

Notice of Meeting and Agenda Council

Date	Time	Venue
Thursday, 17 December 2020	09:30	Teams meeting,

KENNETH GRAHAM
Head of Corporate Governance

Membership

Councillor Jennifer Marion Adam-McGregor: Councillor Tom Begg: Councillor Derek Bibby: Councillor Bill Binks: Councillor Bill Brown: Councillor Stephen Burns: Councillor Jacqueline Cameron: Councillor Michelle Campbell: Councillor Carolann Davidson: Councillor Eddie Devine: Councillor Andy Doig: Councillor Audrey Doig: Councillor Natalie Don: Councillor Alison Jean Dowling: Councillor Edward Grady: Councillor Neill Graham: Councillor Jim Harte: Councillor John Hood: Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes: Councillor Karen Kennedy: Councillor Scott Kerr: Councillor Alistair Mackay: Councillor James MacLaren: Councillor Kenny MacLaren: Councillor Mags MacLaren: Councillor Eileen McCartin: Councillor Colin McCulloch: Councillor Marie McGurk: Councillor John McIntyre: Councillor John McNaughtan: Councillor Kevin Montgomery: Councillor Will Mylet: Councillor Emma Rodden: Councillor Jim Sharkey: Councillor John Shaw: Councillor James Sheridan: Councillor Andy Steel: Councillor Jane Strang:
Provost Lorraine Cameron (Convener): Councillor Cathy McEwan (Depute Convener): Councillor Iain Nicolson (Leader): Councillor Jim Paterson (Depute Leader)

Recording of Meeting

This meeting will be recorded for subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site. If you have any queries regarding this please contact Committee Services on 07534 058160. To find the recording please follow the link which will be attached to this agenda once the meeting has concluded. Please note that only meetings from 17 April 2020 onward have been recorded for broadcast.

Apologies

Apologies from members.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare an interest in any item(s) on the agenda and to provide a brief explanation of the nature of the interest.

Recording of Council meeting - 17 December 2020

Please note that there are two parts to this recording.

Part 1 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSwPKZrKZUg>

Part 2 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVQaViCwk7c>

Items of business

1 **Minutes of Council, Boards and Panels (attached separately)**

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Placing Requests and Exclusions Appeals Panel, 8 October 2020, pages 166 -167
Special Council, 22 October 2020, pages 168 -171
Communities, Housing & Planning Policy Board, 27 October 2020, pages 172 - 193
Regulatory Functions Board, 28 October, 2020, pages 194 - 205
Education & Children's Services Policy Board, 29 October 2020, pages 206 - 211
Infrastructure, Land & Environment Policy Board, 4 November 2020, pages 212-221
Finance, Resources & Customer Services Policy Board, 11 November 2020, pages 222 - 241
Regulatory Functions Board, 12 November 2020, pages 242 - 249
Local Review Body, 17 November 2020, pages 250 - 253
Special Regulatory Functions Board, 19 November 2020, pages 254 - 259
Audit, Risk & Scrutiny Board, 23 November 2020, pages 260 - 269
Special Council, 26 November 2020, pages 270-275
Leadership Board, 2 December 2020, pages 276 - 291
Placing Requests and Exclusions Appeals Panel, 8 December 2020, pages 292 - 293

2 **Update on COVID-19** 7 - 26

Report by Chief Executive

3 **Recovery and Renewal Plans**

3(a) **Financial Update** 27 - 42

Report by Director of Finance and Resources

3(b) **Renfrewshire Economic Recovery Action Plan** 43 - 60

Report by Chief Executive

3(c) **Social Renewal Programme Update** 61 - 74

Report by Chief Executive

3(d) **Housing-led Regeneration and Renewal Programme for Renfrewshire** 75 - 86

Report by Chief Executive, Director of Communities, Housing and Planning Services and Director of Finance and Resources

4 **Alcohol and Drugs Commission – Final Report** 87 - 146

Report by Chief Executive

- 5 A Prudential Framework for Capital Finance - Progress Report** 147 - 156
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Report by Head of Corporate Governance as Monitoring Officer
- 8 Audit Risk and Scrutiny Board Review - Conversion of Grassed Areas to Parking** 179 - 184
Report by Lead Officer on behalf of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board
- 9 Notice of Motion 1 by Councillors McCartin and Grady**
"Council recognises that new child and adolescent mental health waiting times statistics for April to June 2020 show a record 1,520 children waiting more than a year for treatment.

Council further recognises that the Scottish Government's old strategy already wasn't working, because three years in, it has led to record numbers of children waiting over a year for the help they need.

Council demands therefore that the Scottish government brings forward a recovery plan to meet existing and heightened demand for CAMHS services, including immediate new steps to seriously expand the workforce."
- 10 Notice of Motion 2 by Councillors Harte and Devine**
"Right for Renfrewshire

Council agrees that the Council's change and transformation programme, "Right for Renfrewshire" reports, will, from now on, go to future full Council meetings.

That this administration explains why a real term cut to local authority funding is a fair deal."
- 11 Notice of Motion 3 by Councillors Andy Doig and Steel**
"Scottish Stage Race Winner and Promotion of Cycling for Schools

This Council congratulates Mr Tao Geoghegan Hart on being the first Scottish cyclist to win a major European stage race, with his outstanding victory in the Italian national stage race, the Giro d'Italia, earlier this year.

Council recognises both the physical and mental health benefits of

cycling in all its forms, both recreational, utilitarian, and sporting pursuits. Council therefore resolves to have a renewed focus to promote cycling as part of the PE curriculum in Renfrewshire's schools, and to investigate options for our schools using the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome in Glasgow."

12 Notice of Motion 4 by Councillors Harte and Kennedy

"Kate Forbes' statement

Council welcomes Kate Forbes' statement that the Scottish Government will not impose a 'Tory pay freeze' on public sector workers in Scotland. The council will write to the Scottish Government urging them to make sure that the next pay offer is substantial and meaningful."

13 Notice of Motion 5 by Councillors Audrey Doig and Don

"This Council reaffirms its position that no fox hunting activities will occur or be allowed to occur on any land or property that is owned or managed by Renfrewshire Council."

14 Notice of Motion 6 by Councillors Andy Doig and Hood

"Community Consultation on Road Safety at Walkinshaw Street/Johnstone High Street

This Council regrets the recent fatality at the junction of Walkinshaw Street and Johnstone High Street and sends its condolences to the family concerned, notes that there have been previous fatalities there over the years, and resolves to initiate a full community consultation to improve road safety measures at that junction.

Council believes that this consultation should involve Police Scotland, Johnstone Community Council, the Johnstone Business Consortium, Johnstone Seniors Forum, Provost Close Tenants and Residents Association, Linstone Housing Association, and the four Ward Councillors."

15 Notice of Motion 7 by Councillors Sheridan and Hood

"Use of Fireworks

That this Council seeks a review of existing legislation surrounding the sale and use of fireworks so that the legislation recognises the enjoyment factor of public firework displays which should be advertised in advance, promoting a public awareness campaign regarding the negative impact on animal welfare and vulnerable people and licensing traders to minimise the noise levels of fireworks sold to the public for private displays."

16 Notice of Motion 8 by Councillor K MacLaren and Councillor M MacLaren

"Well Street Bus Stops

Further to the unanimous decision of council on 5th December 2019, Council instructs council officers to re-instate two bus stops located at

the top of Well Street, Paisley to their original location (prior to their removal by SPT).

Council further instructs council officers to approach SPT in order to recoup the full costs of this relocation."

17 Notice of Motion 9 by Councillors Begg and Kerr

"Notes this Council on Thursday 26 November at its Special Meeting approved the Audited Annual Accounts for 2019-20 unopposed.

Recognises that on page 10 of the Auditor's Report our Councillors were advised that financial challenges and difficult decisions lay ahead due to Covid-19.

Notes that on Page 28 of that same report we saw that the impact of the pandemic had cost us £21 million in Renfrewshire, yet we have only received £15 million of Covid relief from the SNP Government in Edinburgh which has resulted in our £6 million shortfall.

Congratulates our council officers on balancing the pre-Covid budget which delivered services to our electors and ratepayers. We call on Renfrewshire Council not to be short-changed so our financial challenges and difficult decisions are eased as we recover from the Covid pandemic.

Notes the recent Fraser of Allander report that highlighted that the SNP have yet to formally allocate £1 billion of funding they've received from the UK Government and moves that Renfrewshire Council ask the SNP Government to urgently give the council the money they require to support our communities, businesses and people who have been affected in relation to Covid-19."

18 Notice of Motion 10 by Councillors Sheridan and Harte

"£500 bonus for NHS and Social Care Workers

Council welcomes the £500 bonus for NHS and social care workers that has been announced by the Scottish Government.

Council also recognises the vital work carried out by our own front line employees during the pandemic, and will look to adopt a similar approach as soon as is practicable."



To: Council

On: 17 December 2020

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Update on COVID-19

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update of the current position in relation to the Council response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the last update report to Council on 25 June 2020, service updates have been provided to relevant Policy Boards on all the operational and service issues that have been impacted as a result of responding to the ongoing pandemic. Cross party briefings have also been issued to elected members fortnightly covering ongoing matters in relation to the COVID-19 response, key statistics relating to the transmission of the virus, updates to policy and guidance, impact on service provision and the operational position of services. A further report on the specific impact of the pandemic on the communities of Renfrewshire was considered at Council on 24 September 2020 and highlighted plans to support the economic and social recovery of communities as the pandemic moves forward and ultimately is mitigated through improved and newly developed approaches to testing and vaccination.
- 1.2 Section 3 provides a contextual update and includes the numbers of cases and deaths within Renfrewshire and notes the position in relation to Care Homes which has contributed significantly to the overall number of cases identified in Renfrewshire. This report focuses on the second wave of the virus, which has impacted particularly significantly on Renfrewshire where at times some of the highest levels of infection per 100,000 population in Scotland have been recorded and some of the highest overall positivity rates in Scotland.
- 1.3 Section 4 provides an overview of the current steps being taken to respond to and manage as far as possible the impact of the virus during the second and any subsequent waves of the virus.

- 1.4 Section 5 provides information on key steps being taken to mitigate and combat the effects of the virus. It highlights the expansion of COVID-19 testing and includes the development and running of a pilot community asymptomatic testing centre by Renfrewshire Council and partners on behalf of the Scottish and UK Governments and the recent approval of the first vaccine and the emerging programme to begin to deliver vaccinations nationally and locally is noted.
- 1.5 Section 6 outlines some of the key support measures that have been provided for businesses and communities, support for individuals and families being asked to self-isolate and the extension of furlough and business grants.

Key Messages

- 1.6 Renfrewshire has been particularly impacted during the second wave of the virus and while the number of confirmed positive cases in Renfrewshire per 100,000 population is now lower than at any time since October 2020, currently Renfrewshire still has one of the highest number of COVID-19 confirmed cases per 100,000 population in Scotland, as well as one of the highest positivity ratings in the country.
- 1.7 In Renfrewshire, a total of 293 people have sadly now died with COVID-19 since the outbreak of the virus. 87 of these deaths have taken place during the second wave of the virus – since September 2020. 33 of the deaths during the second wave took place in Care Homes; 49 in Hospital and 5 at home or other settings.
- 1.8 In recent weeks the proportion of positive tests recorded in Scotland has been well over the 5% World Health Organisation threshold for concern – however it has been reducing from a peak 7-day average of 8.2% on 22 October 2020 to a 7-day average of 4.8% on 9 December 2020. By comparison, the latest 7-day average of positive tests for the NHSGGC area is 5.8% and in Renfrewshire the 7-day average is currently 6.4% - having reduced from over 10% since October 2020.
- 1.9 Currently 7 care homes for older people in Renfrewshire have notified outbreaks, with 37 residents currently testing positive. The vast majority of residents are asymptomatic, are stable and the HSCP are seeing people recover. However, there have also sadly been 32 COVID-19 related deaths across the Renfrewshire care homes since the beginning of October 2020. Over the past four weeks, one independently operated care home has had a significant outbreak. Mass testing carried out in relation to this outbreak contributed significantly to a spike in numbers of positive cases identified in Renfrewshire on 17 November 2020.

