

To: Emergencies Board

On: 27 March 2020

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Update on Covid-19

1. Background

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the Council's current arrangements and response to the ongoing international Coronavirus, Covid-19 pandemic.
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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 response measures being put in place by the Council.
 - (c) Note that the emergency provisions in the Coronavirus Bill have now been approved by Parliament and that the Council is awaiting information on when those provisions will come into force.
 - (d) Notes the temporary suspension of charging in Council owned car parks to support key workers and notes that normal traffic restrictions e.g. double yellow lines will continue to apply.
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3. National Situation

- 3.1 The UK Government continue to monitor the situation and due to the rapidly developing picture, Senior Government Ministers continue to update the UK government and public on a daily basis. Each update requires consideration and most have resulted in changes to the Renfrewshire Council approach and mitigation arrangements when released.
- 3.2 Currently there are 9529 confirmed cases of COVID – 19 in the UK up from 2626 reported on 20 March 2020. There have been 465 deaths across the UK (up from 108 in the last report). In Scotland there are now 894 confirmed cases (up from 266) and 25 deaths (up from 6). Of these 258 cases are within the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board Area (up from 57).
- 3.3 In response to this rapidly developing position, the Government has now implemented a “lock down” for the population. The current advice is that the only permissible reasons to leave your home are:
- to shop for basic necessities and that should be limited to once a day
 - to take exercise once a day - but alone or with your own household, not in groups
 - for medical reasons or to care for a vulnerable person
 - to travel to essential work if that cannot be done at home

In addition:

- Anyone who is suffering from a new, persistent dry cough and / or fever should self-isolate within their 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
 - Gatherings of more than 2 people other than a household group are banned
 - All non-essential shops should be closed as well as public spaces such as libraries, playgrounds, and places of worship
 - All cafes bars and restaurants are closed unless providing take away only
 - The ban extends to ceremonial social events, such as weddings and christenings, with the exception of funerals which are restricted to immediate family only
 - Visits to care homes and extra care housing are now closed to family and friends. Where a resident is at the end of their life the family or nominated other will be able to discuss a limited visiting arrangement with the Registered Manager.
 - Everyone should expect the rate of cases to escalate dramatically
- 3.4 The UK Government has brought forward emergency legislation in the Coronavirus Act 2020 which contains a large number of measures to address the Coronavirus epidemic. A number of these measures have a direct impact on local authorities while others are of more general application to our communities. The Act enables action in five key areas:

- Increasing the available health and social care workforce
 - Easing the burden of frontline staff (eg by reducing administrative tasks and allowing remote working).
 - Containing and slowing the virus by reducing unnecessary social contacts
 - Managing the deceased with respect and dignity including relaxing rules on death registrations
 - Supporting people - including measures such as allowing them to claim statutory sick pay sooner and by supporting the food industry to maintain supplies.
- 3.5 Vulnerable people – those over 70 or anyone under 70 with an underlying health condition, are being asked to take steps to socially distance themselves for a period of around 12 weeks. In addition, it is our understanding that letters will be issued shortly by the NHS to a sub-group of these people that are deemed at most significant risk due to their underlying health conditions. We understand that they will be asked to completely socially isolate themselves for a period of 12 weeks and the letters will provide specific additional advice to them.
- 3.6 To support these most vulnerable people, and those that otherwise find themselves in crisis - with no family or friend support available - arrangements for humanitarian assistance are being put in place to ensure access to essential care, medicines and food.
- 3.7 Extensive engagement is being undertaken with partner organisations who are playing a critical role in terms of supporting vulnerable people in communities through, for example, the provision of food and provisions, and/or mental health and wellbeing support. A network of communication has been established to support regular dialogue with these partners. A verbal update on arrangements being made locally will be available at the Emergencies Board Meeting.
- 3.8 At the Emergencies Board Meeting on 20 March 2020, reference was made to the package of financial assistance announced by the Government for businesses and communities.
- 3.9 The Council's Website has been updated with information about all of the support available across all levels of government and application forms have now been made available for specific business grants being administered by local government on behalf of the Scottish Government. A significant number of applications for these grants have already been received. Guidance is expected shortly from the Scottish Government on assessment and distribution arrangements, with payments expected to begin to flow to businesses during the first week in April.
- 3.10 The Economic Leadership Panel met on Wednesday 25 March and ongoing contact is being maintained with the Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses locally. A verbal update on the discussions that took place on Wednesday and on the up to date position will be available at the Emergencies Board Meeting.

