - 10am	18 Dec	12 Jan - 3pm	29 Jan	Mon 8 Feb - 10am	12 Feb	23 Feb - 3pm
Health & Social Care Committee	27 Nov	Tues 8 Dec - 3pm	11 Dec	7 Jan - 3pm	29 Jan	Tues 9 Feb - 3pm	12 Feb	25 Feb - 3pm
Environment & Regeneration Committee	4 Dec	Tues 15 Dec - 2pm	18 Dec	14 Jan - 3pm	5 Feb	Tues 16 Feb - 2pm	19 Feb	4 Mar - 3pm
Education & Communities Committee	11 Dec	Tues 5 Jan - 12 noon	8 Jan	19 Jan - 2pm	12 Feb	Mon 22 Feb - 3pm	26 Feb	9 Mar - 2pm
IJB Audit Committee (Dates and times to be agreed by IJB)	18 Dec	Mon 11 Jan - 2.15pm	15 Jan	25 Jan - 1pm	19 Feb	Mon 1 Mar - 2.15pm	5 Mar	16 Mar - 1pm
Inverclyde Integration Joint Board (Dates and times to be agreed by IJB)	18 Dec	Mon 11 Jan - 3pm	15 Jan	25 Jan - 2pm	19 Feb	Mon 1 Mar - 3pm	5 Mar	16 Mar - 2pm
Petitions Committee	-	-	-	28 Jan - 3pm	-	-	-	18 Mar - 3pm
Policy & Resources Committee	8 Jan	Tues 19 Jan - 12 noon	22 Jan	2 Feb - 3pm	26 Feb	Tues 9 Mar - 12 noon	12 Mar	23 Mar - 3pm
Local Police & Fire Scrutiny Committee	8 Jan	Mon 18 Jan - 10am	22 Jan	4 Feb - 3pm	26 Feb	Mon 8 Mar - 10am	12 Mar	25 Mar - 3pm
Inverclyde Council	1 Feb	Mon 8 Feb - 2pm	11 Feb	18 Feb - 4pm	1 Apr	Mon 12 Apr - 2pm	15 Apr	<u>22 Apr - 4pm</u> *

NB As usual, the submission and pre- agenda dates for this cycle have been altered to avoid holding meetings in the week before Christmas and the week between Christmas and New Year.

* Date altered to take account of the school holidays.

	April/May/June 2021			
Committee/Inverclyde Council	Submission Date - 9am	Pre- Agenda Date	Issue Agenda	Date of Meeting
Audit Committee	1 Apr	Mon 12 April - 10am	16 Apr	27 Apr - 3pm
Health & Social Care Committee	1 Apr	Tues 13 April - 3pm	16 Apr	29 Apr - 3pm
Environment & Regeneration Committee	9 Apr	Tues 20 April - 2pm	23 Apr	<u>Tues 4 May - 3pm*</u>
Education & Communities Committee	16 Apr	Mon 26 Apr - 3pm	30 Apr	11 May - 2pm
IJB Audit Committee	NO MEETING			
Inverclyde Integration Joint Board (Date and time to be agreed by IJB)	23 Apr	<u>Tues 4 May - 3pm</u>	7 May	17 May - 2pm
Petitions Committee	-	-	-	20 May - 3pm
Policy & Resources Committee	30 Apr	Tues 11 May - 12 noon	14 May	25 May - 3pm
Local Police & Fire Scrutiny Committee	30 Apr	Mon 10 May - 10am	14 May	27 May - 3pm
Inverclyde Council	24 May	Mon 31 May - 2pm	3 June	10 June - 4pm
Inverclyde Integration Joint Board (Date and time agreed by IJB)	28 May	Mon 7 June - 3pm	11 June	22 June - 2pm
Audit Committee	28 May	Mon 7 June - 10am	11 June	24 June - 3pm

*Date changed from Thursday to avoid clash with Scottish Parliamentary elections.

DRAFT**APPENDIX 1**

PLANNING BOARD			
Submission Date - 9am	Pre- Agenda Date	Issue Agenda	Date of Meeting
20 Aug	n/a	25 Aug	2 Sept - 3pm
24 Sept	n/a	29 Sept	7 Oct - 3pm
22 Oct	n/a	27 Oct	4 Nov - 3pm
19 Nov	n/a	24 Nov	2 Dec - 3pm
10 Dec	n/a	15 Dec	6 Jan - 3pm
21 Jan	n/a	26 Jan	3 Feb - 3pm
18 Feb	n/a	23 Feb	3 Mar - 3pm
25 Mar	n/a	30 Mar	7 Apr - 3pm
22 Apr	n/a	27 Apr	5 May - 3pm
20 May	n/a	25 May	2 June - 3pm

GENERAL PURPOSES BOARD			
Submission Date - 9am	Pre- Agenda Date	Issue Agenda	Date of Meeting
21 Aug	n/a	27 Aug	9 Sept - 3pm
25 Sept	n/a	1 Oct	14 Oct - 3pm
23 Oct	n/a	29 Oct	11 Nov - 3pm
20 Nov	n/a	26 Nov	9 Dec - 3pm
11 Dec	n/a	18 Dec	13 Jan - 3pm
22 Jan	n/a	28 Jan	10 Feb - 3pm
19 Feb	n/a	25 Feb	10 Mar - 3pm
26 Mar	n/a	1 April	14 Apr - 3pm
23 Apr	n/a	29 Apr	12 May - 3pm
21 May	n/a	27 May	9 June - 3pm