- 1.10 On 25 November 2020 the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport announced plans to significantly expand testing in a national programme. From the beginning of December testing will be undertaken for all hospital admissions and by end of December this will also include increased routine testing of healthcare workers and professionals in the community. Testing for Care Home visitors will be available for designated visitors over the festive period and a national programme of lateral flow testing is being rolled out to include all care homes by February 2021.
- 1.11 Renfrewshire Council piloted the first lateral flow test, community asymptomatic testing centre in Scotland from 2 December 2020 to 9 December 2020 at Johnstone Town Hall. The aim of this approach was to identify the level of infection that exists in the community in people who have no symptoms with a view to further reducing the spread of the virus. The pilot was successful with just over 5,000 eligible residents and workers participating. The learnings from this pilot will be considered at a national level to inform the further roll out of testing and use of lateral flow tests in the New Year.
- 1.12 Preparations are now being made for the roll out of a national COVID-19 vaccination programme, with the HSCP and Council working closely with the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board to plan for the imminent delivery of the programme locally, following commencement of the vaccination programme nationally from 8 December 2020.
- 1.13 The introduction of the 5-tier model of protective measures with the placement of Renfrewshire within the most restrictive level 4 measures for a period has had a significant impact on local communities and businesses and has impacted on the services provided by the Council and RLL in particular
- 1.14 Significant financial and welfare support has been provided to local businesses and communities by the Council and through programmes developed by the UK and Scottish Governments. These programmes are continuing to evolve at a rapid pace and this report seeks delegated authority for the Chief Executive to make arrangements for the distribution of financial and welfare support funds that may be created in line with the guidance provided by the Scottish Government, on behalf of the Council.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:
- i. notes the update provided on the Council's response to the COVID-19 crisis and the associated impact in terms of local communities and service provision;
 - ii. acknowledges the work being undertaken by the Council to support communities and businesses in line with national guidance;

- iii. authorises the Chief Executive to make arrangements for the distribution of financial and welfare support funds that may be created in line with the guidance provided by the Scottish Government, on behalf of the Council, and to decide on how those funds are distributed; and
 - iv. agrees that a report on the exercise of the authority granted in paragraph 2.1 (iii) be provided to elected members at the earliest opportunity.
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3. Current Position

- 3.1 Pandemic infections are known to impact on populations in a series of waves – peaks and troughs of infection. Over time, the full lockdown restrictions imposed in March 2020 in response to the first wave of infections successfully restricted the transmission of the virus across Scotland and led to a number of weeks during July and August 2020 where no deaths were recorded with COVID-19 in Renfrewshire and in Scotland. However, the first wave of the virus did lead to the deaths of 206 people in Renfrewshire with COVID-19. As the second wave of the virus began to impact in September 2020, deaths with COVID-19 also began to recur. So far in the second wave of the virus 87 people have died with COVID-19 in Renfrewshire.
- 3.2 The communities of Renfrewshire have recorded particularly high levels of test positivity (at times over 10% of tests taken were positive) – and have in recent weeks also been the communities with the highest number of positive cases per 100,000 population in Scotland. Analysis has shown that a small number of significant outbreaks has contributed to this position and in particular outbreaks within local care homes. It is worth noting however, that in general, due to a greater understanding about the nature of the virus, how it is transmitted and how it is best treated, the second wave of infections has led to fewer deaths overall and the restrictive measures imposed have been less severe than during the first wave of infection.
- 3.3 The number of cases associated with Schools, Early Learning and Childcare Centres has been a clear indicator of overall numbers of cases occurring in the community during the second wave of the pandemic. In more recent weeks there has been a reduction in the numbers of cases being picked up and reported through the schools, early learning and childcare centres and this is a positive sign that the level four protective measures put in place may have had a positive impact on reducing transmission of the virus within the wider community.

COVID-19 Cases in Renfrewshire and GGC Health Board area

- 3.4 Currently Renfrewshire has the fifth highest number of COVID-19 confirmed cases per 100,000 population in Scotland – after Clackmannanshire, Argyll and Bute, North Ayrshire and Glasgow. As the significant impact of cases identified through mass testing in Care Homes has naturally been removed from within figures over time, the proportion of COVID-19 confirmed cases per 100,000 has begun to reduce significantly and in a sustained way from 260 cases on 17 November 2020 (when Renfrewshire was the highest in Scotland) to 149 cases by 9 December 2020.
- 3.5 In recent weeks the proportion of positive tests recorded in Scotland has been well over the 5% World Health Organisation threshold for concern – however it has also been reducing from a peak 7-day average of 8.2% on 22 October 2020 to a 7-day average of 4.8% on 8 December 2020. By comparison, the latest 7-day average of positive tests for the NHSGGC area is 5.8% and in Renfrewshire the 7-day average is currently 6.4% - having reduced from over 10% since October 2020.
- 3.6 Positive cases from tests in Renfrewshire had a spike on 17 November 2020 - with 134 cases recorded that day – roughly double the daily numbers recorded on either side of that spike. The mass testing carried out in relation to a significant outbreak in a Renfrewshire Care Home was a major contributor to this spike in numbers of positive cases. While this figure is still fluctuating day by day, the current 7-day average daily figure is 38.
- 3.7 The highest daily number of positive cases reported in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board Area was 607 cases on 2 November 2020. The current 7-day average daily figure is 230.

Protecting the NHS

- 3.8 The system of restrictions used to combat the second wave of COVID-19 has been successful in allowing the NHS to continue to cope with demand, and to continue to provide ongoing care on a wider range of emergency and elective procedures than was the case during the first lockdown in March 2020. Hospital cases during the second wave of COVID-19 in Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board area peaked at higher levels around 2 November 2020 with 530 people in hospital with COVID-19, 21 of whom were in intensive care. On 8 December this had reduced to 358 people in hospital and 12 in intensive care.

Deaths

- 3.9 Sadly, deaths with COVID-19 are continuing. In Renfrewshire, a total of 293 people have died with COVID-19 since the outbreak of the virus. Of these 206 died in the first wave of the pandemic and 87 have died since 21 September 2020.

- 3.10 National Records of Scotland recorded 22 deaths with COVID-19 in Renfrewshire in week commencing 30 November 2020. 11 of these deaths took place in hospital and 10 in a care home and 1 at home or a non-hospital institution.
- 3.11 The most recent National Records of Scotland report (9 December 2020) shows that as at 6 December 2020, there had been a total of 5,868 deaths registered in Scotland where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate.

Care Homes

- 3.12 As the impact of COVID-19 increases across communities, the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) is continuing to see the effect within care homes. Of the 23 care homes for older people across Renfrewshire, 1 is newly registered - Bridge of Weir and 3 are operated by the HSCP - Montrose, Hunterhill and Renfrew. At the time of writing all three HSCP operated care homes have no formally notified outbreaks. As previously highlighted the use of a range of testing and the activity of Test and Protect within the wider community means that the HSCP can identify a wider range and higher number of both residents and staff who are positive. The vast majority of residents are asymptomatic, are stable and the HSCP are seeing people recover.
- 3.13 The situation, however, remains fluid and the range of enhanced support and oversight delivered through the Daily Huddle and enhanced clinical and care governance arrangements remain in place. The HSCP continues to work closely with both Public Health and the Care Inspectorate. At the time of writing 7 care homes for older people in Renfrewshire have notified outbreaks, with 37 residents currently testing positive. Over the past four weeks, one independently operated care home has had a significant outbreak which has resulted in a significant increase in positive cases in care homes during this time. The mass testing carried out in relation to this outbreak contributed significantly to the spike in numbers of positive cases identified in Renfrewshire on 17 November 2020. There have also sadly been 32 COVID-19 related deaths across the Renfrewshire care homes since the beginning of October 2020.

Care Inspectorate Key Question 7 Inspections

- 3.14 During the pandemic, the Care Inspectorate, together with colleagues from Health Improvement Scotland and Health Protection Scotland, have been carrying out inspections of care homes for adults and older people. Inspections have a focus on answering the question (known as key question 7): "How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?".

- 3.15 The scrutiny carried out by the Care Inspectorate is led by intelligence and based on risk. This means information is gathered, risks are assessed, and intensity of scrutiny is based on this. The Care Inspectorate also maintains oversight of care services through data gathering, concerns and complaints, notification requirements, registration and more, including video consultation and virtual visits (using Near Me) to services.

4 Management of the virus – 2nd Wave

- 4.1 This section of the report sets out the main terms of the Scottish Government's protective measures strategic framework and its impact on areas of frontline service and service delivery when a Council area moves between levels of protective measures.

Scotland's Strategic Framework – New protection levels

- 4.2 The Scottish Government confirmed its new five-tier framework to help suppress Coronavirus outbreaks across Scotland on 27 October 2020. It is intended to allow for rapid and flexible responses to be made on both a local and national basis using a range of measures and options, and to give a level of clarity and consistency to businesses and communities about the nature of intervention that would be applied at each level.
- 4.3 The types of restriction and protective measures at each level are based on improved knowledge about how the virus is transmitted and how it can be controlled, balanced with a desire to minimise some of the worst impacts of a full lockdown on the economy, wider health services and vulnerable individuals and communities. Within the tiered system of protective measures therefore, it is the intention that schools and other educational establishments remain open as far as possible, across all tiers; that general health services including elective surgeries be kept operational as far as possible; and controls be focused on the situations and settings most likely to lead to significant transmission of the virus. It is not intended to return to the previous shielding arrangements at any level – but there is specific advice for those who were previously Shielding provided within each tier.
- 4.4 In determining the level of intervention for each Council area, meetings take place between Scottish Government and key stakeholders including Councils to examine a range of indicators. These indicators include; number of cases per 100,000; the age profile of positive cases; forecasted cases; characteristics/containment of any local clusters; % of positive tests; and current and forecasted NHS capacity including ICU capacity.

4.5 The levels are:

- Level 0 – closest to normal life without a vaccine (similar to the arrangements experienced during August 2020)
- Level 1 – similar to Scotland’s position mid-September, with tighter measures on meetings indoors (6 people from 2 households)
- Level 2 – no in-home socialising, some restrictions on events, leisure activities and hospitality hours – alcohol only with a meal
- Level 3 – Increased restrictions on hospitality businesses - no alcohol, restricted hours of operation, and limited travel into and out of the area
- Level 4 – closer to full lockdown, hospitality and non-essential shops closed

Renfrewshire’s position in the Protection Level Measures

- 4.6 Due to the overall position of Renfrewshire in relation to the number of positive cases and the infection rates prevalent in the community on 17 November 2020 the First Minister announced that Renfrewshire would be placed in level four protective measures along with 10 other local authorities in west / central Scotland. The changes came into force on 20 November 2020 and remained in place until 11 December 2020 at which time the 11 Council areas were all moved down to level three protective measures.
- 4.7 As the Council moved back to level three protective measures some of the most restrictive protection measures were relaxed, this has allowed some hospitality; non-essential retail; gyms; leisure and entertainment facilities; close contact services such as hairdressers; visitor attractions; and holiday accommodation for tourism, to begin to operate again with strict operational controls in place.
- 4.8 Guidance on travel restrictions also became law on 20 November 2020 – meaning travel into or out of Council areas in levels three or four is only permitted for certain essential purposes. Similarly, people living in lower level areas elsewhere in Scotland must not travel into a level three or level four area other than for essential purposes and there should be no non-essential travel between Scotland and other parts of the UK. Public transport should only be used for essential purposes.
- 4.9 Unlike the March lockdown, schools remain open at all levels of the protective measures, as well as early learning and childcare services.
- 4.10 People continue to be advised to work from home wherever that is possible. Businesses which provide essential services can continue to operate, such as those supporting critical national infrastructure, courts and tribunals. Outdoor workplaces, construction, manufacturing and veterinary services also can remain open.

- 4.11 In terms of shielding, there has been no return to full shielding advice, with no requirement for those previously shielding to stay at home or not to work. The focus is on supporting those individuals to manage their risk and on employers to support people to stay safe at work.

Communications

- 4.12 To support the moves between different levels of the protective measures, a comprehensive communications and engagement plan for communities, businesses and staff has been put in place.
- 4.13 Following each announcement of a change or prospective change a range of channels is used to provide key information on the changes, including social media, the local press and the Council website. Communities are encouraged to comply with each set of new measures to minimise the amount of time more restrictive measures are in place and reduce any adverse impact. Local partners are also supported to play their part by sharing these messages through their own channels.
- 4.14 The key messages for communications as the Council moved to level 3 measures on 11 December 2020 were:
- People must not visit any other household in their homes in any part of Scotland (limited exceptions apply)
 - It is safe for people to attend work, following safe travel advice and complying with workplace guidance
 - For those able to work from home, this should continue
 - People should not travel into or out of the level 3 area unless it is essential travel, for example *'those from outside Glasgow should not travel into the city to do Christmas shopping when retail reopens'*
 - All hospitality premises, including cafes, pubs and restaurants, will now be able to serve food and close at 6pm, without the sale of alcohol
 - Only six people from two households should meet in a hospitality setting or outdoors

Business Regulation

- 4.15 Business Regulation is an area where each change in guidance and legislation has a significant impact on workload. Each time the Council area changes tier this has a significant impact on hospitality and retail services in particular, and the Business Regulation teams are required to support businesses to ensure that they understand and comply with the changes in guidance and legislation. Where necessary, enforcement action can be taken where businesses are not complying with legislation.
- 4.16 As the levels of restriction reduce - when Council areas are placed into a reduced level of protective measures, the scope for more businesses to begin to trade more normally increases. At each level it is for the Business Regulation team to understand and support compliance with the appropriate controls in place.