Local Situation

- 4.1 Renfrewshire Council is currently following all guidance from both the UK and Scottish Governments and a number of operational service changes have been put in place.

Council Management Arrangements

- The Council's Emergency Management Team continues to meet by Skype twice weekly on a Monday and Thursday and the Corporate Management Team currently meet twice daily by Skype to respond to the developing situation.
- Renfrewshire House and all other main office buildings were closed on Tuesday 24th March, with minimal and restricted daily access at Renfrewshire House only to ensure essential mail is collected and distributed and essential documents are scanned for processing.
- All Council employees are now working from home wherever possible – this includes employees from the Council contact and service centres who continue to respond to members of the public by phone and email.
- Essential frontline services are continuing to be provided in line with the Council business continuity arrangements. A range of key workers in the Council are still involved in face to face or community service delivery, with arrangements for maintaining effective social distancing in place and/or equipped with appropriate protective equipment where that is not possible.
- Where public contact, or access to an office or depot is required to provide an essential frontline service, this is being delivered through reduced numbers of allocated properties in line with government and health guidance. Minimal staffing, arrangements for social distancing and relevant PPE and cleaning protocols are in place.
- Where employees are unable or not required to carry out their normal duties, options for redeployment are being developed. These are focused on maintaining the provision of the priority services reported to Board on 20 March 2020. Where relevant, additional training is being provided to employees moving into new areas of service provision.

Service Update – Health and Social Care Partnership

- In line with the national guidance, care homes and extra care housing are operating with strict arrangements to protect their vulnerable residents. This includes maintaining social distancing where this is possible and appropriate PPE being available. Visits to care homes and extra care housing are now closed to family and friends. Where a resident is at the end of their life the family or nominated other will be able to discuss a limited visiting arrangement with the Registered Manager.
- Care at home continues to operate to deliver services to people with the most critical levels of need only.
- Arrangements have been put in place to redeploy and train additional employees to support essential home care, catering and support services for vulnerable residents – to be able to maintain minimum levels of staffing throughout this period.
- Working with Environment and Infrastructure, catering services for Home Care, Care Homes and Community Meals and to provide care packages for vulnerable residents have been consolidated and will be provided from

Baltic House and kitchens at Castlehead High School, with appropriate distribution arrangements in place.

Service Update – Children’s Services

- Schools have been closed to normal service delivery and pupils are being supported to continue their learning at home, by their teachers using e-learning and remote learning approaches. The SQA is continuing to assess options and will provide guidance for the award of qualifications to pupils following the cancellation of the forthcoming exam diet.
- Secondary Schools have remained open to support the arrangements to provide care to children of key workers. West Primary, St James’ Primary (Renfrew), the West Johnstone campus (includes nursery provision), Hugh Smiley Nursery, Moorpark Nursery and Riverbrae school have also remained open to support this programme which will be continued through the school Easter holiday period. All other Schools and Pre 5 establishments have been closed.
- Next week, in line with reduced requirement to support S4 – S6 pupils in school, it is likely that only 3 Secondary Schools will be opened to provide care to children of key workers. West Primary, St James’ Primary (Renfrew), the West Johnstone campus, Hugh Smiley Nursery, Moorpark Nursery and Riverbrae school are also likely to remain open for this service provision.
- Direct payments to families in receipt of clothing grant to replace the free school meals service have been arranged as noted at the last Emergencies Board.
- Children’s Services are paying particular focussed attention on supporting vulnerable children and families through regular contact. They will also move to a model of trying to get vulnerable children into school for some days each week.
- Children’s social work continues to undertake priority visits to children on the child protection register and those identified as high need. The service has arrangements in place to support care leavers. The service maintains regular contact with foster carers and kinship carers. The children’s houses are settled and staff are demonstrating significant commitment to maintain a safe care environment for the young people.
- Criminal Justice maintains regular contact with the highest risk offenders and those with highest needs. The high needs service users are mainly vulnerable women. The Unpaid Work scheme has been suspended on a temporary basis. Arrangements are in place to support the Court.

