
To: Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board

On: 2 September 2020

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Service Update – Chief Executive's Service

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board with a summary of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the areas within the Board's remit since March 2020. It also outlines the key priorities and areas of risk identified for the Service through to autumn, highlighting any key areas of risk.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members of the Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board note the content of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 In March 2020, working closely with our partners, Renfrewshire Council moved quickly to respond to the emerging coronavirus pandemic, protecting and supporting our employees and communities, particularly vulnerable people across the area.
- 3.2 Colleagues across the Council have shown great commitment and resilience during the pandemic delivering essential services, volunteering to support frontline services and helping others to remain safe at home.
- 3.3 In order to ensure effective decision-making and governance, the Emergencies Board was convened on 20 March 2020 and has received regular updates on the different workstreams established to support Renfrewshire throughout the crisis, highlighting the humanitarian response,

reviewing the available data showing the impact on Renfrewshire's people, and considering how we can restart services, recover and renew. Detailed reports were also presented to the Council on 25 June 2020.

- 3.4 This report is therefore not intended to provide granular detail of the response, but to give a broad overview of the key areas impacted by the Covid-19 crisis – the service areas paused and restarted, the particular areas of focus now and in the near future, and any specific risks and priorities of relevance to this Policy Board.
- 3.5 Whilst this report is a high-level update for Elected Members, the service is acutely aware of the impact on our communities of the pandemic - of those who have sadly been bereaved, who have struggled through isolation, have lost their income, have had their health impacted through this crisis, have supported their children and young people with home learning or have contended with other challenges made more difficult by the pandemic and consequent restrictions. Across services, and with our partners, the Council continues to support our communities and develop our operational and policy response both now and as we continue to move through the recovery route map.

4. Updates for Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board

- 4.1 The Chief Executive's Service has played a critical role in terms of supporting the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. At a strategic level this has involved coordinating activity with community planning partners and across Council services, including leading on all communications and public information activities both internally and externally. As with other Council services, the majority of staff working across the service are now doing so from home, delivering services and working in new ways to meet the needs of customers, both internal and external. Staff responded with great commitment and flexibility to establish new services and undertake new activities required as a result of the pandemic, including the administration of new business support funds, the establishment of neighbourhood hubs and the critical focus on ensuring supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the Council's workforce. A summary of key activities is provided in the sections below.

Economy and Regeneration

- 4.2 The [Update on COVID-19 report](#) presented to the Emergencies Board on 17 July details work being done in response to the economic impact of the pandemic, including findings from a recent business survey of Renfrewshire businesses showing that:
- 92% of Renfrewshire businesses have been closed or operating at only partial capacity, and 44% have been completely closed throughout lockdown.
 - About half of all businesses had most of their workforce on furlough at one point, almost 27,000 employees across Renfrewshire, just under 1 in 3 of their total workforce.

- 40% of businesses believe that redundancies may be likely over next 3 months.
- 4.3 During the period March – July 2020 Renfrewshire Council distributed over £26million to around 2,500 local businesses and self-employed residents. These support measures, which have been aimed primarily at ratepayers of smaller business premises together with some larger businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, have been well received and popular, judging by the feedback to the recent business survey. The Scottish Government announced the closure of these grant streams from 10 July 2020.
 - 4.4 The Council's Employability Service has been offering support on jobs and skills development throughout the pandemic. Over the next month or so the national support for employability will become clearer and the service will undertake a reprofiling exercise to ensure that the best possible services are provided to those who need them most.
 - 4.5 Following the closure of business grants nationally, and taking into consideration the views expressed by businesses in the business survey, a series of business support measures were developed for the consideration of Elected Members at the 17 July Emergencies Board. The measures are based on feedback from businesses as well as the local knowledge of the Council and Chamber in terms of the local economy and what it is believed will make the biggest difference in the short term, including Business Restart Loans, Business Grants for Social Distancing Adaptations, Business Grants (Restart and Sustain Business), and advice and support. Applications for these grants were accepted from 17 August.
 - 4.6 Within the Cultural Infrastructure Programme a number of projects were paused as a result of lockdown, including Paisley Learning and Cultural Hub, Paisley Arts Centre, design work for St James' Playing Fields, Ferguslie Sports Pavilion and the hockey pitch and cycling track at ON-X, and design work for Abbey Quarter and County Square.
 - 4.7 The intention is to table a proposed Economic Recovery Plan to the September 2020 meeting of Renfrewshire Council