Children's Services

- 4.17 Throughout the second wave of the pandemic there has been a focus on maintaining educational and childcare opportunities as far as possible. The Scottish Government has updated their guidance on reducing the risk in schools to ensure a safe and supportive environment for learning and teaching during the coronavirus pandemic. This includes specific enhanced measures for schools and early learning and childcare settings in local authorities at levels three and four in the system of tiered protection levels.
- 4.18 On 7 October 2020 the Deputy First Minister made a statement to parliament confirming that there would be no external assessment or examinations for national 5 courses. The SQA, in partnership with all stakeholders, has developed an alternative certification model. On 8 December 2020 the Deputy First Minister also announced there would be no external assessments of Higher or Advanced Higher courses in 2020/21. It is anticipated that a model of alternative certification will be implemented similar to the agreed model being implemented for national 5. Extensive planning will take place to ensure that the application of these models is robust in all secondary schools.

Care Home Visiting

- 4.19 On 12 October 2020, the Scottish Government released guidance for care homes on phasing in the re-introduction of visiting. Essential visits will be supported sympathetically at every protection level throughout the pandemic and such visits will be supported where it is imperative that friends or family see their loved one. This might include circumstances where it is clear that the person's health and wellbeing is changing for the worse, where visiting may help with communication difficulties, to ease significant personal stress or other pressing circumstances.
- 4.20 On 4 December 2020, the Scottish Government issued a Christmas and New Year guidance for adult care homes and visitors. The guidance seeks to balance the serious risks posed by the virus to care home residents with the ability to see friends and family throughout the holiday period. This will be supported by the use of testing for care home visitors being rolled out in the programme detailed in Section 5 of this report. Following this, a local decision-making framework will be published to support a longer term and more nuanced approach to decisions on visiting which will take account of a number of local factors and is proportionate to the assessment of risk. This will allow increased tailoring of visiting arrangements based on local circumstances.

Renfrewshire Leisure

- 4.21 Due to the nature of its services Renfrewshire Leisure has been significantly impacted by higher tiers of restriction during the second wave of the virus. Under the most restrictive level four measures, Renfrewshire Leisure was required to temporarily close all leisure centres, gyms, swimming pools, libraries and the heritage centre. Renfrewshire Leisure reflects these restrictions and suspended in-venue operations in leisure members' direct debit payments or annual terms as relevant for any period impacted. Provision of live-streamed and on-demand leisure exercise classes has been increased to meet demand.
- 4.22 Community Halls are closed except where exemptions are granted, for example to deliver out of school care and COVID response work.

Specific COVID-19 Guidance for Festive Period

- 4.23 Scottish government guidance for the relaxation of travel and household restrictions for the festive period has been issued. Over the period from 23 December 2020 to 27 December 2020 Christmas "bubbles" of up to three households will be permitted to form in Scotland, each of which should contain no more than eight people. Children under the age of 12 will not count towards the total number of people in the bubble. Travel restrictions will be lifted across all four nations to allow people to visit close friends and relatives and form these temporary households. Those in a bubble can only gather in a private home, outdoors or at a place of worship – but should not meet in a hospitality setting or form more than one bubble. For those meeting in someone's home, it is permissible to stay overnight.
- 4.24 Students travelling home at the end of term will be able to take voluntary COVID-19 tests through their college or university prior to travelling. As part of a number of measures to support a safe return home, students are also being asked to take extra care in the period leading up their departure, only going out for essential purposes such as learning, exercise and food shopping. Students returning home from University or College will immediately form part of and be included as one of their family's household.

5 Mitigation of the Virus

- 5.1 In recent weeks a number of national programmes have come forward that have brought the first concrete advances (through technical and scientific developments) in the ability of public agencies to begin to better understand and ultimately control the spread and impact of the virus.

Expansion of COVID-19 Testing Strategy

- 5.2 On 25 November 2020 the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport announced plans to significantly expand COVID-19 testing in a national programme. This further expansion is now possible because of increases in testing capacity - coming from the 3 new NHS regional hub laboratories, from Lighthouse laboratories, and from the development of new testing options.
- 5.3 From the beginning of December, testing has been undertaken for all hospital admissions to emergency departments, acute assessment centres, maternity units and emergency mental health units. By mid-December this will include all medical and surgical elective admissions.
- 5.4 Routine testing of healthcare workers is also being extended to twice weekly and will include everyone working in patient facing roles in all hospitals; the Scottish Ambulance Service; COVID-19 Assessment Centres in the community; and healthcare professionals who visit care homes. This will also be fully rolled out by the end of December.
- 5.5 Testing in social care will also be extended and it is intended will include lateral flow testing of designated visitors to care homes on the day of a visit, to ensure that if the test is positive, family members can take immediate action to isolate and avoid the harm that could have arisen during a visit.
- 5.6 Renfrewshire will be included in the programme to deliver home test kits to all care homes nationally prior to 14 December 2020. This will be supplemented by PCR testing from 21 December 2020 and will allow designated visitors to access tests over the 3-week festive period. Although no test is 100% accurate, testing provides an additional layer of protection and will increase the confidence of visitors at this time. Risk assessments and protocols for indoor visiting will remain in place for each care home, operating in line with their current circumstances.
- 5.7 On its own, testing doesn't give risk-free visiting, but combined with appropriate PPE and strict hand hygiene the roll out of lateral flow testing to include all care homes by February 2021 will allow more relatives to visit their loved ones, reduce isolation and loneliness for care home residents and give providers the additional confidence they need to facilitate and support more visits.
- 5.8 From mid-January 2021, the national testing programme will be being extended wider into the community to include home care staff, including permanent and visiting staff and personal assistants to a person's home; and covering residential settings; sheltered housing and day care. This part of the programme will begin in those local authority areas with the highest prevalence of the virus at the time and expand out from there to cover the whole sector by March 2021.

- 5.9 Asymptomatic testing to entire groups and communities has already begun. From the return of the school term in January 2021, a number of pathfinder testing programmes on deliverability in the school environment will be undertaken with the objective of establishing a sustainable programme of asymptomatic testing amongst school-based staff.

Community Asymptomatic Testing Centre Pilot – Johnstone Town Hall

- 5.10 To support the development of the national testing programme, Renfrewshire Council agreed to run a community asymptomatic testing pilot facility at Johnstone Town Hall on behalf of the Scottish and UK Governments. The facility operated from 2 December to 9 December 2020 providing an opportunity for those living or working in Johnstone, who do not have any COVID-19 symptoms, to take a test which processes a result in around 30 minutes.
- 5.11 This pilot of the 'lateral flow' test process identified asymptomatic people who were unaware they were carrying the virus as they had no symptoms. It also gave a clearer picture of the overall prevalence of coronavirus within the Johnstone community. Just over 5,000 tests were undertaken during this pilot period – some of which were through the provision of home testing kits to around 450 residents on the former shielding list. A significant communications and marketing campaign was developed to encourage local people to participate and support the pilot using the full range of social and traditional media as well as direct contact with residents and service users in the Johnstone area. In the end over a quarter of eligible residents and employees in the area attended the testing site.

COVID-19 Vaccine Programme

- 5.12 As reported in the media, the first COVID-19 vaccine, known as the Courageous (Pfizer) vaccine was approved for use in the UK on 2 December 2020, having met the strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness set out by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. Other vaccines are also at an advanced stage of development and testing, and subject to approval by the regulators be made available on the NHS as part of the wider vaccination programme.
- 5.13 The vaccine began to be rolled out nationally the following week with the first vaccinations delivered on 8 December 2020. The Chief Medical Officer has advised that priority, based on clinical risk, will be given to staff and residents in care homes for older adults, and other frontline healthcare workers. People over the age of 80 will then receive their injections, as supply allows. The Courageous vaccine requires to be stored at very low temperatures between minus 70 and minus 80 degrees centigrade. This places challenges on the transportation and distribution of the vaccine. It also requires to be delivered as a two-stage process with the second injection three weeks following the first. It is expected that the person receiving the vaccine will be protected around a week after the second injection.

The UK's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation is currently preparing guidance on all of the priority groups for immunisation, and further information will be provided on plans for the roll out of a wider vaccination programme as additional guidance is published and additional vaccines become available.

- 5.14 Delivery of the vaccination programme is still at an early stage and will be subject to the availability and flow of the vaccine. Renfrewshire has established a joint Council and HSCP planning team to support the wider NHS GGC rollout programme, building on learning from the recent flu programme and mass testing pilot. An initial NHS GGC vaccination programme has commenced at the Louisa Jordan, focused on care home staff and frontline NHS staff working in red zones i.e. intensive care units. This includes staff working in Renfrewshire care homes, who have started to be vaccinated. Planning is also underway to deliver the vaccine at a local centre(s), which may include the Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH) and St Mirren Football Stadium, and also across our care homes, subject to vaccine availability and the environmental conditions set out in paragraph 5.2.

6 Support for business and communities

- 6.1 Significant financial support has been made available through programmes funded by both the UK and Scottish Governments to seek to mitigate the adverse impact on individuals and businesses that are unable to live and work as normal due to the restrictions placed on them under the initial lockdown period, and the tiered system of protective measures now being used during the second wave of the pandemic. The scale and range of financial support measures put in place is unprecedented with almost £30m distributed directly to businesses in Renfrewshire by the Council since March to help them mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and the operational restrictions imposed by the Government to tackle the pandemic.
- 6.2 Updated packages of funding are continuing to be developed with the most recent announcement on additional funding was made by the Finance Secretary on 9 December 2020.

Business Grants

- 6.3 The business support that had been made available was reported to Council on 25 June 2020. An updated and amended business grant programme was introduced from 2 November 2020 to provide ongoing support to businesses impacted by increased and extended protective measures. The grants available were primarily to support those required to close or restrict services during the second wave of the pandemic. When Renfrewshire was operating under level four protective measures approximately 1,120 businesses were impacted in this way.

- 6.4 More detail on the various statistics relating to business supports (including the UK furlough and self-employed schemes) are contained within the report on the Economic Recovery Plan also included on the Council agenda on 17 December 2020.

Further Funding Announced – 9 December 2020

- 6.5 On 9 December 2020 the Finance Secretary, Ms Forbes announced an allocation of £185m for new and additional business support to be distributed in 2021, providing support on a sector by sector basis. This will include grant schemes for: Tourism (including for self-catering, B&Bs and guest houses, travel agents and tour operators); the events sector; the wedding sector; hospitality; live music and cultural venues; the arts; taxi drivers; indoor football centres; brewing sector and mobile close contact services (such as hairdressers). The fine detail of each of these schemes will be provided in coming weeks.
- 6.6 In addition to the grant support outlined above, the Scottish Government has previously announced two other funding streams for Councils to distribute:
- **£30 million discretionary fund** to enable Local Authorities (in all Levels) to provide additional support for businesses where they consider that necessary or justified - for example, for businesses in supply chains, or to taxi drivers suffering an indirect effect.
 - **Additional £15 million for newly self-employed people** (in all Levels) who have not been able to access other forms of support.
- 6.7 The Finance Secretary anticipated that her announcement would help local authorities begin to make their individual decisions about how they will use the £30m discretionary fund, taking account of the sectors the government is supporting and making considered local determinations on where to target the resources available to them.
- 6.8 It is anticipated that the Scottish Government will make further announcements and issue guidance on the specific funds to be given to local authorities in coming weeks to tackle the social and economic consequences of the pandemic. It is likely that the Council will require to make arrangements for the distribution of those funds within timescales that would make it very difficult to get the Board approvals that are usually required. In these circumstances, it is proposed as a temporary measure that the Chief Executive is given the authority to make arrangements for the distribution of the funds.

Self-Isolation Welfare Support Support for people team

- 6.9 The Council has been asked to contact all people self-isolating locally in order to offer support in relation to aspects such as wellbeing, financial issues and access to food and medicine. Data is provided on a daily basis by NHS NSS to the Council, with relevant data sharing agreements in place to ensure this data can be shared and used by local authority officers.
- 6.10 Up to 8 December 2020, the Council has been provided with details for 3,720 self-isolating residents. All residents have been called and successful contact has been made with over 91% of individuals. 181 referrals have been made for further support from the neighbourhood hubs or for financial support through the Self Isolation Support Grant. A high number of the people that have been contacted by the team, have opted out of any further contact as no support is required by them. The low number of onwards referrals correlates to previous trends in terms of requests for support from people self-isolating, which have also been very low in recent months.
- 6.11 Officers from the team have also been handling referrals that come in through the national helpline to the Council and are directed through the Customer Service Centre.

