

**To:               Emergencies Board**

**On:               20 March 2020**

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**Report by:    Chief Executive**

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**Heading:      Update on Covid-19**

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## **1.     Background**

- 1.1    This report provides an overview of the Council's current preparations and response to the ongoing international Coronavirus, Covid-19 pandemic.
  - 1.2    Coronavirus is a type of virus, with this one named Covid-19. Typical symptoms include fever and a cough. Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people and those with long term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. As Covid-19 is new, there is no vaccine or immunity within the community. Currently the approach being taken to manage the outbreak is to reduce the speed at which people become infected within the community, giving time for the NHS and other response services to prepare for and manage the numbers of people that will require assistance and health care.
  - 1.3    This is a rapidly changing situation which is being monitored carefully by the World Health Organisation, UK and Scottish Governments, NHS and local authorities. Regular updates are being provided by NHS Scotland and Health Protection Scotland and can be found at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>
  - 1.4    The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared a global pandemic with cases rising across the world, including the UK and Scotland on a daily basis. The UK Government has identified 4 phases of tackling the virus (Contain / Delay / Research / Mitigate) Currently the UK is now in the delay phase.
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## **2. Recommendations**

### **2.1 It is recommended that the Emergencies Board:**

- (a) Notes the current national and local situation with regards to Covid-19 and the current plans and guidance from both the UK and Scottish Governments.
  - (b) Notes the current position and mitigation measures being put in place by the Council, including the prioritisation of services as highlighted in Appendix 1 and latest online information on service changes highlighted in Appendix 2 to this report.
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## **3. National Situation**

3.1 The UK Government continue to monitor the situation and due to the rapidly developing picture, the Prime Minister now updates the UK government and public on a daily basis. Each update requires changes to the Renfrewshire Council approach and mitigation when released.

3.2 Currently there are 2626 confirmed cases and 108 deaths across the UK, with 266 confirmed cases and 6 deaths in Scotland. Of these 57 cases are within the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board Area.

3.3 The current advice is that:

- Anyone who is suffering from a new, persistent dry cough and / or fever should self-isolate at home for 7 days
- All members of the same household must also self-isolate for 14 days;
- They should only call NHS or GP's if their symptoms get worse and cause concern
- From Monday 16 March 2020, in Scotland, mass gatherings of over 500 people were cancelled.
- Visits to care homes should be restricted to immediate family and essential care providers
- Increased social distancing is advised for all – avoid pubs, clubs, gatherings and unnecessary travel
- Everyone should expect the rate of cases to escalate dramatically

3.4 Vulnerable people – those over 70 or anyone under 70 with an underlying health condition, should take steps to self - isolate for a period of around 12 weeks. This includes anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds, including:  
Chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis; chronic heart disease, such as heart failure; chronic kidney disease; chronic liver disease, such as

hepatitis; chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy; diabetes; problems with your spleen - for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed; a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy and/or being seriously overweight (a BMI of 40 or above). To support this, working from home should be encouraged where possible and begin as soon as possible

- 3.5 On 18 March the Scottish Government announced a series of financial measures to support businesses and communities. The details on how this funding will be distributed - how much will come to local government directly, and how much to the Renfrewshire area are still to be developed. The financial measures announced are summarised below:

#### Non-Domestic Rates

- 1-year rates holiday (100% relief) for all retail, hospitality and leisure properties, from April.
- 1.6% NDR relief for all properties across Scotland, from April.
- A new Local Government Finance Order to approve the NDR estimate reduction of £1bn and an increase in General Revenue Grant of £1bn.

#### Grants to businesses

- £10k grant for all businesses qualifying for Small Business Bonus Scheme, eligible for rural relief or nurseries relief, from April.
- £25k grant for businesses in hospitality sector for Rateable Values between £18,000 and £51,000 from April.
- Total cost: £1.2bn with 120,000 businesses eligible.
- Councils will administer the grants and they will not be application based.

#### Support to Communities

One-off £350m package of measures:

- £50m hardship fund for Local Government with full flexibility.
- £45m additional funding for Scottish Welfare Fund, administered by Local Government for Community Care and Crisis Grants. This is in addition to the current £35m annual funding.
- £50m for increased eligibility for social security benefits and increased cost to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- £70m food fund for organisations to address food insecurity, especially for older people, and families who may not be able to rely on free school meals, to be delivered through Councils.
- £50m wellbeing fund for 3rd sector partners, provided directly to third sector.
- £40m supporting communities fund to address social isolation, distancing etc, to go to community groups.