City Deal

- 4.8 Glasgow Airport Investment Area site works were suspended in line with Scottish Government guidance and liaison is now taking place with the Contractor to work through the consequential programme and financial implications. The Team continue to work closely with Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District Scotland (AMIDS) partners, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Government, and stakeholders National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS) and Medicines Manufacturing Innovation Centre (MMIC) to maintain momentum in preparing the readiness of the AMIDS site for these anchor facilities, and further develop the AMIDS proposition to attract further investment. The Team are also reviewing and reprogramming the timing of

other procurement to ensure the market is ready to respond.

Marketing, Communications and Events

- 4.9 Effective communications have been absolutely critical to the Council response to the pandemic. This includes public health advice and information on local services, from lockdown through restart and recovery. To support public communications, the public have been signposted to the latest information from NHS and Scottish Government – with the Council website being redesigned to create a dedicated Covid-19 information hub for residents, staff and businesses, updated daily. This has provided a single source of truth on all relevant issues, supported by information updates on all relevant social media platforms and via local community groups and organisations. Social customer service has also been introduced through Council Twitter and Facebook to provide real time responses to customer enquiries. This service is operating seven days. The Council's public website, social media channels and information line have been the main sources of live information for local people.
- 4.10 Elected Members, managers and employees have been updated on a regular basis. Updated guidance for employees has been made available on the public website and intranet with links to the latest information and advice on the NHS Inform website. Weekly messages from the Chief Executive have been issued. A new weekly staff newsletter has been introduced and information has also been cascaded weekly to frontline workers supported by public health information posters in place around Council buildings, facilities and fleet.
- 4.11 At the beginning of the pandemic, the Council's spring events programme was cancelled, which was then extended to the summer and autumn programme, up to and including the Halloween festival. The annual Sma Shot Festival was delivered in digital form. Due to the ongoing ban on mass gatherings, a decision was also taken to cancel the winter events programme, based on current public health advice, the scale of the programme, and the planning time required to safely accommodate the large numbers of people who normally attend the events. Officers from the events team are currently deployed to support Local Assistance and Social Customer Services and will begin work on planning a new events programme for 2021 which will take account of Covid-19 safety measures. Work continues at a national level with EventScotland to support the national restart plan.
- 4.12 Destination marketing was initially paused and has now resumed in line with the Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG) action plan to restart the tourism sector and extend the 2020 season wherever possible. Activity is focusing on promoting Renfrewshire staycation opportunities and 'COVID safe' days out to local and regional visitor audiences. A local restart action plan has been developed to support Renfrewshire's visitor sector recover. Spend Local and Steal Back Summer marketing campaigns launched

in July to promote local attractions, retail and outdoors activities and encourage local footfall. Renfrewshire is included in VisitScotland's 'Only in Scotland' marketing activity.