Self-Isolating Support Grant (£500 payment)

- 6.12 The Scottish Government has committed to providing a grant of £500 to individuals who are in receipt of low-income benefits and who lose income as a result of being required to self-isolate to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It will provide them with the financial support they need to meet their basic needs during the 14-day period in which they are unable to work. Using the Scottish Welfare Fund as the legal and delivery mechanism, applications for Self-Isolating Support Grant's opened on 12 October, with applicants who were asked to self-isolate on or after 28 September able to apply during their 14 day isolation period.
- 6.13 Applications can be made at any point during the individual's 14 day self-isolation period. The initial key tests of eligibility for a Self-Isolation Support Grant are whether the applicant:
- has been required to self-isolate by Test and Protect Scotland;
 - is employed or self-employed;
 - is unable to work from home and will face reduced earnings as a result of self-isolating; and
 - is currently receiving or has been awarded but not yet received a payment of Universal Credit or other specified means tested benefits.

6.14 On 30 November the First Minister announced changes to the SISG eligibility criteria. The changes widen the range of people able to claim a support grant and provide decision makers with greater scope to make an award where all the other criteria are met. The changes took effect from 7 December 2020 and are noted below:

- A parent/guardian or carer can make an application for a SISG where they meet the other eligibility criteria and any child they are responsible for has been asked to self-isolate from school or nursery and the parent is not able to work
- Where an applicant is not in receipt of Universal Credit, where the local authority believes they would qualify for it if they applied, they will be treated as if they are.

6.15 Data on the number of applications and awards made as at Monday 7 December is shown in the table below.

Week commencing	No. Applications	No. Awarded	No. Declined
Up to 21/11/2020	306	109	197
22/11/20	38	22	16
30/11/20	40	17	23
Total	384	148	236

6.16 The main reasons for an application being declined up until the eligibility criteria changed on 6 December are as noted below:

- Not in receipt of or eligible for a qualifying benefit,
- Earnings have not been impacted as a result of being asked to self-isolate
- The applicant has not been formally requested to self-isolate by NHS

Support for Low Income Families

6.17 On 30 November 2020, The First Minister announced funding of £100m to help low-income people over the winter period, including direct payments of £100 to be made before Christmas to all families with children in receipt of free school meals. £25m of the funding will be distributed to vulnerable people through local authorities, £15m will go to charities, with further allocations to help the homeless and tackle fuel poverty.

6.18 This announcement followed the statement by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security on 20 October 2020 when it was announced that the Scottish government would make £10m available for free school meal provision over the Christmas holidays, February half-term break and Easter. The statement also noted that there will be an £18m fund available to Councils to tackle financial insecurity, in addition to the £57m already made available through the Scottish Welfare Fund designed to help people meet housing, fuel and food costs.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – although at this stage not fully 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 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.
2. **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.
3. **Community/Council Planning** – Covid-19 impacts on the operations of Council partners and on services to 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. This will also apply to outdoor assets.
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**
 - (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.
 - (b) 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** – 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** – 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** – COSLA Leaders have continued to meet very fortnight during the crisis and there has been ongoing dialogue in relation to emerging issues, with specific work being undertaken in relation to the significant financial constraints facing local authorities and education recovery amongst others.
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.

List of Background Papers

None

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To: Council

On: 17th December 2020

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: General Fund Financial Update

1. Overview and Key Messages

- 1.1 The Council's financial outlook over the relatively short period of the next two years, is subject to significantly increased uncertainty at the end of 2020 in comparison to that which existed at the beginning of 2020. In this context, the next two to three years may represent the most critical period in the financial history of the Council. It is now a necessity that the Council is highly focused on re-mobilising and driving forward the Right for Renfrewshire transformation programme once it is freed from COVID19 demands in order to deliver the targeted £25 million of savings. This is critical to provide confidence that the Council will be positioned to secure the financial sustainability of priority services.
- 1.2 It is has become increasingly clearer that there is growing collateral damage caused by the COVID19 pandemic to the economic and fiscal position of the UK and Scotland, resulting in the largest economic slump in 300 years, and ultimately the uncertain impact this will have on future public spending.
- 1.3 The Chancellor of the Exchequer in his recent spending review announcement, outlined that the economic emergency arising from the pandemic has only just begun. Based on the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast, economic output across the UK is not expected to recover to pre-pandemic levels until the final quarter of 2022 and long lasting economic scarring is expected to result in the UK economy being 3% lower in 2025 than forecast prior to the pandemic. Additionally, the OBR estimate that the impact of a no deal Brexit should this emerge is forecast to add a further drop in economic output at circa 2%.

- 1.4 UK Government borrowing during 2020 will reach unprecedented peacetime levels, with in year borrowing expected to be nearly £400bn and debt levels cumulatively now in excess of total annual economic output of the UK and expected to grow from there over the medium term. For context, these debt levels have only been seen in the periods when the UK was recovering from post war periods in the 20th century.
- 1.5 Such is the ongoing uncertainty at a national level, the UK government as a direct consequence has committed only to a single year spending review. Decisions on tax and borrowing have been put off until the new year and the previous commitment to a multi-year comprehensive spending review postponed until next year at the earliest given the scale of uncertainty.
- 1.6 Critically however, this unprecedented level of national borrowing is being accessed at equally unprecedented low rates of interest. Consequently, the cost to service the overall UK government debt is forecast to be lower this year than last year. This suggests the UK government may have greater fiscal scope to manage such a high level of debt as well as having scope to accommodate future budget deficits without the financial sustainability of meeting the annual debt servicing costs becoming as significant an issue as it otherwise might have been in a higher interest rate environment. This undoubtedly will provide the UK government with a greater degree of flexibility over the medium term than it would have had were borrowing costs not as low and may therefore limit the extent to which public spending reductions and or tax rises are deemed necessary.
- 1.7 Early indications would suggest that the impact of the UK spending review on the Scottish Government core block grant settlement, is relatively similar in revenue budget terms to 2020/21, with the block revenue grant growing by £1.1bn (over 4% in cash terms). The capital block grant is however planned to drop by £0.3bn (5%) in contrast to the growth experienced in 2020/21.
- 1.8 Under fiscal devolution, this block grant settlement from the UK Government represents only a staging post in the process of setting a Scottish Budget for 2021/22 and ultimately the local government settlement. As previously reported to members the Scottish budget is subject to growing risks and uncertainties and this settlement from the UK government, which has maintained a real terms growth of circa 3.5% in the block grant settlement, provides only limited reassurance at this stage. For context, a similar level of growth in the block grant settlement emerged in 2020/21, after which the Council's grant settlement ultimately experienced a like for like cut of 1.1%. Therefore, healthy real terms growth in the block grant nationally does not automatically translate into an expectation of an improved outlook for the local government grant settlement.
- 1.9 COVID-19 related funding for the Scottish government has been set at this stage at £1.3 billion in 2021-22, compared with the guaranteed minimum amount of £8.2 billion in 2020-21. This suggests that based on current financial plans as set out by the UK government it is anticipated that many of the ongoing interventions that have occurred this year in response to COVID19 will be unwound somewhat and or ultimately removed.
- 1.10 Based broadly on the central planning scenario over 2021/22 – 23 it is anticipated that the Council is likely to be faced with a funding gap of circa £26 million prior to any decisions on council tax, albeit this is subject to significant uncertainty, predominantly driven by future grant settlements and pay awards.

- 1.11 The Right for Renfrewshire programme has been heavily disrupted by the capacity of the Council being diverted to support the COVID19 response and this is expected to remain a significant constraint on the programme well into 2021. The current financial planning assumption is that the R4R programme will not provide any further delivery of savings in 2021/22 over and above those linked to the reprofiled savings from the tranche 1 service redesigns.
- 1.12 Further, it is anticipated that the delivery of the R4R programme is now likely to extend into a 4 year programme (to 2023/24) as opposed to the 3 year programme (to 2022/23) previously planned.
- 1.13 Consequently, it is anticipated that the Council's financial strategy over the next two years will require to draw heavily on and potentially exhaust the financial flexibilities secured both through national agreement with the Scottish Government, but more significantly through changes to capital financial planning arrangements approved locally by the Council,.
- 1.14 It is critical for members to note that the use of such financial flexibilities as part of the medium financial term strategy represent a temporary measure, providing the Council with time and space to organisationally recover and re-stabilise post COVID19 and transition back to driving forward delivery of the R4R programme.
- 1.15 Given the relatively limited window of protection the financial flexibilities are expected to be able to provide the Council, and in the absence of the financial position crystallising at the optimistic end of the two year forecast, should the Council fail to achieve the R4R financial objectives or fail to achieve it at the required pace, there is a severe risk that the acute financial challenge faced by the Council will escalate into a financial crisis over the medium term.
- 1.16 This significantly heightened financial risk profile reinforces the need for the Council to be decisive, make substantial and at times more challenging decisions than it has previously in order to fully commit to the delivery of significant change and transformation.
- 1.17 Failure to achieve this transformational progress, will ultimately lead the Council into territory that would involve action to secure rapid reduction in costs, not delivered through managed transformation but by cutting, downsizing or withdrawing services.
- 1.18 Additionally, given the significantly more challenging economic outlook outlined by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and ignoring any additional negative impact from a potential no deal Brexit, it now appears certain that the overall UK and Scottish economies will be poorer over the medium term than they otherwise would have been had COVID19 not occurred. This inevitably brings with it, greater downside risks to the outlook for public finances in the UK over the medium term.
- 1.19 There is therefore is no certainty that this relatively short two year financial planning horizon to the end of 2023, will see the end of the Council being required to deliver significant savings. In this context, it is more critical than ever that the Council from a sustainability perspective is as well placed as possible to address this risk moving beyond 2022/23.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that members

- note the update provided in the report,
- note that the next update is anticipated to form part of the budget report to Council based on the planned announcement of the Scottish Government budget and local government financial settlement on the 28th January, and
- agree to the adjustments to the capital planning arrangements as outlined in section 5 of the report.

3. Revenue Summary Update

3.1 COVID19 Impact 2020/21

3.1.1 The financial outlook report to Council in September outlined an expectation that - excluding education, early learning and childcare hubs – the net additional costs expected to be incurred in relation to COVID19 were in the region of £20-£22 million. This position has not changed markedly, with the range of costs potentially reducing marginally to £19 million - £21 million. Some areas of cost have increased as prevention measures have extended over a longer period; while other initial estimates have reduced such as loss of income from commercial waste collection which is once again being undertaken, generating income which had not previously been forecast. These estimates are based broadly on the current environment of restrictions remaining in place until the end of the financial year. Should this change materially, for example with further recurring Tier 4 restrictions applying for prolonged period, there is likely to be a consequential impact on council services and associated costs.

3.1.2 This forecast includes an anticipated impact on net council tax income of around £4m and unachieved savings potentially in the order of £3m; largely attributable to the pausing of the Right for Renfrewshire (RFR) programme and the impact of the pandemic on management capacity to fully deliver departmental savings incorporated in the base budget for 2020/21.

3.1.3 The position above includes an estimated loss of £2.3m for Renfrewshire Leisure (RL), which is an improvement on the previous estimates predominantly owing to RL securing a greater level of furlough income than previously forecast. However, it is noted that this estimate is likely to be impacted negatively due to the recent Tier 4 closure and any further restrictions that may yet emerge over future months.

3.1.4 In line with the approach outlined in previous reports, the Council's financial forecast does not include any net unfunded costs being incurred by Renfrewshire HSCP. This position continues to be informed by the formal Scottish Government commitment that that costs incurred by the HSCP in relation to the pandemic will be fully funded by the Scottish Government.

- 3.1.5 Costs related to the pandemic which are being incurred in schools/ELC and children's social care are estimated to be £4.3 million. It continues to be the expectation that this cost will be self contained within the additional funding provided by the Scottish Government specifically for teacher recruitment and school mobilisation costs, and from permitted flexibilities in the application of other specific grant funding linked to Early Learning and Childcare expansion and Pupil Equity Funding.
- 3.1.6 Since the September Council report, further funding announcements and distributions to individual council level have been confirmed by the Scottish Government, and these have been largely in line with expectations. A total of £13m of revenue funding has been confirmed to date (excluding funding specifically for additional teachers the costs of which are not reflected above), with further allocations still to be confirmed. It is estimated a further £1-2m in total may be allocated to Renfrewshire from these funds, taking the total funding to circa £15 million – again broadly in line with the position outlined in the financial outlook report in September.
- 3.1.7 Based on the existing forecasts of additional COVID19 related costs and funding for the 2020/21 period outlined above, the net cost to be funded by the Council is estimated to be within the range of £4 million - £7 million. General fund unallocated reserves as at the end of 2019/20 were £6.6m and it is expected these may be fully deployed in order to meet this net cost on the closure of the 2020/21 accounts.
- 3.1.8 As approved by Council in September, unallocated reserves will be replenished to £10 million moving into 2021/22, funded from the application of the financial flexibilities available to the Council. This will replenish unallocated balances to a position which is approximately 2.3% of the Council's net revenue expenditure, which remains well within accepted planning parameters. This is a necessary step in order to re-establish the immediate financial resilience of the Council and is reflective of the heightened financial risks the Council will continue to face from the pandemic, in terms of its ongoing impact pending the vaccine programme, legacy risks and the recovery period, but also from the wider impact on the Council's financial strategy and additional financial risks caused by the disruption to the Right for Renfrewshire transformation programme.
- 3.2 Updated Outlook for 2021/22 – 2022/23
- 3.2.1 Since the previous update provided to Council in September, a significant amount of work has been progressed to further update the assessment of the Council's financial outlook moving into 2021/22 and thereafter into 2022/23, which represent years 2 and 3 of the current 3 year financial strategy.
- 3.2.2 Since September, the developing consequential impact of the COVID19 pandemic has continued to escalate the level of financial uncertainty facing the Council over this two year period, particularly in relation to government grant prospects, future pay settlements and the consequential delay to the Right for Renfrewshire programme due to managing the COVID19 response.