Service Update – Communities Housing and Planning

- Sheltered Housing officers continue to visit each of the 10 sites daily to ensure welfare contacts are maintained. Employees are observing social distancing and safe working practices.
- Concierge and caretaking services for high rise blocks are being maintained to ensure fire safety and cleaning of communal areas / lifts.
- Housing repairs and repairs to public buildings are now restricted to emergency repairs, priority voids, gas servicing and required maintenance checks only – with strict protocols in place to allow appropriate social distancing and the provision of cleaning materials and equipment to employees to maintain a safe working environment in line with health guidance.

- Homeless Services are continuing to be delivered with the assessments being completed by telephone and arrangements are being made to provide access to temporary accommodation where required.

Service Update – Environment and Infrastructure

- HWRC sites and special uplift services have been closed in line with government guidance on maintaining social distancing - Waste collection services are operating as normal.
- In recognition of the requirement to support front line key workers, parking charges have been temporarily suspended in Council owned car parks. Normal traffic restrictions e.g. double yellow lines will continue to apply.

Service Update - RLL

- All RLL properties and services are closed in line with government guidance.

5. Renfrewshire Council Services/Staffing

- 5.1 HR and OD are currently putting in place arrangements to identify and record the key skills and experience of all employees that are not currently required within their normal job role in order that they can be easily matched to redeployment areas where there is an additional requirement for staffing to maintain priority services.
- 5.2 Amongst Renfrewshire Council employees there are currently 646 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. (This is an increase from 538 reported on 20 March 2020) Of these 173 are currently working from home.
- 5.3 The 646 are split across Services as follows:

Service	Number of employees
Chief Executive Services	6
Children's Services	319
Communities, Housing and Planning	42
Environment and Infrastructure	155
Finance and Resources	72
Health and Social Care Partnership	52
Council Total	646

- 5.4 The number of employees now being "shielded from social contact" in line with government and health guidance is 957, up from the approximate figure of 700 reported on 20 March 2020. Of these 394 are currently working from home. Where employees are not able to carry out their normal duties from home options for redeployment on a home working basis are being actively considered and put in place.

Renfrewshire Council Communications

- 5.5 The Council has worked hard to match the pace of the national response to COVID-19 with public communications addressing 3 aims: keeping people informed; maintaining public confidence in the Council's ability to respond to the crisis; and maintaining staff and community morale.
- 5.6 The approach adopted has been to:
- Provide advice on lockdown measures and how to stay well by signposting to trusted, official sources such as NHS Inform and the Scottish Government
 - Thank and recognise the efforts of the workforce and partners
 - Encourage everyone to work together to help keep people safe and well
 - Outline the Council's response and that of key partners including the Health and Social Care Partnership and Renfrewshire Leisure Limited:
 - Explaining changes to services and why some services have temporarily stopped
 - Providing advice on how to access welfare and support for those who find themselves in crisis
 - Providing advice and support for the local business community
 - Building awareness and helping people to access services online and by phone
- 5.7 A daily communications update is provided to all Elected Members. Daily updates on the latest national position and guidance are issued to all managers following each government announcement and a weekly brief from the Chief Executive to all employees is also being issued.
- 5.8 The Council public website, social media channels and information line continue to be the main sources of live information for local people. A new section within the Council website has been developed to provide a single point of truth for COVID-19 information and service updates. This includes public information and information for staff. The latest information can be found online - <http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-public>
- 5.9 Public communications continue to be directed through partner channels, local community groups, local Facebook groups, local business organisations, community websites and via third sector partners.

Support for Elected Members

- 5.10 Elected Members are receiving a number of enquiries in relation to both the Council's response to Coronavirus and also specifically about the impact that changes are having on local people, groups and businesses.
- 5.11 A mailbox has been set up to support enquiries from Elected Members. Using this mailbox will help services to respond effectively to issues that are being raised. Elected Members will receive a response individually and information will also be shared on the issues raised through the daily Elected Member briefings provided by the communications service. Frequently asked questions will be used to populate information on the Council's website so that people can

be signposted directly to information about the support which is available on the issues that they raise most frequently.

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.
 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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