

**REPORT TO:** East Lothian Council

**MEETING DATE:** 25 August 2020

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

**SUBJECT:** COVID-19 Emergency Recess Business and Arrangements for 2020/21 Committee Session

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To inform the Council of the business undertaken during the COVID-19 Emergency Recess, in line with the decision taken at the Council meeting of 17 March 2020.
- 1.2 To inform Council of the arrangements for meetings taking place during the 2020/21 session.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The Council is requested:
  - to note the business undertaken during the COVID-19 Emergency Recess, as set out in Sections 3.2 to 3.16;
  - to note that, although business continuity arrangements are still in place, the Chief Executive has determined to bring the COVID-19 Emergency Recess to an end as of 17 August 2020 and to re-start Council and committee meetings (see Section 3.17 for further details);
  - to note the proposed arrangements for meetings during the 2020/21 session; and
  - to note that the approved committee schedule for 2020/21 is subject to change.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Since 20 March 2020, the Council has been operating in accordance with the COVID-19 Emergency Recess procedures approved by Council. During that period, there have been regular meetings involving Group Leaders and Cabinet Spokespersons to deal with necessary business.

All reports approved in accordance with these arrangements have been published in the Members' Library, and are summarised in Sections 3.2 to 3.16 below.

**3.2 Taxi and Private Hire Car Testing** (Members' Library Reference 37/20 – April 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) sought approval for a temporary relaxation on the testing procedures for taxi and private hire cars in light of the pressure being experienced by the Council's Vehicle Plant Maintenance Unit (VPMU) as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. This report was approved by the Councillors Currie, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan.

**3.3 Update on 1140 Hours of Early Learning and Childcare** (Members' Library Reference 53/20 – May 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) provided Members with an update on the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of 1140 Hours of Early Learning and Childcare and sought approval to amend the number of admissions throughout the year to Early Learning and Childcare settings. This report was approved by Councillors Akhtar, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan.

**3.4 Corporate Risk Register 2020** (Members' Library Reference 54/20 – May 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) sought approval of the Risk Register for 2020. This report was approved by Councillors Currie, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan.

**3.5 Cockenzie Power Station Site – High-level Optioneering Study into the Creation of a Cruise/Port-related Facility** (Members' Library Reference 55/20 – May 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Chief Executive advised of the high-level optioneering study into the creation of a cruise/port-related facility on the former Cockenzie Power Station site and sought approval to engage with the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, and senior civil servants, to seek clarity on the potential for the development of cruise and port-related infrastructure at Cockenzie. This report was approved by Councillors Currie, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan.

**3.6 East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 – Design Standards for New Housing Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance** (Members' Library Reference 56/20 – May 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnership and Community Services) noted the results of the public consultation on the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance: Design Standards for New Housing Areas, and sought approval of the final draft Supplementary Planning Guidance: Design Standards for New Housing Areas. This report was approved by Councillors Currie, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan.

**3.7 Draft ClimatEvolution Vision and Action Plan** (Members' Library Reference 57/20 – May 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) sought approval to carry out a public consultation on the Draft ClimatEvolution Zone Vision and Action Plan and, following consideration of consultation responses and any changes to the document arising following the consultation, to adopt it by the Council as non-statutory supplementary planning guidance. This report was approved by Councillors Currie, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan.

**3.8 Common Good Funds – Budget Development 2020-23** (Members' Library Reference 60/20 – May 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) noted the financial implications and ongoing risks relating to COVID-19 on the Common Good Funds, and sought approval of the budgets for the Dunbar, Haddington, Musselburgh and North Berwick Common Good Fund for 2020/21, and indicative budgets for 2021-2023. This report was approved by Councillors Currie, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan.

**3.9 COVID-19 Financial Management Update** (Members' Library Reference 61/20 – May 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) provided an update on the financial implications for the Council relating to the COVID-19 outbreak, including details on the package of financial support provided by the Scottish Government to support the COVID-19 outbreak, the emerging financial implications and pressures for the Council relating to the COVID-19 outbreak, the response from the Council to date, and the process for preparing the 2019/20 consolidated financial position. This report was noted by Councillors Currie, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan.

**3.10 Procurement of an Operator for Musselburgh Racecourse** (Members' Library Reference 62/20 – May 2020 Bulletin)

A private report submitted by the Chief Executive advised of the current position regarding the procurement process to appoint a third-party operator for Musselburgh Racecourse, and sought approval to finalise the contract and agree to COVID-19 relaxation measures. This report was approved by Councillors Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan (with Councillor Currie abstaining).

**3.11 Local Policing Plan** (Members' Library Reference 72/20 – June 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by Police Scotland (per the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services)) sought approval of the Local Policing Plan 2020-23. This report was approved by Councillors Currie, Goodfellow, Hampshire and Henderson.