- £20m for a Third Sector Resilience Fund, to address business health of third sector organisations.
- £25m reserve held by Scottish Government.

3.6 Also, on Wednesday 18 March 2020, it was advised that schools in Scotland would close on Friday 20 March 2020. The First Minister advised that it should be expected that schools may not re-open as normal until after the summer recess in August 2020. This is a rapidly evolving position and a further verbal update on the most current position will be provided at the Board Meeting.

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#### **4. Local Situation**

4.1 Renfrewshire Council is currently following all guidance from both the UK and Scottish Governments.

- The Council's Emergency Management Team is now meeting twice weekly on a Monday and Thursday and the Corporate Management Team currently meet twice daily to respond to the developing situation.
- The Council's business continuity plans have been reviewed and updated, identifying our most critical services and how we can protect service delivery and support our partners for as long as possible. A list of critical services is attached as Appendix 1 to this briefing.

#### **Mitigation measures in place**

- Enhanced cleaning of Council buildings and surfaces has been introduced – key office and depot buildings, care homes, sheltered accommodation and schools have been prioritised.
- Visitors to the Council's residential care homes are currently being restricted to essential visitors only – medical/care or immediate family members only.
- All non-essential home visits have been cancelled with services now being delivered by telephone or email.
- In line with the most recent government guidance we are now reducing events that bring together groups of people, this has meant the cancellation of the Paisley Food and Drink Festival and British Pipe Band Championships and the suspension or re-provision of a number of non-essential services, groups and activities

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#### **5. Renfrewshire Council Services/Staffing**

5.1 Whilst the numbers are changing and currently increasing, daily, amongst Renfrewshire Council employees there are currently 538 employees self-isolating either because they have symptoms; or because they have other people in their household experiencing symptoms: or because they have

recently returned from a Category 1 country and are following government and health guidance.

5.2 The 538 are split across Services as follows:

<b>Service</b>	<b>Number of employees</b>
Children's Services	330
Finance and Resources	83
Communities, Housing and Planning	14
Environment and Infrastructure	71
Health and Social Care Partnership	35
Chief Executive Services	5
<b>Council Total</b>	<b>538</b>

5.3 Renfrewshire Council has followed UK Government guidance and has been looking at vulnerable/at risk staff who have an underlying health condition as detailed in section 3.4. This has resulted in a significant number of staff now being "shielded from social contact" for a period of time. Where possible, these staff will continue to work from home. In some cases, where they cannot carry out their normal role from home, they are being redeployed onto alternative duties that can be supported through home working. We are currently estimating that there are around 700 staff at risk who will be advised to go home. The overall figures are still being confirmed and we are also identifying how many of these people will be able to continue to work from home and providing the equipment they require to do so.

5.4 The recent decision to close schools will also increase pressure on some employees as they balance work requirements and family commitments and caring responsibilities. The full impact of this is still unclear. Consideration is being given to what support can be provided to assist in this and as many as possible will be supported to continue working from home - either in their own role where practical or fulfilling alternative roles that support priority frontline services. It is likely that these pressures will increase and active consideration is also being given to how we can support parents with child care arrangements that will enable them to continue to work – particularly when they are providing priority frontline services.

### **Renfrewshire Council Public Communications**

5.6 To support public communications, we are sharing and signposting to information from the NHS and Scottish Government:

- **Public website** – [www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/coronavirus), provides the latest guidance for staff and the local community, linking to the latest information on the NHS Inform website
- **Social media** – daily updates @RenCouncil on the latest information from NHS and Scottish Government and council-specific updates
- **Dedicated information line** – from Monday 16 March a phonenumber will be live to provide pre-recorded advice - 0300 300 0333
- **Poster campaign** – public buildings, venues, sheltered housing, care homes, residential homes, schools and nurseries and local businesses
- **Council newsletters** – provide regular updates on the latest advice
- **Schools advice** – advice for parents and carers is being issued through schools and nurseries

5.7 Daily communication is taking place with our Health and Social Care Partnership and Renfrewshire Leisure colleagues to ensure a coordinated approach.

5.8 Public communications are also being directed through local community groups, local Facebook groups, local business organisations, community websites and via our third sector partners.

