

## East Renfrewshire Culture & Leisure Ltd

(A company which is a Scottish Charity (Scottish Charity Number SC0045726) incorporated in Scotland under the Companies Act with company number SC486489)

### Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Trustees of East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Ltd.

#### Conference Call, on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020 at 4pm

**Present:** Professor Grant Jarvie (Chair) (GJ)  
Andrew Allan (AA)  
Rob Crusher (RC)  
Provost Jim Fletcher (JF)  
Councillor Barbara Grant (BG)  
Steven Larkin (SL)  
Councillor Colm Merrick (CM)  
Councillor Paul O’Kane (PO)  
Dr Noreen Siddiqui (NS)

**Attending:** Anthony McReavy, Chief Executive (AMcR)  
Karen Storie, Director of Finance and Commercial Services (KS)  
Moira McFadden, Head of Communities and Arts (MMF)  
Robert Hammond, Head of Operations (RH)  
Ian Pye, Head of Sports & Physical Activity (IP)  
Scott Simpson, Head of Library and Information Services (SS)  
Jude Smith, Head of Marketing (JS)  
Angela Burgess (minute taker) (AB)

#### 1. Welcome & Introductions

The chair welcomed everyone and thanked them for joining this conference call during the current COVID 19 circumstances and hoped everyone was safe and well.

#### 2. Order of meeting

GJ invited members of the SMT to lead a discussion about recent events and the Trust’s response, and asked board members to keep questions to the end to avoid interruptions. All agreed.

#### 3. Board Update

AMcR began by noting that the meeting was quorate and therefore we would count this meeting as a Board Meeting for the purposes of Governance and External Audit. The SMT would update on what has happened since the organisation closed on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 following Government guidelines. Also to discuss what Trust staff have been involved in working with external organisations including East Renfrewshire Council, Health and Social Care Partnership to support the response to Covid-19, and the in support of the Education department’s support for key the children of key workers and vulnerable children.

#### **4. Online Offer**

JS gave an overview on the online and customer engagement that has been ongoing with customers since we closed. A variety of platforms are being used to communicate and offer online classes to include fitness and wellbeing, customer services and fun children's activities.

There is a timetable of activities for a variety of customer groups including Live Active and Vitality groups. These customers have stressed how much they value these classes as they can continue to see the instructor and friends they usually meet at the classes.

Our most engaging posts are pre-recorded videos and Facebook live fitness classes and Bookbug sessions and the feedback from parents is very positive and the number of views has increased significantly.

We have had positive engagement in other areas including sports challenges, sharing online art exhibitions, sharing online theatre performances with National Theatre Live, Family History top tips and digital library resources.

#### **5. Digital Library Services**

SS spoke of the digital library provision for library users. We use Borrowbox platform for ebooks and eAudio and the demand for titles has outstripped the supply. We are also using a new platform, Press Reader, for Digital Newspapers and this allows 7000 titles of newspapers and magazines from across the world. Issues read has increased to over 21,000.

As customers cannot return books all loans have been extended and any fines waived.

Library staff have also given digital support to customers over the phone when required.

#### **6. Finance**

##### **Customer Bookings**

KS explained that customers who had any term-time classes booked had received notification that the booking and payment would be carried forward to when we restart.

Customers have received refunds for one off classes and holiday programmes.

Where possible theatre performances have been rescheduled and customer bookings transferred. If performances have been cancelled refunds have been given.

##### **Direct Debits**

Fitness memberships and swimming lesson DDs have been suspended. Initially there was a jump in DD cancellations but, since suspension, the numbers that are being cancelled are relatively small.

##### **Financial impact**

The estimated cost to 2019/20 of COVID-19 (ex Furlough rebate) is in the region of £180k This is due to refunds, re-scheduling classes / theatre bookings until 20/21 etc and includes estimated loss of income in the last 2 weeks of March.

## **Cashflow**

At present we have c£2m cash in the bank, including the ERC Q1 2020/21 service fee which is paid quarterly in advance, providing funds to settle payroll and on-going operating expenses in the short term.

A furlough claim will be submitted to HMRC to minimise the current payroll impact.

A high level cashflow forecast will be produced once a draft balance sheet is available, which should be within the next couple of weeks.

## **7. Venues and Community Facilities**

RH gave an overview of procedures that are happening within venues and community facilities.

Deep cleaning has been taking place in all facilities which will quicken our recovery when we reopen. Pool plant maintenance has been reduced to minimum circulation levels and background heating. Legionella and compliance activities are continuing. External Compliance and Insurance testing is continuing. Full and regular building checks of community facilities – minimum 1 per week – are continuing.

Access and support is being provided to external partners who require access to community facilities.

Operational risk assessments are being undertaken.

## **8. Furlough**

AMcR stated that some staff have been working from home and if this was not possible staff were able to undertake online training, but there is a limit to how much online training can reasonably be undertaken.

The Trust started to look at furloughing staff, and considering:

- Eligibility
- Type of staff
- Specific external funding
- Operational tasks
- Staff requests to continue working
- Staff proximity to places of work so as to minimise risks through travel

Discussions had taken place with unions to make sure proposals have been well thought out and that a joint agreement was in place.

Managers have been calling staff today to inform them if they are being furloughed or not and to explain they will receive this in writing explaining what this means, as well as a list of 'Frequently Asked Questions'.

ERCLT will claim 80% of salaries from the Government and make up the 20% themselves therefore staff will still receive 100% of salaries including benefits.

AMcR stated that this is a work in progress and more staff may need to be furloughed at a later date.

## **Volunteering**

ERCLT have had a large number of staff volunteering to assist ERC and HSCP. At present we have 14 staff working on various tasks including distributing PPE and supporting at the Humanitarian Hub. They have agreed to continue to do this even if furloughed. Other staff may be called on to assist if required although the number of people who have volunteered in East Renfrewshire was far greater than required.