3.2.3

Government Grant

Prior to the pandemic the Council's financial outlook forecast a continued year on year reduction in like for like government grant levels over the medium term. At the beginning of 2020 following the publication of the 2020/21 Scottish Government budget and wider economic and fiscal outlook at a national position in Scotland, there was limited encouragement or justification to alter this current medium term forecast for the Council's future government grant prospects. The central planning expectation was that existing core revenue grant levels made available to local government were likely to experience a further like for like cuts, with 1.25% per annum adopted as the central assumption. This forecast was reflective of three key influencing factors at that time:

- The fiscal and economic outlook nationally for Scotland continuing to anticipate relatively limited growth by historic standards and lagging that of the UK with the Scottish Government's overall budget anticipated to face significant challenges moving forward under the workings of the fiscal framework. This backdrop was expected to place an increasing constraint in the overall level of growth in public sector spending across Scotland.
- Additionally, the Scottish Government has on several occasions re-affirmed clear policy commitments to real terms growth or protection to major areas of the Scottish Budget, most notably to the NHS, Police and education (excluding schools) which constitute the majority of overall devolved spending. Local Government forms the significant proportion of the unprotected area of the budget and as such would be required to fit within the resources available to the Scottish Government. Taken together, these factors suggested limited prospects for overall growth in local government resources.
- At the same time, local government has been and continues to take on new responsibilities which require new funding, such as the ongoing expansion of early learning and childcare. Moving forward there continues to be significant additional resources tied into the delivery of early learning and childcare expansion that will require to be funded, significantly increasing the risk that the core local government grant may continue to experience a reduction on a like for like basis once adjustments are made for such new burden funding. The most recent announcement by the Scottish Government relates to a future commitment, if they are re-elected for a new parliamentary term, to expand free school meal provision to all primary school pupils from August 2022, at a reported annual cost of £230 million, suggesting a potential continuation of this risk factor over the medium term.

The most recent influencing event for the Council's future grant prospects occurred on Wednesday the 25th of November, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a single year spending review for the UK. This follows confirmation of the growing collateral economic and fiscal damage caused by the COVID19 pandemic to the UK and Scotland, resulting in the greatest economic slump in 300 years.

The Chancellor's announcement outlined that the economic emergency arising from the pandemic has only just begun. Based on the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR), economic output across the UK is not expected to recover to pre-pandemic levels until the final quarter of 2022 and long lasting economic scarring is expected to result in the UK economy being 3% lower in 2025 than forecast prior to the pandemic. Additionally, the OBR estimate that the impact of a no deal Brexit should this emerge is forecast to drive a further drop in economic output of circa 2%.

UK Government borrowing in 2020 is at unprecedented peacetime levels, with in year borrowing expected to reach nearly £400bn and debt levels cumulatively now in excess of total annual UK economic output and expected to grow from there over the medium term. For context, these are debt levels only experienced in the post World Wars recovery periods.

Such is the ongoing uncertainty at a national level, the UK government as a direct consequence has committed only to a single year spending announcement. Decisions on tax and borrowing have been put off until the new year and the previous commitment to a multi-year comprehensive spending review postponed until next year given the scale of uncertainty.

However, within such a widespread context of negative factors there is one area which provides some critical benefit to the current circumstances. The immense level of borrowing being undertaken by the UK government is being accessed at unprecedented low rates of interest. Consequently, the annual cost to public spending to service the overall UK government debt is forecast to be lower this year than last year.

This supports the prospect that the UK fiscal position may have greater financial scope to sustainably carry such high debt levels, as well as capacity to shoulder further borrowing to support future UK level budget deficits. This undoubtedly will provide the UK government with a greater degree of flexibility over the medium term than it would have were borrowing costs not so low and may therefore limit the extent to which public spending reductions and or tax rises may be required.

Early indications would suggest that the impact of the UK spending review on the Scottish Government core settlement, is relatively similar in revenue budget terms to 2020/21, with the block revenue grant growing by £1.1bn (over 4% in cash terms). The capital block grant is however planned to drop by £0.3bn in contrast to the growth experienced in 2020/21.

Under the scale of fiscal devolution now operating in Scotland, this spending settlement from the UK Government represents only a staging post in the process of setting a Scottish Budget for 2021/22 and ultimately the local government settlement. As previously reported to members the Scottish Government budget is subject to growing risks and uncertainties and this settlement from the UK government, which appears to have maintained a real terms growth of circa 3.5% in the block grant settlement, provides only limited reassurance at this stage.

Additionally, and for member's context, with a very similar level of real terms growth in the block grant in 2020/21, the Council's grant settlement ultimately experienced a like for like cut of 1.1%. So, growth in the block grant nationally does not necessarily translate into a positive outlook for the like for like change in the local government grant settlement.

COVID-19 related funding for the Scottish government is set at £1.3 billion in 2021-22, compared with the guaranteed minimum amount of £8.2 billion in 2020-21 suggesting the UK government financial plans at this stage anticipate many of the ongoing interventions that have occurred this year will be unwound and or removed completely. It is not clear at this stage whether the Council is likely to have access to any COVID19 specific funding to support the ongoing demands from COVID19 and specifically the longer term recovery period.

3.2.4 Future Pay Settlements

Across all pay groups, 2020/21 represents the final year of the current multi-year pay settlements covering 2018/19 - 2020/21. This current 3 year pay deal followed a period of sustained pay restraint that operated across the UK public sector and which was characterised by periods of both pay freezes and capped below inflation increases. The current pay agreement reflected a multi-year above inflation annual settlement for all local government employee groups in Scotland, providing a degree of real terms restoration of pay levels.

Pay negotiations in local government in Scotland are complex, and for teachers constitutes a tri-partite negotiation between employers, employee representative groups and the Scottish Government with the non-teaching workforce a more direct negotiation between employer and employee representative groups. Although operating within these collective negotiating frameworks, such negotiations are inevitably influenced by wider economic, fiscal and social conditions as well as any national government announcements on pay policy.

Moving into 2021/22, the UK and Scottish fiscal, economic and financial backdrop has changed significantly from that which existed at the beginning of 2020/21 and will present critical context to future pay negotiations.

In this context, the UK Government has published as part of its Spending Review announcement, a public sector pay policy which places pay restraint firmly back in the centre of the overall public spending response to help address the significant longer term cost associated with the COVID19. The Chancellor of the Exchequer also stated clearly that this policy sought to ensure that any increase in public sector pay levels, needed to be appropriately sympathetic to the reported squeeze on pay level across the private sector over the course of 2020. The UK Government's stated position is to apply a "pause" on any pay growth across the public sector with the exception of front line NHS nurses and doctors and those earning less than £24,000 across public service.

The Scottish Government have yet to commit to a public sector pay policy for Scotland and this will not be formally confirmed until they publish their draft budget on the 28th January. However, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance has already publicly stated they do not intend to follow a similar path to that of the UK government, suggesting a national pay policy in Scotland may yet emerge that envisages wider pay growth.

Although not directly influencing local government's pay negotiations, the re-emergence of pay restraint as a clear national policy commitment by the UK government represents important context and will ultimately be reflected in their spending plans and resources made available to devolved governments. Similarly, the decisions that will be taken by the Scottish Government on pay policy will equally be reflected in the scale of financial settlement provided to local government and will therefore represent critical backdrop to future pay negotiations.

Although at present negotiations have yet to formally commence, it is anticipated that trade union groups by contrast will continue to promote their stated ambition of real terms pay restoration. In addition, public sector unions are increasingly calling for the significant contribution of the public sector workforce to help the country respond to and cope with COVID19, to be formally rewarded and reflected in the pay settlement for 2021/22. Both these ambitions will run counter to any form of pay restraint and indeed affordability considerations in the context of anticipated financial settlement prospects for local government in Scotland.

Given this backdrop, pay negotiations for 2021/22 will be particularly challenging and potentially difficult to achieve a reconciled position of agreement over a short period of time. There is therefore a strong possibility that the Council will need to set a budget for 2021/22 in the absence of an agreed pay settlement and will therefore be required to manage and provide for this uncertainty moving into next financial year.

3.2.5 Right for Renfrewshire

The Council's three year financial strategy 2020 – 2023 is underpinned by a requirement for the R4R transformation programme to support the delivery of £25 million of recurring revenue savings over the medium term period to 2023. An initial phasing assumption of savings of £7 million, £13 million and £5 million was made for each financial year through to 2023. The approved 2020/21 budget ultimately planned for £3.5 million of recurring savings to be released in 2020/21 with a further £2.3 million of linked full year effect savings in 2021/22 from the Tranche 1 service redesigns. To remain broadly in line with the financial strategy at that time, a further £14 million of transformation savings would require to be secured as part of the 2021/22 budget and a further £5 million in 2022/23.

Members will however be aware, that at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, a decision was taken to formally pause the R4R programme, recognising the capacity of the Council was required to be fully diverted to support the emergency response. The Council continues to remain on an emergency footing in line with the new Strategic Framework now operating significant restrictions across Scotland as part of the ongoing response to managing what is now recognised as the second wave of the pandemic over the winter period. Additionally, it is expected that demands on the Council will continue to emerge moving well into 2021 as the country moves toward managing the logistical challenge of delivering a mass vaccination programme over the first half of the year.

As reported to the Leadership Board, it is recognised that the R4R programme has and is likely to continue to suffer significant delay in the context of the original three year financial strategy planning horizon. There remains a significant risk that even once remobilised and restarted, the pace at which transformation work can progress will continue to be hampered and constrained by the capacity of the organisation continuing to flex to support the changeable demands that emerge from the ongoing COVID19 emergency response, vaccination and ultimate recovery process.

At this stage, it is now inevitable that the phasing of the targeted R4R savings of £25 million will change significantly from that previously assumed as part of the medium term financial plan.

The scope and scale of a second tranche for R4R is expected to be brought forward to the Leadership Board in February. However, it is expected that this will be relatively smaller in scale and focused on areas less immediately impacted by the COVID19 demands. Such opportunities will not have been sufficiently developed by this stage to allow any further savings to be planned for and incorporated into the 2021/22 budget process.

It is now inevitable that the delivery of the majority of planned savings from R4R will now push back into 2022/23 and extend into a fourth year in 2023/24. Given this outlook, the budget strategy for 2021/22 requires to be progressed based on no further savings emerging from R4R. This, along with the expectation of R4R savings being pushed back into a fourth year in 2023/24, adds significant pressure to the Councils financial strategy over the next two years.

3.2.6 Updated Financial Outlook 2021-23

As referred to above, work has been progressed since September to update the financial outlook over the period 2021 – 23. In addition to the uncertainties linked to grant and pay as outlined above, there are further uncertainties connected to the scale of future cost pressures over the next two financial years associated with the impact of the COVID19 pandemic, the vaccination period and ultimately the social and economic recovery. Additionally, there is uncertainty as to how quickly direct impacts will recover, particularly around income levels and Council Tax.

The updated outlook continues to consider a range of scenarios which suggest that over the next two year period, the Council will continue to be required to deliver significant budget savings to achieve a balanced budget, albeit the scale of this requirement is subject to potentially greater uncertainty than before and likely to fall within a range of £14 million - £36 million. These estimates are prior to the impact of any Council tax increases in each year. Members will recall that Council Tax provides a critical but limited avenue to increase resources. For illustrative purposes these lower and upper forecasts would reduce to circa £7 million - £29 million after adjusting for an exemplar 4% per annum increase in Council Tax levels each year.

This two year forecast continues to represent a wide variation in potential lower and upper planning scenarios and it is probable that over the two year period the actual outcome has a greater likelihood of falling closer to the central scenario of circa £26 million (circa £19 million after adjusting for the illustrative Council tax increase).

At present, the financial strategy assumes a further £19 million of savings to be identified and secured from the R4R programme. At this juncture, this continues to be a broadly valid financial objective. Over the course of the following months, the budget announcements by both the UK and Scottish Governments will provide greater certainty for 2021/22, however given the ongoing economic uncertainty, there may be limited insight as to how this may inform what 2022/23 and beyond holds for the Council's financial outlook.