5.9 All established channels will continue to support information and messages regarding the outbreak and the council's response. The council public website, social media channels and information line will be the main sources of live information for local people. The most up to date on line position in relation to services subject to change has been attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

### **Renfrewshire Council staff communications**

- Managers and staff continue to be briefed daily
- Updated guidance for staff is available on the public website and intranet and links to the latest information on the NHS Inform website
- Information is cascaded weekly to frontline workers
- Public health information posters are in place around council buildings, facilities and fleet.

### **ICT Planning**

5.10 A key resilience measure for the Council is the need to support workforce flexibility. The Council's ICT/Digital resilience is now much better placed to respond to and support demand for large scale flexible / home working across services.

- 5.11 The Council's ICT Infrastructure capacity has been substantially stepped up in preparation and is now able to provide the capability for over 3,000 remote connections to Council systems.
- 5.12 This ensures the Council can facilitate much larger numbers of employees being able to operate effectively without the need to be physically located in a Council office and plugged into the Council network.
- 5.13 Several tests have and continue to be carried out to "volume test" this increased capacity to provide reassurance of the system resilience as well as all relevant officers being encouraged to take flexible ICT kit home every night and regularly test their connections to the Council systems.
- 5.14 At the same time, services have identified officers who fulfil key roles where the ability to maintain access to council systems is a priority and who may be proactively targeted or required to work at home at a future point. In some instance, such officers are not currently enabled with laptops/surface devices and they are currently being prioritised for re-provision of new flexible ICT kit – e.g. the Customer Contact Centre.
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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – although at this stage not quantified, the Council will experience a wide range of significant financial pressures arising from the impact of the pandemic on the population as well as the economic and social disruption caused by the associated restrictions being deployed by national governments. Significant financial pressures will emerge in a wide range of forms from loss of income, exceptional service costs, significant increase in demand for services, the need for additional and new interventions, urgent and immediate support arrangements and services from the Council to help individuals, families and businesses across Renfrewshire as well as the Council's workforce. The Scottish Government has provided a range of immediate funding announcements to provide specific support via local authorities to both individuals and businesses as well as a degree of general funding to assist local authorities in managing immediate financial pressures. Engagement will continue between COSLA and the Scottish Government regarding further funding as the period of emergency extends, however notwithstanding, the Council will experience significant financial impact and disruption that will require it to draw heavily on all its financial reserves and which is likely to take some time to recover.
1. **HR & Organisational Development** – the Council's workforce represents a major part of the local population and as such is being impacted directly by the spread of confirmed cases, but much more significantly by the public health directions for self-isolation given to those displaying symptoms and

those with family members displaying symptoms as well as those in the at risk groups instructed to pro-actively implement strict social distancing arrangements. Full support and communication are being provided to all staff members to ensure they remain fully informed of the developing situation and where appropriate and practical, are being supported to work safely at home and or safely return to active work once recovered or free of recommended self-isolation periods. The impact of these factors will increase exponentially over coming days and weeks and therefore the scale of availability across the Council's workforce will come under unprecedented pressures. Working closely with national government, partners and trade unions the Council will by necessity be required to actively manage and redeploy staffing resources to meet the most critical services over this exception emergency period.

2. **Community/Council Planning –**

Covid-19 will impact on the operations of Council partners and on services to the community. This paper highlights the work being undertaken to mitigate this impact as far as possible and maintain essential services for the safety and wellbeing of the community.

3. **Legal – N/A**

4. **Property/Assets – N/A**

5. **Information Technology** – ICT are working to ensure staff have the capability to work from home wherever possible to reduce social contact in line with government and health guidance.

7. **Equality & Human Rights**

(a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report as the report is for noting only.

8. **Health & Safety** – Advice and guidance is being given to protect the health and safety of employees and service users when carrying out priority services for the Council in line with government and health guidance.

9. **Procurement – N/A**

10. **Risk** – Due to the severity of the global pandemic and Covid-19, there is a risk to the delivery of the services with staff levels being reduced. This is being closely monitored by the Emergency Management Team. Business Continuity Plans have been reviewed and the risk has been added to the Corporate Risk Register.



