

**To: Council**

**On: 25 June 2020**

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**Report by: Chief Executive**

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**Heading: COVID 19 Recovery Planning**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The emergence of the COVID-19 virus and the resulting pandemic, represents the biggest single event and challenge ever to face the Council. Services have worked very closely in partnership with local and national organisations to respond to the crisis, ensuring that critical frontline services continue to be provided, and that vulnerable people living in our communities are supported.
- 1.2 The impact that the pandemic has had on the provision of Council services has been significant, with no service areas being untouched by the lockdown measures and associated national guidance put into place. New services have also been introduced at pace in response to emerging national requirements such as for people who have been required to shield. A detailed report on the impact on Council operations has been provided separately on the agenda for this Council meeting.
- 1.3 As elected members will be aware the Scottish Government published a Routemap to support the country to come through the crisis, which sets out a number of key phases by which lockdown measures can be eased and services and functions can be restarted in line with associated national guidance.
- 1.4 The organisation has commenced work to support the short, medium and longer term recovery of Council services. There are three key stages to this process:
- **Restart** - incrementally restarting service provision in line with national guidance
  - **Recovery** - rebuilding levels of service capacity, confidence and resilience and supporting reconnection with communities and residents.
  - **Renew** - reimagining / building better and resetting Renfrewshire's ambition and vision for the future.

- 1.5 In taking forward these planning arrangements it should be recognised that whilst the commitment of staff has ensured that core services have continued to be delivered over the period of the crisis, it may not be possible for services to restart fully or be delivered as they were prior to the crisis. It should be noted that:
- The presumption is that home working will remain a default position for most employees as set out in the Scottish Government's Routemap.
  - Services will require to comply with current and emerging guidance in terms of physical distancing and use of personal protective equipment.
  - Services may have to respond to a potential second wave of cases, and changes to lockdown measures at a national and local basis.
  - Services will need to respond to the changing needs of local citizens and communities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including in relation to employability or vulnerability.
  - The impact on the Council's financial position is unprecedented as reported to the Emergencies Board, and the delivery of services will require to be closely managed in terms of the resources available to the Council.
- 1.6 There remains significant uncertainty in terms of the timeframe associated with working through the phases of the Scottish Government's Routemap, as this is dependent on the suppression of the virus. For planning purposes, services are working on the basis that Restart and Recovery phases will continue to be the organisation's focus until at least the end of the calendar year, assuming a second wave of the virus does not emerge. 7 key workstreams have been put into place to drive forward recovery, each of which is lead by a Director or Head of Service. Specific detail on these workstreams is included at Section 5 of this report.
- 1.7 Moving into 2021/22, it may be possible for the Council to move forward with the Renewal phase in a comprehensive way – with the organisational capacity and stability in place to undertake further transformation and change work that will meet the future needs of local residents, communities and businesses within available resources. Officers will continue to consolidate and build on the Right for Renfrewshire programme, and will take full account of the changing context in which we now operate.
- 1.8 Regular progress updates on recovery planning arrangements will continue to be provided to the Emergencies Board over the summer period, with more detailed plans brought forward for elected members thereafter.

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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council notes:
- (a) the work being undertaken to develop and take forward recovery planning arrangements for the Council, and

- (b) that regular reports will be provided to the Emergencies Board over the summer period, as Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Government's routemap are actioned.
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### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Since the emergence of the pandemic crisis, services have been working intensively with local and national partners to respond to the needs of local people, businesses and communities, whilst ensuring that essential services continue to be provided.
- 3.2 The impact of the crisis has been significant, and no services have been untouched by the lockdown measures introduced on 20 March 2020. The commitment of frontline staff across the organisation has ensured that critical services such as care at home, child and adult protection, homelessness and waste collection amongst many others, have continued to be delivered. A significant proportion of staff across the organisation are also now working from home, and have adapted the way that they work to continue to provide services. This has been critical to ensure that the Council as a organisation has been able to continue to function and operate effectively and fully support front line service provision despite the significant impact on normal operational arrangement arising from the lockdown restrictions.
- 3.3 As outlined in the COVID-19 Update paper presented to Council on 25 June 2020, the organisation has also been required at some pace to deliver new services, in order to meet new requirements including support for people shielding, co-ordination of PPE, support for contact tracing, the establishment of neighbourhood hubs and volunteering amongst others.
- 3.4 It is now over 3 months since the lockdown measures were introduced, and the organisation remains in crisis response mode first and foremost, ready to respond in a flexible way to any new emerging needs or requirements. In parallel, work is also under way to plan for the remobilisation of services in line with current guidance.
- 3.5 At a Scottish and UK level, these plans are often referred to as recovery or increasingly renewal plans, as it is recognised that for organisations across all sectors, it will not simply be a matter of restarting and scaling up services and a return to normal. Many of the behavioural changes and social and economic impacts that COVID-19 and the associated lockdown has introduced, will require new and innovative solutions to be developed in partnership to ensure that services meet the changing circumstances of local residents, businesses and communities. There will also be a critical requirement for local authorities to adapt and change they way that they work in order to ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of the organisation, given the unprecedented pressure on resources that the crisis has and will continue to have on the Council's financial position.

