

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTES of Meeting of the SCOTTISH
COUNCIL held remotely by Microsoft Teams
on Thursday, 30 July, 2020 at 10.00 am

Present:- Councillors D. Parker (Convener), S. Aitchison, A. Anderson, H. Anderson, J. Brown, S. Bell, K. Chapman, G. Edgar, J. A. Fullarton, J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton, S. Hamilton, S. Haslam, E. Jardine, H. Laing, S. Marshall, W. McAteer, T. Miers, D. Moffat, S. Mountford, C. Ramage, N. Richards, E. Robson, M. Rowley, H. Scott, S. Scott, E. Small, R. Tatler, E. Thornton-Nicol, G. Turnbull and T. Weatherston

Apologies:- Councillors D. Paterson

Absent:- Councillors

In Attendance:- Executive Director - Corporate Improvement and Economy, Executive Director - Finance and Regulatory, Service Director HR & Communications, Chief Legal Officer, Clerk to the Council.

1. **STANDING ORDERS**

- 1.1 With reference to paragraph 9 of the Minute of 25 June 2020, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Executive proposing amendments to the Council's Standing Orders in light of changes to the impact of the Coronavirus outbreak. The report explained that on 26 March 2020 the Council had recognised the need to take steps to reduce the risk to its Members, staff and citizens of transmitting or contracting Coronavirus (Covid-19). It had therefore been agreed to suspend formal meetings of the Council whereby Members and officers previously gathered together in person, and to replace such formal face to face meetings with meetings held remotely to minimise the risk of infection. In order to ensure the Council was still able to effectively exercise its essential functions, an interim decision-making process was also introduced and, to implement that process, some additions were made to Standing Orders. This included specific emergency powers decisions for the Chief Executive, in light of the Covid outbreak. On 25 June 2020, a further report was approved by Council to amend Standing Orders to ensure they reflected the operational practice that had developed as a result of the experience gained in the operation of remote committees.
- 1.2 Scottish Borders Council had now been able to hold a variety of formal meetings of Council and committees remotely. In light of that positive experience, it was recognised that Council had the ability to perform its functions appropriately in this way, and consequently the additional interim emergency decision making powers which were added as Standing Order 49(a)(ii) on 26 March 2020 were no longer necessary. This report therefore sought to remove that Standing Order as of 10 August 2020, the day that schools were currently anticipated to return to full operation. It was recognised that the threat from Coronavirus, although diminished, still continued, and consequently that meetings would still have to be held remotely to comply with Covid legislation and guidance in Scotland. It was therefore proposed to vary Standing Order 49(a)(iii) to apply it to all formal meetings which took place while that continued to be the position, and, that this provision should also apply to any future meetings should there be a public health or safety reason to do so. Any remote meetings would also be live streamed to public and press. Officers would also look at the potential for holding "blended" meetings in future, whereby some Councillors would be able to join a meeting remotely and a further report would be brought to Council for consideration once an appropriate technical solution to facilitate blended meetings had been scoped and costed.

- 1.3 Councillor Haslam, in moving approval of the report, commented on how tough the last 5 months had been and paid tribute to both officers and the community for their support during this time and hoped that many of the new ways of working would continue. Councillor Bell seconded the Motion and also expressed his thanks to communities for their support and while he was confident things would improve there was still a degree of uncertainty and he hoped that any decision making backlogs could be resolved. The Convener also thanked staff and reminded Members that a number of staff were still seconded to other areas so some services would still be impacted.

**DECISION
AGREED:-**

- (a) that as of 10 August 2020 to:-**

- (i) revoke Standing Order Nos. 49(a)(ii) and (iv);**
- (ii) retain and amend Standing Order 49(a)(iii) to read:**

“Where the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Convener or Chair of the Committee, considers it appropriate, and with the reason being recorded in the Minute, meetings of Council and its committees may be conducted in the following manner:

- The Chair or Convener of the meeting (whom failing their Deputy) shall direct that the meeting will take place in accordance with Section 43 of the 2003 Act;**
- Elected Members who are to join the meeting will do so using on line video or audio functionality;**
- The meeting will otherwise be called in the usual manner, with the agenda and papers published on the Council website;**
- The meeting will be available to view via a livestream;**
- A minute of the meeting will be taken and published on the Council website”**

- (iii) re-number Standing Order 49(a) accordingly; and**

- (b) to receive a further report from the Chief Executive in due course on the feasibility of using technology for holding “blended” meetings, whereby some Councillors are able to join a meeting remotely, and the meeting itself can be live-streamed.**

The meeting concluded at 10.15 am