11. **Privacy Impact** - None.
  12. **COSLA Policy Position** – Not Applicable
  13. **Climate Risk** – Not Applicable
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## **List of Background Papers**

None

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Appendix 1

## **BUSINESS CONTINUITY – PRIORITY SERVICES**

### **Emergency Management Team**

- Strategic Management – Planning, Response and Recovery
- Reporting to Elected Members

### **Chief Executives Service**

- Strategic Procurement Team
- GIS team
- Information for Public, Staff, Elected Members and Other Key Stakeholders
- Emergency Response Duty

### **Children's Services**

- Early learning - Vulnerable Babies /Children 2-5
- Partner Nurseries
- General Schools and Early Years Centres – Riverbrae / Mary Russell
- Senior Phase Exams
- Children's Houses
- Protection of Vulnerable Children at Home
- Foster Care Service
- Kinship Care
- High risk sex offenders

### **Communities, Housing and Planning**

- Sheltered Housing
- Homeless Services

- Concierge and Caretaking service
- Housing allocations
- Emergency repairs
- Building Standards – dangerous buildings
- Environmental Health – Port Health
- Trading standards – airport duties
- CCTV monitoring
- Out of hours call handling
- Civil Contingencies

### **Environment and Infrastructure**

- Burial Service – Both Admin & Lair Management
- Building Cleaning
- Street Cleaning – Litter Bin Emptying & sweeping of priority areas
- Emergency Housing & Public Building Repairs
- Waste Collections
- Emergency Response – Weather/Traffic Management & Road Defects
- Vehicle Maintenance – vehicles for Priority Services
- Drivers – to support service priorities & new service requirements
- Feeding

### **Finance and Resources**

#### **Maintaining Customer Contact and Support to Key Services**

- Customer Ops Centre - Death registration, emergency housing repair emergency environmental, reception, SWF payments
- Asert - Mental health referrals and hospital discharges
- Building Services Planners - Emergency repairs to council houses
- Children's Services First Response

#### **Maintaining Cashflow to Pay Suppliers, Benefit Claimants and Employees**

- Payroll and employee services
- Invoice Payments including Community Team to ensure suppliers cashflow protected including providers for care at home services.
- Treasury and Revenues & Benefit Functions to ensure the Council's cashflow, ability to make payments and ability to make payments same day e.g. Housing Benefit Payments and SWF crisis payments

#### **Maintaining Support to Organisation**

- ICT Support
- Recruitment (support priority vacancies – e.g. care vacancies)
- Human Resources – monitoring and advice

### **Maintaining Council Resources & Cashflow**

- Business Team - New liabilities, direct debit runs for NDR and housing and RPA needs to run for Housing.
- Council Tax - Make sure liabilities are correct and the Direct debit operates to maintain council income flow

### **Health and Social Care Partnership**

- Frontline Delivery
- Care at Home\*
- Care Homes\*
- District Nursing
- Telecare/Community Alarms
- Community Meals
- Adult Support and Protection

(\*includes external care at home and care homes)

### **Renfrewshire Leisure**

- Johnstone Town Hall for RC Registrar services
- Finance and banking activities
- IT services (in conjunction with RC)
- Marketing and sales – managing comms and cancellations
- Asset team for security and urgent repairs



## On-line Council service updates – changes due to Coronavirus

Last updated: [       ] Thursday 19 March 2020

This page provides details of any changes to Council services as we follow national guidance to manage the impact of Coronavirus. Please visit the public advice on Coronavirus webpage for the steps you can take to support this.

### Customer Service

Wherever possible, customers are asked to contact us by phone on 0300 300 0300 or by email to [customerservices.contact@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices.contact@renfrewshire.gov.uk).

Our Customer Service centres in Paisley, Johnstone and Renfrew are currently open, with social distancing measures in place.

Enquiries relating to Council Tax, rent payments for Council tenancies and Blue Badge applications are not available at the customer service centres. Customers can complete these by telephone to 0300 300 0300 or online at [MyAccount](#).

### Health and Social Care

Details of any changes to health and social care services, including social work, will be outlined on a Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership webpage, with the link added here today.

### Benefits, money and debt advice

Advice Works – which provides financial advice, is now only available by phone to 0300 300 1238.

Anyone with Universal Credit enquiries should call 0800 328 5644, Textphone: 0800 328 1344 or visit [Relay BT](#) if you cannot hear or speak on the phone. Support is not available from Renfrewshire libraries as these are now closed.

### Registering births, deaths and marriages

From Monday 23 March, registration services are not available in Renfrew. Registration services are currently available at Renfrewshire House and Johnstone Town Hall.