#### 4. Current context

4.1 As highlighted in section 3.2 above, all services provided by the Council have been impacted in some way by the crisis.

- Critical frontline services such as care and waste services have continued to be physically deployed within communities. Services such as homeless services and child and adult protection services have been maintained and have been delivered in different ways.
- All customer service centres, day centres, housing offices, and leisure and cultural facilities remain closed at this time to staff and to members of the public with many services being delivered remotely, either by phone, or on line.
- 2216 staff are currently working from home, with approximately 10% of staff currently absent or unable to work due to being 'At Risk'. An approach has been developed to support a safe route back to work for these employees which is being informed by government guidance and best practice.
- The Council's financial position remains under significant pressure, with the net financial impact on the Council's revenue budget estimated at this stage to be potentially in the region of £26 million in 2020/21 and anticipated to extend further. It will take some time for full impact on the Council's budget to be realised, through for example lost income and under-recovery of rent or council tax.
- Significant shocks to the economy are already being experienced, and it is estimated that one third of all employees in privately owned companies have been furloughed across the UK. There also has been a significant increase in unemployment rates and universal credit claimant rates. In Renfrewshire between March and April, data indicates that over 4000 new universal applications were made. Unemployment data published on 16 June 2020, indicates that over 3500 people became unemployed between March and May (an increase of 88% over the period).
- The impact of the virus and the lockdown have been universally experienced but the outcomes – health, social, economic, educational and cultural - will reflect and deepen existing inequalities.
- In addition, there have been major changes in how people work, travel and communicate that has seen behavioural shifts in relation to: use and appreciation of outdoor space, use of cars, planes and public transport and the ways people connect digitally for work and personal life.
- There is potential for future waves of the virus to emerge and in result a requirement for local authorities to respond to the reintroduction of lockdown measures, potentially on a regional rather than national basis.

4.2 On 21 May 2020, the Scottish Government published its COVID-19 Routemap which sets out a phased approach to moving the country through and out of the crisis. This phased approach is required as the country seeks to ease some of the lockdown measures in place, whilst continuing to suppress the transmission of

the virus over a potentially longer period until a potential vaccination or treatment can be developed.

- 4.3 These phases essentially set out the trajectory by which certain Council services can restart in some way. Based on the information published to date, it is likely that most Council services will be operational in some form by the end of Phase 4, although a specific timeline has not been set by the Scottish Government for each phase to commence. However, it is clear that as services are able to resume, they will not be able to be delivered in the same way as the country tries to work through ways of being able to regain some level of normality whilst living with the virus for a potentially extended period of many months and possibly years.
- 4.4 It is worth noting that in the Scottish Government's Routemap document, homeworking remains the default position for working practices where possible, physical distancing will remain in place in some form, and there will still be a requirement for citizens to utilise face coverings and for staff to use personal protective equipment in line with the prevailing national guidance.
- 4.5 A specific and very significant example to illustrate this change is in relation to the provision of learning through schools and early learning and childcare centres. As elected members are aware, schools are scheduled to return on August 11 2020, but will adopt a very different model of learning with a mix of in-school and home learning for an extended period of time. Staff have been working intensively to plan for this change, and will be required to innovate, to use new approaches and to support learning to a greater extent through digital platforms. This type of approach and innovation will require to be replicated across many other service areas.
- 4.6 As the Council begins to restart impacted services It will be important to work with partners to review existing priorities in light of all available data on the impact of COVID-19. There may be a specific requirement to support certain groups of people or localities across Renfrewshire. Initial work to review existing priorities and planned activities with the Community Planning Partnership Executive Group and the Economic Leadership Panel is now underway.
- 4.7 This intelligence will support the Council as it looks to move forward with the Right for Renfrewshire programme, as set out within Section 6 of this report.