**3.12 2019/20 End-of-Year Financial Review** (Members' Library Reference 73/20 – June 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) informed Members of the 2019/20 financial performance against approved budgets, including the impact of various non-recurring benefits, the impact on planned reserves, and the Council's Financial Strategy. This report was noted by Councillors Currie, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan.

**3.13 Changes to Standing Orders – Remote Participation in Council and Committee Meetings** (Members' Library Reference 74/20 – June 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) sought approval of changes to Standing Orders to allow Members to participate remotely in meetings of the Council, Committees and Sub-Committees. This report was approved by Councillors Currie, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan.

**3.14 Draft 2019/20 Financial Accounts** (Members' Library Reference 75/20 – June 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) noted the draft annual accounts and key results for 2019/20, and sought approval to submit the draft annual accounts to External Audit prior to the statutory deadline of 30 June 2020 (authorising the Chief Finance Officer to make any required late changes to the unaudited financial statements prior to submission). This report was approved by Councillors Hampshire, Henderson, McLennan and McMillan.

**3.15 Applications for Common Good Funding** (Members' Library Reference 87/20 – August 2020 Bulletin)

A private report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) sought approval of two applications for funding to Musselburgh Common Good Committee and one application for funding to Haddington Common Good Committee. Musselburgh Rugby Football Club was awarded funding of £50,000 (subject to conditions being met), Musselburgh Athletic Football Club was awarded funding of £9,300, and Blooming Haddington was awarded funding of £5,000. This report was approved by Councillors Bruce, Currie, Hampshire and McMillan.

**3.16 Ladies Scottish Open 2020 Exemption Order** (Members' Library Reference 89/20 – August 2020 Bulletin)

A report submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) sought approval to authorise the making of The East Lothian Council (Ladies Scottish Open, The Renaissance Club) (Exemption) Order 2020 in order to exclude a certain area (as set out in the plan attached to the Order) from public rights of access in terms of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 for the duration of the Ladies Scottish Open Golf Tournament (00.01 hours on 13 August 2020 to 23.59 hours on 17 August 2020, unless revoked earlier). This report was approved by Councillors Bruce, Currie, Goodfellow and Innes.

## **Arrangements for Meetings, 2020/21 Committee Session**

- 3.17 The report to Council on 17 March 2020 on the COVID-19 Emergency Recess Procedures stated that it would be for the Chief Executive to decide when to end the Emergency Recess. Although the Council remains very much in COVID-19 crisis response mode, consistent with national advice in relation to the Scottish Government Route Map, significant progress has been made towards restoring various Council services, including extending initial governance and decision-making arrangements established in March. Despite business continuity arrangements still being in place, the Chief Executive has indicated that the Council is now in a position to bring the Emergency Recess to an end (as of 17 August) and re-start Council and committee meetings, albeit with meetings taking place remotely. It should be noted, however, that the Planning Committee meeting of 18 August and Local Review Body meeting of 20 August will be held under the specific provisions agreed as part of the Emergency Recess arrangements, as those meetings were called prior to the Emergency Recess being brought to an end. During the recess period, the procurement of a new remote meeting facility, 'Public-i Connect Remote' was undertaken. This facility will be used as the platform for hosting Council and committee meetings until such times as physical meetings can resume safely. Public meetings will be webcast live through Connect Remote and the recordings will be available for six months following the meeting.
- 3.18 Members are asked to note that there may be some changes to the approved committee schedule for 2020/21, with possible reductions in meetings for some committees. Given that the Council remains in COVID-19 crisis response mode, the Chief Executive may use her existing powers to call additional/emergency meetings of the Council to deal with necessary business. Members will be kept informed of any changes to the approved schedule of meetings.

## **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 As outlined in the submitted reports specified in Section 3.

## **5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

## **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Financial – As outlined in the submitted reports specified in Section 3.

As regards the costs associated with the Connect Remote system, it is estimated that the annual cost of using the system for public meetings could be in the region of £22,500 (which includes the creation of an ELC-branded micro-site, training for users, testing and technical support, and

broadcast meeting time). The costs will be recorded as COVID-19 related and, along with other such costs, it is hoped this will attract government funding support. Efforts will be made to accommodate ongoing costs thereafter within the budget for the People & Governance Service and removing production of hard copy papers.

- 6.2 Personnel – the introduction of a remote meeting facility is likely to impact on the Committee Team resource, particularly during the initial period of operation and for meetings with large numbers of participants. Resources within that team will need to be prioritised to deliver the changes and additional resources allocated where possible.
- 6.3 Other – As outlined in the submitted reports specified in Section 3.

## **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 East Lothian Standing Orders
- 7.2 Report to East Lothian Council, 17 March 2020 – COVID-19 Emergency Recess Procedures
- 7.3 Report to Members’ Library – Procurement of Digital Meetings System (Members’ Library Ref: 79/20 – July 2020 Bulletin)

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