### Business support

A range of business support is being put in place by the Scottish and UK Governments. To find out more about what is available, and for business advice and guidance, contact the Council's Business Development and Business Gateway team on 0141 530 2406 or by email to [invest@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:invest@renfrewshire.gov.uk).

The Scottish Government has set up a helpline for Scottish businesses and event organisers to provide them with tailored advice on coronavirus. The helpline, 0300 303 0660, is open 8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday.

Information is available online at: [Find Business Support](#)

Our business support hub InCube, 27 High St, Paisley, is now closed. All workshops and training events have been cancelled. The InCube Shop on 9B Gilmour St, Paisley is closed until further notice. Customers can visit the [InCube Shop Facebook](#) page for details on how to buy each retailer's products.

## Jobs and employability

Employment support is available by calling Invest in Renfrewshire on 0300 300 1180 or by email to [invest@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:invest@renfrewshire.gov.uk).

Our jobs and employability hub at the Russell Institute, Paisley is closed from Friday 20 March 2020 and all related training and courses have been cancelled.

## Schools and nurseries

The First Minister announced schools will be closed at the end of this week with further guidance to be provided by the Deputy First Minister today (19 Mar) which we will follow.

Detailed information and guidance will be published here in due course.

We will ensure continued support for young people preparing for exams, and children and families who are affected, and will provide more information as soon as it is available. We have robust contingency plans in place, which are continually monitored and updated, to minimise disruption to pupils if schools are closed.

School trips - All school trips, day and residential, have been cancelled. Each school will contact those directly affected regarding refunds and any alternative activities which are available.

School and education events - these are also cancelled and includes all school performances such as pantomimes, plays, choir recitals and concerts.

Parents evenings - any parents evenings scheduled before the Easter holidays are also cancelled. Schools are looking at alternative methods of updating you on your child's progress and they will contact you directly with these.

## Housing support

Homeless Services – Our Abercorn Street and George Street offices continue to be open at present and the stand-by service can be contacted at any time on 0800 121 4466.

Sheltered housing – Our Sheltered Housing Officers are providing telephone support to tenants at all 10 complexes.

Housing neighbourhood services – we have stopped non-essential housing visits and housing services are available by phone or email to the appropriate team. If you need support or advice in relation to your tenancy, please call the Housing team on 0300 300 0222 or email your local office.

Our housing team can be contacted on 0300 300 0222 or by email to the local office.

Johnstone - [johnstone.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:johnstone.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

Paisley - [paisley.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:paisley.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

Renfrew – [renfrew.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:renfrew.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

Housing repairs – Non-essential repairs are not being carried out at this time and anyone requiring an emergency repair at their property should call the Council Customer Service number 0300 300 0300. Before undertaking any repair, we will check on your current situation in case anyone in your household is self-isolating.

Housing Options and Advice – please contact the housing team on 0300 300 0222.

Homexchange – The Homexchange Shop at 7A Moss Street is closed and anyone with an appointment is being contacted to rearrange this. Any enquiries should be made to the Housing Team on 0300 300 0222.

Building Standards – the team can be reached on 0300 300 0144 or by email to [bc@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:bc@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

## Sport and leisure

In-person services, including gyms, pools and libraries, operated by Renfrewshire Leisure are now suspended until further notice.

Customers are being advised leisure membership direct debits are being suspended with immediate effect and box office bookings for cancelled performances will be refunded or deferred if performances can be rescheduled.

Renfrewshire Leisure is working to provide support and advice to groups and organisations who lease their facilities.

For a full list of services affected and further details, visit [Renfrewshire Leisure](#).

## Council-run events

In line with national guidance, all large-scale council-run events have been cancelled until the end of June.

This includes the Paisley Food and Drink Festival which was due to take place on Friday 24 and Saturday 25 April and an agreement with the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association (RSPBA) to cancel the British Pipe Band Championships in Paisley, which was set to take place on Saturday 23 May. We will also look to reschedule both Renfrew Gala Day and Barshaw Gala Day for the end of summer.

We will continue to review our future events, including Sma' Shot Day on Saturday 4 July, as the situation progresses.

For ongoing updates to our event programme, please visit [PaisleyIs](#).

The latest service information and guidance is also available on the Council's recorded phone line - 0300 300 0333.