## 5. Local Recovery Planning arrangements

- 5.1 Local recovery planning arrangements are now being progressed for Renfrewshire, which will be taken forward jointly with residents, communities, partners and businesses. These will focus on:
- **RESTART** - incrementally restarting service provision in line with national guidance
  - **RECOVER** - rebuilding levels of service capacity, confidence and resilience and supporting reconnection with communities and residents.

- **RENEW** - reimagining / building better and resetting Renfrewshire's ambition and vision for the future

5.2 The organisation's approach to recovery planning will be developed on an interim basis, recognising that the impact of the pandemic is likely to be deeply felt over the medium to long term, and there will be a requirement for Council services to continue to operate flexibly to meet the changing needs and behaviours of local communities, potentially providing new services or adapting others to reflect emerging Scottish Government guidance and considering the resources available at each stage. This includes responding to potential future waves of the epidemic should the requirement arise.

5.3 The organisation's approach to recovery planning will continue to reflect the Council's values:

We are **fair**: we treat each other and everyone we deal with respectfully and work hard to build trust in Renfrewshire Council

We are **helpful**: we care about getting things right and are always approachable.

We are great **collaborators**: we work as one team and with people who care about this place.

We value **learning**: to help us innovate, improve and deliver better services.

5.4 Our approach to rebuilding and renewing services will be progressed in line with the following high level principles.

<b>Flexibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing to adapt to changes in national guidance as this develops and changes in response to the pandemic</li> <li>• Considering how existing priorities can be taken forward in light of the current crisis.</li> </ul>
<b>Transparency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly reporting progress to elected members and to the public</li> </ul>
<b>Partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking forward our plans on a collective basis, recognising the need to maximise skills, experience and resources across local and national partners</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging all key stakeholders. Making sure that we offer opportunities to listen and learn from communities and citizens, partners and businesses and staff about their experiences and ideas.</li> </ul>
<b>Intelligence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using data to consider the extent to which local people, communities and businesses have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic in Renfrewshire.</li> </ul>

5.5 The initial approach to this planning is based around 7 key areas or workstreams, each of which is being taken forward on a partnership basis and is being lead by a Director or Head of Service. The key workstreams are as follows:

	<b>Initial priorities identified</b>
<b>Community wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with partners to understand the changing nature of poverty and inequality in Renfrewshire from COVID-19</li> <li>• Identifying opportunities to work differently to ensure vulnerable people receive support</li> <li>• Developing community networks and building on the joint pandemic response with community and third sector organisations across Renfrewshire.</li> <li>• Developing and sustaining volunteering opportunities</li> <li>• Promoting civic pride and supporting people to reconnect within communities including through digital opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing support to businesses responding to the pandemic</li> <li>• Reviewing current Employability and training</li> </ul>
<b>Financial and contractual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Planning to support the financial sustainability of the organisation</li> <li>• Reviewing procurement and contractual obligations</li> </ul>
<b>Organisational recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring appropriate governance and decision making processes are supported</li> <li>• Ensuring facilities are operational in line with recovery planning arrangements</li> <li>• Support for home working including access to Council systems and safe working practices.</li> <li>• Meeting the wellbeing needs of the workforce as it adapts to COVID19.</li> </ul>
<b>Health and social care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of care to those most vulnerable to the transmission of COVID 19</li> <li>• Mobilisation plan for health and social care services locally/across NHS GGC</li> </ul>
<b>Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing for a physical return to education and childcare premises</li> <li>• Developing online learning as part of the blended model of provision</li> <li>• Provision of childcare hubs</li> <li>• Continuing to progress early years expansion plans and adapting these</li> </ul>
<b>Leisure and Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restarting services in line with guidance, with significant adaptations to current practice and spaces to comply with this guidance</li> </ul>

5.6 The organisational capacity that will be required to take this forward will be significant, and it will be undertaken in parallel with existing work being undertaken in terms of managing the organisation's ongoing response to the pandemic crisis.