4. Planned Use of Financial Flexibility and Criticality of the R4R Programme

- 4.1 As outlined to the September Council meeting, following national level engagement between COSLA and the Scottish Government, temporary one off flexibilities in relation to the application of capital receipts, a payment holiday on capital financing principle repayments and changes to accounting arrangements linked to PPP contracts have been made available to the Council. These are expected to provide limited one off flexibility for the Council. In addition, adjustments made by the Council to capital financial planning arrangements, as approved at the September Council meeting, provides at this stage a more substantial level of one off financial capacity for the Council, that will be critical to the medium term financial plan.
- 4.2 As approved by Council, this flexibility, will be utilised in the first instance to replenish unallocated balances moving into 2021/22. The remaining capacity will be available to support the Council to mitigate any short term unplanned volatility but more significantly manage the gap in the financial strategy that has emerged from the delayed delivery of the R4R programme. It is estimated that this overall flexibility may be fully utilised to support the financial strategy in this manner over the next two year period.
- 4.3 It is critical for members to recognise that use of such flexibility provides only temporary financial support and does not represent a permanent funding solution to the underlying budget gap that is expected to emerge over the next two years. The availability of this flexibility provides the Council with scope to re-establish immediate financial resilience and stability moving into 2021/22, which is critical given the significant shift in the Council's financial risk profile. But more significantly, it provides a temporary financial buffer to offset the delay in the delivery of R4R savings. This provides the Council with a valuable window, to organisationally re-stabilise and recover from the demands of COVID19 and transition back to being capable of fully remobilising the R4R programme. It is increasingly becoming clear, that achieving this transition is likely by itself to be a major challenge for the organisation.
- 4.4 In this context, the next two to three years may represent the most critical period in the financial history of the Council. It is now a necessity that the Council is highly focused on re-mobilising and driving forward the R4R transformation programme once it is freed from COVID19 demands in order to deliver the targeted £25 million of savings. This is critical to provide confidence that the Council will be positioned to secure the financial sustainability of priority services.
- 4.5 The direct and indirect financial impact of COVID19 is expected to exhaust available financial flexibilities at the Council's disposal over the next two years and therefore achieving financial sustainability over the medium term has now become a greater and more acute challenge for the organisation than it was pre-COVID.

- 4.6 In the absence of the Council's financial position crystallising at the optimistic end of the two year forecast outlined above, and given the relatively limited window of protection financial flexibilities are expected to be able to provide, should the Council fail to achieve the R4R financial objectives or fail to achieve it at the required pace, there is a severe risk that this acute challenge will quickly escalate in scale.
- 4.7 This significantly heightened financial risk profile reinforces the need for the Council to be decisive and make substantial and at times more challenging decisions than it has previously in order to fully commit to the delivery of significant change and transformation. In the absence of substantial levels of managed transformation, change and associated savings delivered at pace, the Council will risk drifting into a financial crisis.
- 4.8 Such territory would place the Council in an unavoidable position of being required to rapidly reduce costs, not through managed transformation but through cutting, downsizing and withdrawing services in order to address the recurring financial gap and meet its legal requirement to achieve a balanced budget. Recently, increasing experience in England is demonstrating that councils operating in such territory become less stable, less resilient and less able to fundamentally address the underlying structural financial deficit of the organisation. In some instance this has ultimately led to financial failure of individual councils demonstrating the scale of risk that can develop.
- 4.9 Further, given the Chancellor of the Exchequer has outlined that the economic challenge from COVID19 has just begun, it is clear that the UK economic and fiscal outlook over the medium term is anticipated to be materially poorer than forecast prior to the arrival of COVID19. This inevitably suggests there is a greater risk of the outlook for public finances in the UK over the medium term, being significantly less positive than previously envisaged. There is therefore no certainty that this relatively short two year financial planning horizon to 2023, will see the end of the Council being required to deliver significant annual savings. In this context, it is more critical than ever that the Council is as well placed as possible, both from a financial and organisational perspective to address the risk of a further period of significant financial challenge moving into the medium term period beyond 2022/23.

4.10 Revenue Investment Capacity

Since 2010/11 the Council's rolling three year financial strategy has focused on maintaining a medium term view when progressing transformation and savings plans. This has supported the Council to consistently secure recurring savings in advance of immediate need which has both provided confidence in addressing the medium term financial challenge that has persisted over the last decade but also critically facilitated both recurring and non-recurring investment capacity in emerging priorities for the Council.

However, the significant and rapid shift in the Council's financial strategy due to the direct and indirect impact of COVID19 has effectively removed such opportunities moving forward.

Rather than remaining ahead of the curve of required savings, the Council is now likely to remain behind the curve over the medium term and be reliant upon financial flexibilities to support the annual budget process. In this context, it is anticipated that the Council will have no revenue funded investment capacity to support new service developments or initiatives or indeed capital investment funded by prudential borrowing over the medium term. The financial challenge over the next two to three years for the Council, is most likely to be focused first and foremost on achieving a balanced budget position each year and progressing the medium term target to secure financial and service sustainability, whilst protecting the delivery of the range of significant investment commitments the Council has already made.

5. Capital Investment Programme

- 5.1 The Council agreed in March capital investment plans for housing and general services for the period 2020/21 to 2023/24 which included investment totalling £368 million. In the current financial year, it was planned that spend of £130 million of investment would take place.
- 5.2 The short-term cessation of construction sites and subsequent social distancing and other requirements as sites have re-opened has and continues to impact on the Council's capital plan over 2020/21 and potentially over the medium term.
- 5.3 As previously reported to members, a significant pro-active exercise was commenced earlier in the year with all active contractors to seek early engagement to achieve mutually agreeable adjustments to contract arrangements and avoid potentially expensive, disruptive and protracted legal disputes. This process has and continues to be significant in terms of both scale and complexity and subject to ongoing management with contractors.
- 5.4 Work completed to date suggest the immediate financial impact of COVID19 has exposed the Council's investment programmes to circa £5 million - £6 million of additional cost. Broadly this potential impact is spread equally across the General Fund investment programme and Housing investment programme. In relation to the Housing programme, there exists sufficient flexibility within the Housing Revenue Account debt management arrangements to accommodate the impact of this level of cost exposure without unduly disrupting the revenue or capital programme and it is proposed that appropriate adjustments are made in this regard as part of the Housing financial planning arrangements looking ahead to the 2021/22 budget.
- 5.5 In relation to the General Fund investment programme, £2.5 million of resource capacity has been identified through the following routes to provide financial coverage to manage these additional COVID19 cost exposures in addition to the associated contingencies that exist within individual projects.
 - The capital lifecycle maintenance programme was heavily disrupted by the closedown of construction activity over the course of 2020 and summer period in particular, which will result in a level of re-profiling of planned maintenance work to future years. As part of this process it is proposed to release £1 million of resources from the 2020/21 programme recognising the degree of constraint that exists in organisational capacity to manage a significant slippage in the programme at this scale.

- In previous budgets the Council has earmarked up to £1 million of resources to support the digital switchover of traffic signals across Renfrewshire. In this context, the Council has been successful in securing support for this programme through the wider SPT capital programme and in this context £0.7 million of resources can be released from the original £1 million without impacting on the delivery of the original project scope.
- In response to a long standing contractual issues linked to the investment delivered in the Lagoon Leisure Centre as part of the Council's Building Better Communities programme a number of years ago, a financial settlement was reached with the main contractor which has resulted circa £0.8 million of resources being paid to the Council. These resources have not been committed and are therefore available to support the wider capital programme.

5.6 As part of this wider review exercise the city deal project financial arrangements have been reassessed. The Council's long-term financial commitment in relation to the delivery of the city deal projects extends to the element of investment that requires to be funded outwith the national government grant contributions. This is funded by the Council via prudential borrowing which ultimately results in a long term annual debt servicing cost charged to the revenue budget. In this regard, a level of provision has been built into the Council's revenue planning arrangements for some time to ensure this financial requirement is appropriately accommodated. The scale of borrowing that is assessed as being required to be undertaken by the Council to deliver the projects is set at £37 million. This requirement can be comfortably accommodated within the existing revenue provision that has already been built into the Council's financial plans through matching the Council's borrowing to those elements of the projects with the longest asset life coupled with a low interest rate environment that currently exists. It is proposed that this adjustment be incorporated into the council's capital programme moving forward.

5.7 In addition, as previously outlined to members the medium term impact on the construction sector and supporting supply chains from the wider economic disruption at this stage remains unclear. Early indications suggest that in the wider construction market, inflation forecasts over the short term have softened slightly suggesting that there are no imminent risks in this regard. This may however only be a temporary position and reflective of a less buoyant market as private sector led investment in particular has been paused during the period of COVID19 and associated economic disruption.

5.8 There remains the risk that over the medium term, construction inflation may yet begin to spike as the development and investment market fully remobilises, as national government investment activity as part of the wider economic response accelerates as well as the developing impact from Brexit becomes clearer. Such a scenario would impact on the financial deliverability of the capital programme as currently constituted. In the context of the challenge to be addressed on the revenue budget, scope to manage such cost growth in the capital investment programme in the future is likely to be more constrained. Additionally, there is also a risk that general capital grant settlements from the Scottish Government may continue to reduce placing increased pressure on the deliverability of future recurring maintenance programmes.

5.9

In this context of uncertainty, it would be prudent that as part of the full refresh of the capital programme in early 2021, the opportunity is taken at that stage to assess the medium term pipeline of planned investment activity and ensure that an appropriate level of flexibility is established to provide, if required, the opportunity to scale back the scope of investment activity in a planned manner. Full details in respect to the proposed adjustments will be presented as part of the capital investment programme report to the Council budget meeting.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – the report highlights the significant shift in the Council’s immediate financial exposure as well as the scale and shape of the medium term financial challenge facing the Council. Delivery of the R4R programme and associated savings are critical to ultimately supporting the Council secure a financially sustainable position and financial flexibility capacity secured will in the short term provide the Council with a level of temporary financial support to stabilise, recover from the COVID19 disruption and restart the medium term transformation programme.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – the medium term financial position and associated plans require to align with workforce and service plans to ensure the size and composition of the Council workforce remains appropriate and affordable.
3. **Community/Council Planning** – the Council requires to remain financially sustainable in order to deliver on its priorities as outlined in the Council and Community Plans.
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – n/a at this stage and any implications will be assessed as part of associated proposals taken forward as part of the financial strategy and wider Right for Renfrewshire programme.
8. **Health & Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – as outlined in the report, the Council’s financial risk exposure both in the immediate term and over the medium term has increased significantly. The report outlines the ongoing uncertainty as well as a range of key measures to be implemented as part of the medium term financial planning arrangements to protect the Council’s immediate financial stability and resilience but also continue to progress toward medium term financial sustainability.
11. **Privacy Impact** - none
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – none
13. **Climate Risk** - none

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To: Council

On: 17 December 2020

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Renfrewshire Economic Recovery Plan

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report presents an Economic Recovery Plan for Renfrewshire for the period December 2020 to December 2022. The Plan has been prepared in conjunction with and approved by the Renfrewshire's Economic Leadership Panel. The Economic Panel commend the Plan to Renfrewshire Council for endorsement.
- 1.2 The Plan's success is dependent on the continued support and contributions of a wide variety of local partners, many of whom will lead on specific elements of the Plan's delivery. A detailed Action Plan with specific economic targets will follow in early 2021.
- 1.3 The Plan takes its lead from the Scottish Government's approach to economic recovery but focuses on the actions that will make the biggest difference in the local context. It is intended to build on, rather than replace, the existing Renfrewshire Economic Strategy and progress will be reviewed on a 6-monthly basis by the Council's Leadership Board.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:
- (i) endorses the Renfrewshire Economic Recovery Plan (Dec 2020) as recommended to them by the Renfrewshire Economic Panel;
 - (ii) agrees that regular updates on delivery of the Plan will be brought back to the Council's Leadership Board over the next 2 years; and

- (iii) agrees that the Plan provides the basis for continued dialogue with Scottish Government and their agencies on a specific case for supporting a Renfrewshire economic recovery.
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3. Background

- 3.1 A report providing an update on Renfrewshire's economic position during the Covid-19 pandemic was considered by Council at its September 2020 meeting. The Council instructed officers to prepare an Economic Recovery Plan in conjunction with the established private sector-led Renfrewshire Economic Panel. Whilst it will be some time before the Renfrewshire economy recovers to pre-Covid levels it is important that the Council (as one of most significant influencers locally) endorses the direction of travel over the next period.
- 3.2 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the UK, Scottish and Renfrewshire economies. This has affected most economic sectors and has placed a large proportion of Renfrewshire residents and businesses in a more precarious economic position than the one they faced in 2019. Appendix 2 to this report offers an updated overview of the UK, Scottish and Renfrewshire economic context from that presented in the September 2020 report.
- 3.3 The Fraser of Allander Institute's (FAI) bespoke analysis of the Renfrewshire economy (Aug 2020) demonstrates that even with its 'most-likely' scenario the Renfrewshire economy will not return to pre-Covid levels of activity until winter 2022/2023. FAI also predicted in their report that if "second wave restrictions" were imposed (similar to those being experienced by Renfrewshire's classification as a Protection Level 4 area) then it may be as late as November 2024 before it recovers.
- 3.4 FAI's view is that the specific characteristics of the Renfrewshire economy place it at a relative disadvantage in the current pandemic context. Due to the concentration of activity in manufacturing; international exports; aviation; retail; construction; and transportation / logistics; the local economy is likely to require targeted interventions and flexibility in how national policy is applied in order to see a full recovery.
- 3.5 Quantifying the impact on Renfrewshire's economy from the Covid-19 pandemic is not straightforward. There are impacts from the lockdown restrictions on how business operates, and how customers and suppliers interact with local businesses. There have also been perceptible shifts in behaviours that could lead to significant economic change if the trends continue post pandemic.
- 3.6 The Council, in conjunction with the Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce, completed a successful survey of around 500 locally based businesses in June 2020. We plan to re-run a similar survey with the Chamber in spring 2021 as the furlough scheme is coming to an end and the BREXIT transition period has passed.