## **Sickness/Self Isolation**

If any member of staff had health issues that classed them as Shielded they were furloughed previously.

## **9. CRMT**

### *Humanitarian Centres*

RH spoke of the work being carried out at the Humanitarian Hub at Barrhead High School.

- Quickly had work stream and have been running for 4 weeks for emergency food distribution, deliveries and dispatch of food parcels
- Operations team led development of Barrhead High School site as Humanitarian Centre and operational plans.
- At first there were 100 people per week requiring emergency food parcels. Now at 250/300 per week with possibility of reaching 1000 as people start to lose jobs etc.
- ERCLT have staff volunteering at present and will continue to do so even if furloughed.

### *ERC Support*

MMF gave details of other areas staff have been involved during this time. ERCLT have been supporting other areas of ERC and HSCP including procurement, PPE as well as front line support at the Humanitarian Centre.

Wider projects included assisting with the Shielding Project with business support staff contacting around 250 vulnerable people. Staff showed they were compassionate and caring and feedback from people receiving the calls was very positive and they welcomed the calls.

Eastwood House had been available to CHCP for training new carers and risk assessments for staff and customers have been in place.

Background work has also been put in place in the event Carmichael Hall was required if an unusually high number of deaths occurred within East Renfrewshire – thankfully this has not been needed.

The staff have been very reliable and it is greatly appreciated.

## **10. Education Support Hubs (for children of key workers and vulnerable children)**

### **School Hubs**

IP explained that ERCL is supporting all 6 East Renfrewshire School Hubs.

Active Schools and Sports Development teams have been providing 31 hours per week of sport and physical activity. That is a minimum of 2 hours per child per week – similar to PE classes in schools. During lock down some children may not get much outdoor exercise therefore most of our activities are outdoors.

### **Spring Holiday Hubs**

ERCL provided the Spring Holiday Camps in Eastwood High and Carlibar Primary during the school holiday period in April.

Activities included sports, fitness, arts, drama and digital learning and all sections of the trust were involved in organising these activities

Over 2 weeks we had 584 children attend these sessions with 66 members of staff involved in running the camps.

Although staff have experience in running holiday camps these had challenges never encountered before due to social distancing. We had a robust model in place with groups no larger than 10 children with no interaction with other groups. The groups would rotate round each activity giving them a variety of things to do.

## **11. Questions and Observations from Board Members**

Overall all the Board members provided thanks to the ERCLT team for continued contribution during these difficult times, both at home and work.

Recognition was also made in relation to the following:

- Marketing effort and in particular, the ongoing importance of continuing to engage with our customers
- Increased online content across the services, including fitness classes and Bookbug sessions
- The speed in which the Trust has responded to a change in the way to deliver services / content in an effort to retain customers. This was also noted in relation to suspending current memberships which aims to retain customers longer term.
- Customer communications issued early as events unfolded to keep them informed

PO also stated that all staff have gone above and beyond what was required during this challenging time and he would like to thank everyone on behalf of the Council.

## *People*

Discussions took place in relation to the decision to furlough staff, summarised as follows:

The Board supported the ERCLT decision of “topping up” furloughed staff’s salaries to 100%. AMcR stated that as the Employer it is the Trusts responsibility and the Trust will make the claim to HMRC in respect of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). AMcR noted that the CEO of the Council had stressed they will stand by the Trust and any issues we encounter will be supported by them. This was reiterated by PO at the meeting.

AMcR provided an overview of the process of furloughing the staff, and in particular how the member of staff was advised including what support was available to them through FAQs and details on how to contact either the Trust or HR for support.

AMcR advised some staff have been furlough retrospectively and others are being given a date when it will start. Managers have looked at their staff individually depending on their roles within the organisation.

AMcR said this continues to be moving and evolving. HR, Health & Safety & Appeals Committee meeting has been scheduled to discuss the impact on staff with either sickness or absence or health & safety issues while on furlough.

## *Financial*

Discussions took place in relation to the financial impact of Covid19:

The financial impact of Covid19 has impeded the Trust’s ability to generate earned income, which represents 50% of its overall income (£4.5m), which will significantly deteriorate the cash position. As ERC is the single member company of the Trust, the overall liability sits with the Council, however, working capital requires to be managed effectively, including timing of receipts from ERC for the quarterly service fees as well as a timely claim for the CJRS scheme.

There will be the need to apply to ERC for financial support, which they are aware of and engagement is ongoing with the Council in this respect. All local authorities will be speaking to COSLA regarding impact.

## *Other*

Consideration was to be given to the following:

Engagement with ERC in respect of the Scottish Government cycle paths grant, with East Renfrewshire potentially receiving a portion around £170k. AMcR advised that he would speak to the Director of Environment to ensure the Trust is kept aware of the proposals.

As part of the recovery plan it might be worth looking at Virtual Fitness classes as it may be a different environment when we return.

Provide an update to the Risk Register in light of current events.

## **AOB**

Future dates will be set for FAR and Board meetings and communicated accordingly.

GJ closed the meeting with a few observations:

Reiterated that he was proud of all staff

We were “Stronger together than apart”

Thanked attendees for the presentation and all comments

AMcR followed this by giving thanks to the Senior Management team who have been very flexible and creative to the challenges faced. A fantastic effort from all SMT who have been right at the front of all of this.

## **Matters Arising**

<b>Action</b>	<b>By</b>
Review dates for FAR and Board and communicate	KS
Engagement with ERC in respect of the Scottish Government cycle paths grant	AMcR
As part of the recovery plan consideration of operating Virtual Fitness classes	AMcR
Review and update the Risk Register	AMcR