5.7 It should be noted that the health and social care workstream is being progressed by the Health and Social Care Partnership through its Integration Joint Board. A Recovery and Renewal Plan is being developed, linked to both the Council's recovery planning arrangements and the mobilisation plan for health and social care services at an NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde level.

## 6 Next steps

- 6.1 In terms of taking forward these recovery planning arrangements, it should be recognised that the Council is in an unparalleled situation in which new information and requirements are emerging on a daily basis. The impact of COVID-19 in socio economic terms will also take time to fully emerge, as will the resulting financial impact on the Council's budget position and financial outlook going forward.
- 6.2 It is unprecedented for officers to be developing planning arrangements of this scale and significance with the level of uncertainty that exists in terms of the current crisis. Recovery planning arrangements will therefore require to be progressed with some flexibility and based on the best information available at this time, as the country moves through the different phases of the Scottish Government's Routemap and the organisation develops a much more detailed understanding of what this will mean in terms of the impact on service provision. In addition, there will also be a requirement to consider the impact of the UK's exit from the EU on recovery planning arrangements, with the transition period for EU withdrawal due to end on 31 December 2020.
- 6.3 In terms of the broad timescales for taking forward recovery planning arrangements, it is likely that current work to respond to the crisis and to restart services in line with national guidance, will last to the end of the current calendar year. This timeframe is likely as it will take some time to restart services and to adapt them to new working environments and guidance.
- 6.4 Completing this particular phase of recovery by December 2020, will only be possible if the virus continues to be suppressed throughout this period, as future waves or spikes in rates of infection would require the Council to shift its focus again more fully to crisis response activities.
- 6.5 It may then be possible to move forward fully with the renewal phase into 21/22, during which further transformation and change work can be undertaken to meet the future needs of local residents, communities and businesses within the resources likely to be available to the Council. Officers will continue to consolidate and build on the Right for Renfrewshire programme over this next period of 6 months, and will take full account of the changing context in which we now operate.
- 6.6 Regular updates will continue to be provided to the Emergencies Board on this work over the summer period.

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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – it is forecast that the Council will experience a significant ongoing financial impact from COVID19 and maintaining immediate financial stability and medium term sustainability will remain a key objective and is covered as part of the workstreams being progressed. It is planned that a full report on options to manage this impact and appropriately adjust the 2020/21 and medium term financial strategy will be presented to Council in September.

2. **HR & Organisational Development** – the impact of the pandemic has been significant for the Council and its workforce. The organisation has provided ongoing support to the workforce to promote health and wellbeing, with risk assessments provided in line with national guidance. This will continue to be a significant focus for the Council going forward, as services restart and recover whilst adapting to national guidance.
3. **Community/Council Planning** – There has been a strong partnership response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Renfrewshire with community and third sector organisations working closely together to maximise the resources available at a local level to meet the needs of local people and communities. This will be a critical focus going forward as partners work collectively to mitigate the impact on those most negatively impacted in our communities.
4. **Legal** – New legislative requirements have been put into place by the Scottish Government to support the country's response to COVID-19. There may be further changes to these requirements or further legislation as the lockdown measures ease, which the Council will require to respond to.
5. **Property/Assets** – The use of Council's assets going forward will be a key element of local recovery planning arrangements, and there may be a requirement to adapt these in order to meet ongoing national guidance around for example, physical distancing.
6. **Information Technology** – In supporting significant numbers of Council employees to work from home over the last few months, the organisation has to adapt and respond to ensure existing systems and technology can support this. This approach will continue to be developed and as outlined in the report there will require to be a specific focus on supporting digital learning as part of the blended model for learning proposed from 11 August 2020.
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 outlined in the report itself, the Council will need to continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 and the disproportionate impacts it may have on certain communities or groups of people across Renfrewshire, including in relation to poverty, ethnicity, gender and disability amongst other protected characteristics.
8. **Health & Safety** – As highlighted above 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, and this will require to continue and support the adaptation of services going forward as these restart and recover.
9. **Procurement** – The Corporate Procurement team will support the restart, recovery and renewal of Council services, providing advice and guidance on all procurement issues.
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** – The pandemic has led to fairly significant changes to behaviours in terms of the mode and level of transport use and there are a range of emerging opportunities to promote active travel going forward. The Council has committed to work towards having net

zero carbon emission by 2020, and the impact of COVID 19 will require to be reflected in future climate planning arrangements.

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### **List of Background Papers**

None

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