- 3.7 Since March 2020 the UK and Scottish Governments have put in place several financial supports for business and employees that have acted as a “buffer” from the reductions in economic activity that have resulted from the restrictions imposed.
- 3.8 Between March 2020 and October 2020 the number of universal credit claimants looking for work in Renfrewshire increased by 80% (see Table 1). This has affected all ages, except for 16-17 year olds. There has been a lower rise in male claimant than females and this may be due to their employment in some of the most affected business sectors.

Table 1: Universal Credit Claimants – Renfrewshire; 2020

	Total claimant numbers	Of which male	Of which female	Aged 16-17	Aged 18-24	Aged 25-49	Aged 50+
Mar-20	4,015	2,655	1,360	20	745	2,250	1,000
Apr-20	6,685	4,395	2,290	25	1,140	3,855	1,665
May-20	7,530	4,910	2,620	35	1,360	4,270	1,860
Jun-20	7,480	4,825	2,655	30	1,475	4,155	1,815
Jul-20	7,765	4,965	2,800	30	1,550	4,280	1,905
Aug-20	7,780	4,975	2,805	25	1,565	4,250	1,935
Sep-20	7,535	4,825	2,710	25	1,505	4,120	1,885
Oct-20	7,230	4,620	2,610	25	1,425	3,930	1,845
change Mar – Oct	80%	74%	92%	25%	91%	75%	85%

- 3.9 The Job Retention Scheme (Furlough) commenced in April 2020 and was initially intended to run until the end of October. The UK Government has now extended the furlough offer until the end of March 2021, meaning it will have been available to businesses having to furlough staff for a full 12 months.
- 3.10 Table 2 sets out the scale of the furlough scheme as it has been applied for by employers of Renfrewshire residents (furlough statistics are based on employee’s residential address). Our estimate is that this has had a value (at Nov 2020) of approximately £115m to Renfrewshire businesses.

Table 2: Job Retention (Furlough) Scheme Claimants – Renfrewshire residents; 2020

Month	Number on Furlough
June (end of May)	23,000
July (end of June)	26,800
August (end of July)	28,300
October (end of Aug)	8,800
November (end of Sept)	6,900

- 3.11 Grant support for businesses affected by the Covid-19 restrictions since March 2020 has resulted in approximately £28.5m being paid out to individual business with premises in Renfrewshire. Primarily focused on retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, the various schemes have benefited more than 2,500 business premises. Similar grants will continue to be payable (monthly in arrears) to business affected by the individual tiered restrictions in place from October 2020.
- 3.12 Around 4,000 self-employed businesses in Renfrewshire have taken advantage of UK Government's Self- Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) since its inception in March 2020. Designed to compensate for the loss of income for such businesses we estimate this has had a value to date of approximately £9.6m.

Economic Opportunity

- 3.13 We know from analysis carried out for the Renfrewshire Economic Strategy (2019) that the local economy benefits from significant opportunities for growth after the pandemic. The building blocks of Renfrewshire's economy have been consistently strong for some time and include a strong business base, strong higher and further education campuses and strong connectivity. Ongoing investments such NMIS and MMIC at AMIDS, the Council's Cultural Investment Programme, the roll-out of fibre broadband connectivity across Renfrewshire and the continued demand for new residential and commercial development illustrate a positive outlook.

4. Economic Recovery Plan

- 4.1 The draft Economic Recovery Plan 2020-2022 (attached to this report at Appendix 1) sets out the priority actions for the Renfrewshire economy over the next 2 years. Some of these can be enacted immediately and others will take longer to implement. All the content of the Economic Recovery Plan will require a partnership approach between two or more of Renfrewshire's key economic stakeholders. The lead organisation for each action is listed in the Plan.
- 4.2 The Plan's actions have been developed under 6 themes. These themes take their lead from the Scottish Government's national equivalent plans but are also edged with a Renfrewshire specific context. The 14 priority actions sitting below these overarching themes are those the Renfrewshire Economic Panel believe will make the largest difference to the recovery of the local economy, improving lives and securing greater well-being through targeted investment and jobs led recovery. The priority actions are targeted interventions to address specific economic challenges from the Covid impact. Other economic development activity (employability, business support, regeneration investment) will continue to be pursued in parallel.

4.3 The Economic Recovery Plan has been developed to achieve several overarching objectives. These can be summarised as:

- Maximising the number of jobs that can be created or retained locally;
- Supporting improvements in business productivity and competitiveness, including the upskilling of their existing workforce, increasing innovation and R&D and building management and leadership capacity;
- Improving the employability of those currently unemployed or who potentially face unemployment through reskilling and retraining;
- Tackling inequalities; employment, income, education and health including measures to mitigate the risks of increasing multiple disadvantages and any widening of the gap between the most and least deprived as a result of the economic crisis;
- The need to adopt actions that support a 'green' recovery;

4.4 The agreed themes for the Economic Recovery Plan were trailed in the September 2020 Council report and the rationale for selecting these is set out below:

- **Supporting Business and their Workforce** – business is the principal provider of job opportunities in Renfrewshire. Many sectors have struggled due to the pandemic restrictions in terms of customer footfall, trade and supply chains. The pandemic has changed economic behaviour and businesses will need to adapt with new skills for this new economy;
- **Supporting Our Young People** - Evidence from previous recessions and economic downturns, as well as the current pandemic, is that the younger generation are disproportionately affected. Government programmes and funding are geared towards economic opportunity for younger people. As well as a safety net we need to equip them to meet changing and future employment opportunities; and to provide the best start in life;
- **Economic Well Being** - There is a need to ensure a resilient recovery whereby local businesses maximise local economic opportunities and we ensure that this activity does all it can to overcome local inequalities in terms of benefiting everyone. It is also about targeted interventions to help people back to work to provide a stronger labour market for business growth;
- **Skills and Employability** - Ensuring that our local population are equipped with the skills required for the future underpins our economy. We need to ensure that when choices are made ranging from first career, to identifying the need for upskilling of the existing workforce, to selecting retraining programmes for those affected by redundancy, such decisions are equally well informed about local opportunity;

- **Green Recovery and Net Zero Economy-** Renfrewshire Council has declared a Climate Emergency and prepare a Climate Change Adaptation Plan. Economic Recovery needs to ensure it is focused on tackling such issues in Renfrewshire;
- **Capital Investment** – Capital investment is a major source of new employment opportunities as well as economic activity for supply chains based in Renfrewshire. It will help sustain existing key sectors such as construction

Priority Actions

4.5 The following priority actions are proposed for inclusion in the Renfrewshire Economic Recovery Plan. To provide a wider context (at Appendix 3 to this report) we have offered a summary of the draft equivalent plan for the Glasgow City Region.

- (1) Develop a **refreshed employability programme** for Renfrewshire (utilising Youth Guarantee and Kickstart funding) to reduce unemployment among young people (18-24 yrs.) and to support local businesses;
- (2) Promote **enterprise and entrepreneurship in all Renfrewshire secondary schools** through curriculum development that encourages linkage with existing business mentors and aligns to STEM activity plans
- (3) Support and grow **supply chain management and knowledge exchange** among manufacturing SMEs to supply Scottish / UK businesses and global supply chain.
- (4) Develop a programme to support **work-place wellbeing** across Renfrewshire companies Work with NMIS (Skills Academy)
- (5) Develop a **productivity and innovation programme** for Renfrewshire manufacturing companies (aligned to the existing AMCF / Critical Engineer programme).
- (6) We will ensure that we raise awareness among locally based companies of our **proposed procurement** across Renfrewshire capital projects and purchase of supplies and services to enhance opportunities for successful bids;
- (7) Extend the participation of Renfrewshire schools in the **Future Paisley creative learning programme**;
- (8) Bring forward actions to **reduce health inequalities**, improving economic participation, more secure earnings and greater earning power;
- (9) Targeted interventions for **recruitment, upskilling and re-skilling** across Renfrewshire's key sectors

- (10) Make it easier for young people to understand their **learning and career choices** at the earliest stage and align this to Economic Strategy and known workforce demand and provide long-term person-centred support for the young people who need this most;
- (11) Promote a **Renfrewshire Apprentice Framework** that can be rolled out across local businesses wishing to participate;
- (12) Propose a large scale **investment programme for Council housing stock** to meet climate change objectives, encourage neighbourhood regeneration and promote wider investment;
- (13) Create a **clearly defined and publicised investment proposition** to attract more investment and talent to the area that will see Renfrewshire secure its position as the primary location for manufacturing (research and development) investment in Scotland;
- (14) Pilot and test the creation of **active travel routes** between neighbourhoods, town centres and business locations using these to test SMART travel solutions and evaluate benefits to biodiversity, air quality and access.

The role of partner agencies

- 4.6 Partner agencies (eg. Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, DWP, Chamber of Commerce, HSCP, West College, UWS) have a key role to play in delivering the Economic Recovery Plan. Without their input the Plan will not be the success we are striving for.
- 4.7 Through a combination of budgets and joint initiatives, collectively we can achieve more for the people and businesses in Renfrewshire. The private sector also has a key role. They are the biggest investors in the local economy. The private sector is also the principal provider of new jobs, albeit they have borne the brunt of the economic downturn in recent months.
- 4.8 The Action Plan itemises the lead partner for each of the key priorities. In some cases, the lead will be joint between two partners.

What impact might the Recovery Plan have

- 4.9 We know the Economic Recovery Plan will create jobs as well as training opportunities for young people in Renfrewshire. We know there is a significant scale of planned capital investment for the area, with the potential for more. This will create more economic opportunity at AMIDS, in our town centres and in our other business locations.

- 4.10 At Dec 2020 we estimate the economic impact from the Recovery Plan (2020-2022) could include:
- 700+ young people finding work;
 - 400+ businesses benefiting from additional resources;
 - 1,500 additional opportunities of employment, education or training to young people;
 - 150 new apprenticeships being created;
 - Level of economic investment in Renfrewshire (circa £500m);
- 4.11 As we develop more detail for Economic Recovery, we will introduce specific targets for each of the 14 Priority Actions outlined above and in Appendix 1. The progress against these targets will be reported back to Leadership Board in due course.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None beyond existing approved budgets.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community/Council Planning** –
 - *Our Renfrewshire is thriving – an Economic Recovery Plan will be critical in supporting the recovery of local business, production and employment from the consequences of the Covid-19 restrictions.*
 - *Our Renfrewshire is well – promoting economic activity among all citizens and communities will support the resilience of individuals, families and neighbourhoods*
 - *Our Renfrewshire is fair – economic recovery will prioritise the delivery of inclusive growth*
 - *Reshaping our place, our economy and our future – the Covid-19 restrictions are having, and will have, long lasting implications for Renfrewshire’s places and its economic future. Rebuilding our economy offers chances to reset ambitions and to introduce innovative thinking about the future of our places.*
 - *Building strong, safe and resilient communities – promoting economic activity among all citizens and communities will support the resilience of individuals, families and neighbourhoods*
 - *Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all – economic recovery will prioritise the delivery of inclusive growth*
 - *Creating a sustainable Renfrewshire for all to enjoy – an economic recovery that is a green recovery and contributes to Scotland’s net-zero carbon target will be prioritised in future planning*
4. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** – None

6. **Information Technology** - None
 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. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
 8. **Health & Safety** - None
 9. **Procurement** - None
 10. **Risk** - None
 11. **Privacy Impact** - None
 12. **COSLA Policy Position** – supports the COSLA Priority to develop local economies and support inclusive growth
 13. **Climate Risk** – an economic recovery that is a green recovery and contributes to Scotland's net-zero carbon target will be prioritised in future planning
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List of Background Papers