Policy and Commissioning

- 4.13 Officers across the service were closely involved in establishing the Local Assistance Team, in response to the requirement made by the Scottish Government for local authorities to support people with "shielding" status. This involved establishing processes for people to access food and medicine and wider welfare support. Over 6,000 people in Renfrewshire were asked to shield, with the service also widening out to provide support to other vulnerable people living in Renfrewshire.
- 4.14 Community groups and third sector organisations mobilised very quickly to assist local people who needed support such as emergency food provision. The Council's Partnerships and Inequalities Team worked with Engage Renfrewshire to form a community food network which ensures that national resources including food and funding are directed to organisations working with vulnerable people across Renfrewshire who are experiencing the greatest barriers to food access. A range of national funding streams are available for community and third sector organisations across Renfrewshire to access to support the Covid-19 response, as well as the sustainability of their existing organisation. Across the Wellbeing Fund, the Response, Resilience and Recovery Fund, Third Sector Resilience Fund, Supporting Communities/Community Anchor Funds and Communities Wellbeing Small Awards Fund, a total of £618,469 has been received by local organisations to date.
- 4.15 A national campaign called Scotland Cares was launched to encourage people to volunteer to support the pandemic response. Over 50,000 people signed up to volunteer in Scotland, with over 1,100 registered in Renfrewshire. At a local level officers worked closely with Engage Renfrewshire to develop our local volunteering response through the Renfrewshire Volunteer Reserve Bank, to which 248 people signed up. Local volunteers are at the heart of the neighbourhood hub model being developed in partnership with communities.
- 4.16 Neighbourhood Hubs were also established to cover the seven Local Partnership areas to support people with the impacts of Covid-19, including support accessing food, befriending support, a mobile library service and other practical support. This was delivered in partnership with Engage Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire HSCP and Renfrewshire Leisure, and supported by volunteers from the Covid-19 Volunteer Reserve which was established locally.
- 4.17 Officers have also coordinated Renfrewshire's allocation of devices and connectivity as part of the Connecting Scotland programme to support digital participation at this time, with over 15 partner organisations in Renfrewshire receiving an allocation of devices from Scottish Council for Voluntary

Organisations (SCVO) and providing digital champion support alongside access to devices.

- 4.18 A local PPE hub was established in Renfrewshire to ensure the effective distribution of supplies to health and social care providers across the area. The Corporate Procurement Unit (CPU) leads the sourcing of PPE stocks for the Council and supported the sourcing of PPE for Renfrewshire HSCP until the Community Health PPE hub was established. Levels of supplies have now stabilised to some degree and seven days of supplies are now being held at any one time.
- 4.19 The Procurement Team have worked very closely with all Council services to consider and monitor the impact of Covid-19 on current and future contractual arrangements. The Scottish Government has published several Procurement Policy Notes to provide additional procurement guidance to both suppliers and contracting organisations during the pandemic. Specific arrangements have been agreed at a national level in relation to supplier relief through COSLA, in relation to care, early years and home to school transport.
- 4.20 Meetings of the Chief Officers Group moved from a quarterly frequency to monthly, and the Adult and Child Protection Committees have also been convened outwith usual meeting cycles to ensure robust oversight of protection issues.
- 4.21 A Covid-19 policy team was set up to provide briefings and updates on the critical information and guidance released by the Scottish and UK governments during the pandemic. Daily briefings were provided to the CMT and Senior Managers on any key policy announcements that would impact on the work of the Council. Enhanced support is also being provided to the Health and Social Care Partnership, in particular to support scrutiny and reporting in relation to care homes. A team was also brought together to support elected member enquiries and concerns relating to Covid-19, and to assist with providing constituents with advice and support.
- 4.22 The Council has been required to submit a range of regular data and information returns to the Scottish Government on areas such as support for vulnerable adults and children, shielding, and housing. Work has been undertaken through COSLA and SOLACE to streamline this activity and the data submission has been coordinated by members of the Policy Team and is reported through a weekly dashboard.
- 4.23 In addition to submitting our own data as above, the data analytics team have been working closely with partners at a local and national level to analyse the available data in terms of risk, infection levels, positive cases and death rates to help us understand the trends, identify any critical areas and inform our response. This work will continue as we work to understand the medium to longer term impact on our communities.

5. Key priorities and risks until next board cycle

- 5.1 Priority areas for the service until the next board cycle include:

- **Renewal planning** – the Chief Executive's Service will lead on the renewal planning arrangements for the Council, including developing a community impact assessment on Covid-19, and focusing on social renewal, economic impact and recovery.
- **Economy** – the intention is to present an Economic Recovery Action Plan for Renfrewshire to Council in September 2020. With national support for employability becoming clearer in the next month or so, the service will undertake a reprofiling exercise to ensure that the best possible services are provided to those who need them most. A range of support measures will be rolled out in response to the survey of Renfrewshire businesses, including a package of financial support to help businesses restart and sustain themselves through this period and make plans for future growth. In terms of Cultural Infrastructure, engagement with the construction market will continue in order to assess the best time to restart each of the projects, balancing the need to maintain each project budget and support the industry in resuming the works
- **Community Wellbeing** – we will continue to develop Neighbourhood Hubs in partnership with local community groups and organisations and develop the role of volunteers. This will be important to our ability to respond flexibly to any future lockdowns. This work will also link to our planned community impact assessment and as we continue to work closely with our partners to review activities in relation to poverty and inequality, social isolation and loneliness in light of our shared experiences and learning through the pandemic and subsequent lockdown.
- **Communications** – this will become perhaps even more important as we move into the next phase, particularly supporting our colleagues in Education with schools reopening, Shielding pausing, and the changes to support provided, and also communicating changes to services and what's open/closed in Renfrewshire to the public. Equally important is our employee communications, supporting new ways of working, and ensuring employees feel safe and supported in the workplace, with a focus on employee health and wellbeing.
- **Alcohol and Drugs Commission** – this was paused due to the outbreak of Covid-19, over the coming months we will seek to publish the report by the Commission and the associated action plan to take forward this work in Renfrewshire; adapted in such a way that takes due cognisance of the environment we're now in and the lessons that have been learned during the lockdown.
- **Climate Change** – work was also paused due to the outbreak of Covid-19 and as resource becomes available will shortly resume. It is intended that a paper on next steps is submitted to the Leadership Board and that work commences to review current activities and new opportunities within the context of a green recovery, such as exploring new funding and the impact of changes in behaviour due to the lockdown.
- **Digital** - we are finalising the Council's digital strategy and refining this to reflect the changes and opportunities which have arisen in the way we work and engage with others and the readiness to take forward new initiatives.

- **Supporting the recovery of services** – the service continues to support all the recovery workstreams through policy, communications and data support. We are also restarting key processes such as Local Partnerships, Council governance arrangements and preparing reports for the resumption of Board meetings.
- **Procurement** - the Procurement Team, working in partnership with services are restarting tendering and award of contracts. The team are also working with existing contractors to ensure that they have capacity and capability to deliver contracts and services for the Council. As the recovery progresses, procurement officers are contacting existing contractors to discuss the delivery of targeted community benefits, particularly supporting Employability and work placement / training initiatives. For new contracts, we will ensure that opportunities for local suppliers are maximised and we will work with partners to promote a virtual “Meet the Buyer” event to encourage participation in tender opportunities across our local supply base.
- **Contingency Planning** – in common with our colleagues across the Council, we are currently planning for a number of scenarios and local case management to provide public and staff reassurance where required. We are reviewing and learning from our experiences and building in flexibility, ensuring we are able to support services to stand up and down to respond to any potential future clusters or local and national lockdowns.

5.2 In terms of risk, the Board should note that the Corporate Risk Management Group is undertaking a piece of work to review the Council’s risk profile in light of the pandemic; many of the existing strategic and corporate risks will be impacted. These risks will be reported to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board in November. At this point in time however, the Board will wish to note that the service-specific risks relating to our recovery work and immediate concerns between now and the next cycle of Board meetings are:

- Supporting the ongoing wellbeing of staff.
- Capacity to support recovery and restart business as usual.
- Flexibility and capacity to respond to future lockdowns or a second wave at both a national and a localised level.
- Restarting infrastructure projects.

Implications of the Report

1. Financial – None

2. HR & Organisational Development – None

3. 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.

4. Legal – None

5. Property/Assets- as facilities start to open in line with the Scottish Government Routemap, adjustment may have to be made to physical spaces to allow for physical distancing and to comply with relevant guidance.

6. 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 – 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 because it is for noting only. However, the service notes the scientific advice in relation to risks to particular groups and communities from Covid-19 and is undertaking individualised risk assessments wherever appropriate.

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 – The ongoing pandemic has and will continue to have a significant impact on existing contractual obligations and on the procurement of future goods and services required by the Council.

10. Risk – As noted in section 5, the CRMG are currently reviewing the Council's risk profile in light of the coronavirus pandemic and will report to board in November.

11. Privacy Impact – None

12. COSLA Policy Position – None

13. Climate Change – As noted in section 5, work will commence to review current activities and new opportunities.

List of Background Papers - None

Author: Jacqui Jacobsen, Senior Planning and Policy Development Officer