
Report To:	Inverclyde Council	Date:	18 February 2021
Report By:	Head of Legal & Property Services	Report No:	GM/LP/030/21
Contact Officer:	Gerard Malone	Contact No:	01475 712710
Subject:	COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Administrative Arrangements – Online Committee Cycle 2021		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report seeks the continuation of the Committee Cycle for 2021 on the basis of expedited business only for the duration of the current COVID-19 emergency as set out in the First Minister's January statement.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Policy & Resources Committee at its special meeting on 7 January 2021 considered a report on the current stage of the COVID-19 emergency and decided that the current cycle of Committee and Board meetings for the Council should continue on the basis of expedited business only and that a report reviewing the position be submitted to the Council at its February 2021 meeting.
- 2.2 The First Minister's statement of 4 January 2021 underlines the current status of the COVID-19 emergency. The concerns specified in that statement clearly parallel the issues confronted by the community from the first days of lockdown in the period from 23 March 2020 and in view of the current status of protection levels, it is entirely appropriate for the Council to continue the expedited reporting arrangements agreed at that meeting.
- 2.3 The administrative arrangements will be reviewed by the Council upon any material alteration to the local protection level.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council approves that the next cycles of Committee and Board meetings continue on the basis of expedited business only until there is a significant reduction in the local protection levels.

Gerard Malone
Head of Legal & Property Services

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The First Minister's statement of 4 January 2021 reflected the severe status of the COVID-19 emergency and clearly parallel the issues confronted by the community from the first days of lockdown last year.
- 4.2 In view of the seriousness of the current situation with transmissibility of COVID 19 and its variants, it is entirely appropriate for the Council to consider its administrative arrangements for all Committee and Board meetings.
- 4.3 At the special meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee on 7 January 2021 it was agreed that the then current cycle of Committee and Board meetings should continue on the basis of expedited business only and that a report reviewing the position be submitted to the Council at its February meeting.
- 4.4 Additionally, the Policy & Resources Committee ensured that relevant delegated powers for operational decisions and for the committing of necessary expenditure from Council budgets was approved in order to aid the speed, through its officers, of Council emergency action and response.
- 4.5 Following upon that decision, officers were enabled to report to the ongoing cycle of Committee and Board meetings in expedited terms and this has significantly assisted all services across the Council in functioning and dealing with pressing matters of urgency arising from the COVID-19 current status of emergency.
- 4.6 The reports that have been submitted to the cycle of Committee meetings have been focused on items that require clear business decision and review by Elected Members. Key items of performance management and progress such as the Council's necessary financial management information and monitoring have been continued with no reduction in essential information to Elected Members. Corporate Directors are aware that Members require to be briefed in full on the whole range of service issues and briefings and technical notes are available for information-only or noting items.

5.0 REVIEW

- 5.1 The current status of the emergency remains at local protection level 4 and although this will be the subject of regular review by the Scottish Government it is not possible, at this time, to determine that there will be a material reduction in protection level.
- 5.2 It is crucial that the Council's governance systems provides Members with assurances relative to their roles in decision-making and scrutiny and review. It is essential that all Elected Members have confidence in the Council's governance system and that the processes are clear and transparent and are an aid to informed decision-making.
- 5.3 As noted by the Policy & Resources Committee at its special meeting, the Council's usual full reporting system involves many officers from across the whole range of Council services to contribute in the submission of comprehensive and accurate reports on many items of ongoing business to relevant Committees and Boards. In the current emergency, the expedited procedures allow a clear focus on those essential items which require decision and this is of substantial assistance in ensuring that officers can spend enough time at the operational level to deliver critical services for the whole community. The expedited system, nevertheless, does not diminish the rigour or accuracy of the information that has been reported to Elected Members for decision or scrutiny: the expedited system allows officers efficiently and effectively to report in full, but focused, terms to their Committees.
- 5.4 Corporate Directors are aware of and can use a whole range of approved mechanisms to ensure that Elected Members have full knowledge of all background issues and they can give effect to this through briefings, technical notes and email updates and communications. The removal of information-only or items that are otherwise only for noting has produced a significant benefit to all officers across the whole range of Council services in the recent

Committee cycle.

- 5.5 It is important to ensure that there is no lack of any financial management information or monitoring information or any other item of critical performance management. All of the reports that have been submitted to Committees focus on these key issues and there is no reduction in any essential information within these expedited reports.
- 5.6 In the above situation, with the current levels of COVID-19 protection, it is recommended that the expedited business-only reports continue for the forthcoming cycles, pending any material change in the local protection level.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Finance

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

6.2 Legal

There are no legal implications other than as noted within this report. The Council's governance systems are robust and the expedited business only format of reports significantly assists Council officers from all services in focusing on operational actions and responses to the COVID emergency.

6.3 Human Resources

There are no HR issues.

6.4 Equalities

There are no equalities issues.

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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

6.5 Repopulation

There are no repopulation issues.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

7.1 The Corporate Management Team endorses this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None.