- (i) *Renfrewshire Economic Update; Council; 21 September 2020*
- (ii) *Update on Covid-19; Renfrewshire Council Emergencies Board; 17 July 2020*

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Chief Executives Services for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Alasdair Morrison; Head of Regeneration; Tel 0141 618 4664; Alasdair.morrison@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

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Renfrewshire’s Economic Recovery Plan December 2020 to December 2022

Theme	<u>Priority Actions</u>	Lead Agency	Partner Agencies
Supporting Our Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a refreshed employability programme for Renfrewshire (utilising Youth Guarantee and Kickstart funding) to reduce unemployment among young people (18-24 yrs.) and to support local businesses 	RC	DWP; DYW; SDS;
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote enterprise and entrepreneurship in all Renfrewshire High Schools through curriculum development that encourages linkage with existing business mentors and aligns to STEM activity plans 	RC	SDS; DYW
Supporting Business and their Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and grow supply chain management and knowledge exchange among manufacturing SMEs to supply Scottish / UK businesses and global supply chain. 	SE	Chamber; RC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a programme to support work-place wellbeing across Renfrewshire companies. 	HSCP	Third Sector; NHS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with NMIS (Skills Academy) to develop a productivity and innovation programme for Renfrewshire manufacturing companies (aligned to the existing Critical Engineer programme). 	NMIS / SDS	Chamber; SE; RC
Economic Well Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure that we raise awareness among locally based companies of our proposed procurement across Renfrewshire capital projects and purchase of supplies and services to enhance opportunities for successful bids; and build in a requirement for commitment to the Youth Guarantee in such contracts. <i>This action will be accompanied by education piece for all anchor institutions and suppliers</i> 	RC	UWS; WCS; NHS; HSCP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the participation of Renfrewshire schools in the Future Paisley creative learning programme 	RL	RC

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bringing forward actions to reduce health inequalities, improving economic participation, more secure earnings and greater earning power 	HSCP	RC
Skills and Employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted interventions for recruitment, upskilling and re-skilling across Renfrewshire’s key sectors eg. introduction of a new Social Care Graduate Apprenticeship programme at UWS and enhancement of redundancy services via PACE, etc. 	RC / SDS	UWS; WCS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make it easier for young people to understand their learning and career choices at the earliest stage and align this to Economic Strategy and known workforce demand and provide long-term person-centred support for the young people who need this most; 	RC / SDS / DYW	UWS; WCS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a Renfrewshire Apprentice Framework that can be rolled out across local businesses wishing to participate 	WCS / SDS	UWS; RC
Capital Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large scale refurbishment programme for Council housing stock to meet climate change objectives, encourage neighbourhood regeneration and promote wider investment 	RC	SG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a clearly defined and publicised investment proposition to attract more investment and talent to the area that will see Renfrewshire secure its position as the primary location for manufacturing (R&D) investment in Scotland 	RC / SE	SE / Anchors / SG / Chamber
Green Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot and test the creation of active travel routes between neighbourhoods, town centres and business locations using these to test SMART travel solutions and evaluate benefits to biodiversity, air quality and access. 	RC	Sustrans / SG

Partner Agencies (key):

DWP – Dept of Work and Pensions; DYW – Developing the Young Workforce; HSCP – Health & Social Care Partnership; NMIS – National Manufacturing Institute Scotland; RC – Renfrewshire Council; RL -Renfrewshire Leisure; SE – Scottish Enterprise; SG – Scottish Government; SDS – Skills Development Scotland; UWS – University of West Scotland; WCS – West College Scotland

COVID-19: Overview of UK, Scottish and Renfrewshire economic context at Nov 2020

UK position

The UK economy is slowly showing signs of recovery in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In September 2020, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 1.1%, the fifth consecutive monthly increase following a record fall of 19.5% in April 2020. However, it remains 8.2% below the February 2020 level, and growth in the UK economy's main sectors has slowed. GDP recovery may continue to be slow with further lockdowns being experienced across the country, and uncertainty remains over any Brexit deal. Latest independent forecasts published by the HM Treasury suggests UK GDP could contract by 10.2% in 2020.

The crisis has significantly impacted the labour market. Between July to September 2020 estimates show a large increase in the unemployment rate and a record number of redundancies, while the employment rate continues to fall.

Since March 2020 the Claimant Count has increased by 112% or 1.4 million. However, the claimant count did drop slightly in October 2020 to 2.6 million (from 2.7 million in September 2020). The continuation of the furlough scheme until March 2021 may help stabilise this rate for the next few months.

As of 30th September 2020, estimates show that furloughing of staff across all sectors have continued to decrease. Since the peak of 8.9 million employments furloughed in May 2020, preliminary figures show that the number of employments furloughed continued to fall throughout the summer months to 5.2 million on 31 July 2020 and down further during the autumn months to 2.4 million on 30 September 2020. However, with the new lockdown measures introduced across the various regions of the UK, potentially the number of staff on furlough will increase again in the coming months. As of November 2020, the value of claims made to the scheme were c.£43bn.

By 31 October 2020, 2.3 million (69%) of the potentially eligible population had claimed a second Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant with the value of these claims totalling £5.9 billion.

Overall, economic output forecasts for 2020 have stabilised in recent months. However significant short term uncertainty remains for the final quarter of the year as well as for the medium term as new local restrictions on activity are introduced to suppress the spread of the virus.

Scotland position

The latest GDP data shows that the Scottish economy grew for the fourth consecutive month in August and over that period recovered around 60 per cent of the output lost during the unprecedented falls in March and April 2020. However, the pace of growth slowed in August 2020, as was the case across the whole of the UK. Slower growth was evident in both the services and construction sectors, alongside a slight fall in output in the production and manufacturing sectors, highlighting the gradual pace at which output will return to pre-pandemic levels. Overall, GDP remained 9.4 per cent below its level in February 2020.

However, the scale of the impact on output during national lockdown, the subsequent pace at which demand has recovered and the need for local restrictions means that sectoral differences are already emerging. For example, accommodation and food services output was 31 per cent below its level in February while construction output was 9 per cent below and manufacturing 5 per cent lower.

Whilst business activity continued to stabilise into the third quarter of the year, subdued demand, heightened uncertainty and new local restrictions have slowed the pace and scale of activity. By the start of October 2020, the proportion of total businesses (with 10+ employees) reporting as currently trading was 95%, with the accommodation and food services sector (80%) and the arts, entertainment & recreation sector (89%) continuing to have the lowest proportions trading over this period. These figures will inevitably decrease further with the introduction of further restrictions under the localised levels system.

Businesses continued to reopen and adjust to new operating and demand conditions going into the third quarter. However, in relation to turnover, many were operating below full capacity and cashflow challenges remained a key risk. Most companies in Scotland continued to report that turnover has fallen compared to last year. Sectors such as accommodation & food services and arts, entertainment & recreation, continued to be impacted significantly by restrictions on consumer activity.

The Scottish labour market has shown signs of recovery in the latest quarter. In terms of CJRS, as restrictions eased in August 2020 and people continued to return to work, the number of employees on furlough fell by 120,400 (reduction of 39%) between the start of August and end of September. In total, the latest HMRC data shows that at the end of September 2020, 183,200 employments in Scotland were on furlough. Scottish businesses have reported that around 11.9% of their workforce were on furlough in October, down from 32.1% in June.

HMRC data show that by end of October 2020, 142,000 claims in Scotland had been made to the second SEISS which opened on 17 August 2020. This represents 69% of the eligible population, with an average claim of £2,500. In total around £359m has been paid out under the second scheme. The number of claims was down from the first SEISS in which there were 158,000 claims in Scotland.

Over the quarter June to August 2020, the employment level increased by 15,000 in Scotland, whereas unemployment level remained broadly stable over the quarter and the unemployment rate was unchanged at 4.5%. Scotland's claimant count decreased in October reflecting that the number of people that are unemployed or employed with low income and/or low hours is stabilising. In total, the number of claimants decreased by 2,972 over the month to 214,837 taking the overall claimant count rate to 7.7%. However, despite this decrease, compared to the same period last year, the claimant count has nearly doubled across Scotland since March 2020 (+89%).

In summary, the short term outlook for the final quarter of 2020 remains notably uncertain as cases rise in Scotland. This has been reflected in weakening business and consumer optimism and presents even greater uncertainty for the medium term outlook. Scenario analysis published in the latest State of the Economy report in September, suggests Scottish GDP could fall by 9.8% in 2020 and not return to pre-crisis levels until the end of 2023, whilst unemployment could rise to 8.2%, and potentially take longer to recover.

Renfrewshire position

Renfrewshire's Claimant Count in October 2020 was 7,230 representing a 4% fall between September and October. Whilst this reduction in claimant count is positive, since March there has been an 80% increase, which highlights the impact the crisis has had on the local economy and workforce. Overall, Renfrewshire's claimant count equates to around 6.3% of the working age population. To be put this in context, this is the 11th highest rate across the 32 local authority areas.

At the end of September 2020, Renfrewshire had 6,900 employees on furlough, around 8% of all eligible employees – comparable to the Scottish average. The number represents a significant reduction (-76%) from the high of 28,300 people on furlough recorded at the end of July 2020 in Renfrewshire. This corresponds to the easing of lockdown restrictions from August onwards. However, as noted above, the introduction of further lockdown restrictions will likely lead to further people being put on furlough in Renfrewshire. It has been estimated that the value of claims made against the CJRS scheme regarding payments to Renfrewshire based businesses is around £115m.

Some sectors of the Renfrewshire economy were impacted by the lockdown more than others. Accommodation and food service activities, other service activities, construction and transportation and storage were sectors where firms reported high shares of their workforce being put on furlough.

Take-up of the second SEISS scheme in Renfrewshire as of 31st October was 73%, with 4,000 claims which accounts for a total value of approx. £9.8m.

Glasgow City Region – Draft Economic Recovery Plan (Nov 2020)

The GCR Economic Recovery Plan is due to be presented to the GCR Cabinet in December 2020. It is presented here in draft format only.

KEY THEME	CONTEXT	WE WILL DO THIS BY
<p>Protect Jobs and Businesses</p> <p>Protecting jobs and hard-hit local businesses is critical.</p>	<p>We will maximise UK Government and Scottish Government funding so that a comprehensive and enduring package of financial and business support is in place to secure the incomes of staff and businesses.</p> <p>We recognise that it is our social/footfall dependent businesses which are being hardest hit. These businesses which have played a critical role in the renaissance of the region. It is vital that they are given targeted support to allow them to trade and flourish.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lobbying for the continuation of, and for additional support from central government to meet the specific needs of Glasgow City Region, its businesses and employees. 2. Supporting commuters and residents to travel safely into the City Centre and throughout GCR we will extend active travel options and provide safe, efficient, reliable and attractive public transport.
<p>Provide Residents with Skills to Flourish in the Future Economy</p> <p>It is sadly inevitable that as a result of restrictions on economic and social life, there will be significant job losses.</p>	<p>The digital transformation brought about by Covid and changing ways of working means that some parts of our</p> <p>Establishing an enhanced package of Glasgow City Region Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) support to help those made redundant back into work or training.</p> <p>It is vital that we provide all the necessary support to get our residents back into work as quickly as possible. It is equally as essential that money is spent wisely, and residents are provided with skills to flourish in the future economy.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Establishing an enhanced package of Glasgow City Region Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) support to help those made redundant back into work or training. 4. Co-ordinating an emergency workforce development programme with responsibility for delivering a regional skills programme that cuts across business, educational institutions, SDS and councils. 5. Identifying skills opportunities and in-demand jobs of the post Covid economy and focus on the need to grow meta skills to help our workforce adapt to the new labour market.

<p>Stimulate New Long Term Employment Opportunities</p> <p>During times of economic recession, to prevent as much scarring on the economy and our communities as possible, it is critical government steps in where possible to fuel demand – and create the next wave of employment and address the climate emergency.</p>	<p>One of simplest ways is to expand infrastructure investment – including finding new ways to deliver projects.</p> <p>And, perhaps most excitingly, there is an emerging body of evidence that one of the most successful ways of stimulating the economy and create local jobs is through green growth</p>	<p>6. Engaging with the UK Government and Scottish Government to increase and accelerate investment in infrastructure to provide short term economic stimulus and to create jobs and drive green economic growth as we move into the post-Covid period.</p> <p>7. Improving the quality of housing, creating jobs, and delivering on our shared commitment to net zero carbon emissions we will develop a proposal to deliver a housing energy efficiency retrofit programme.</p>
<p>Supporting Businesses and Communities to Adapt</p> <p>Some businesses are already finding new ways of working.</p>	<p>This innovation needs nurtured with knowledge transferred from those who have successfully adapted to other businesses, helping to boost their resilience.</p> <p>We know that recessions hit the most vulnerable members of society the hardest. We need to expand our efforts to empower residents to develop solutions that best meet their needs. In doing so, striving to create an equitable recovery, challenge existing inequalities, and respond to the climate emergency.</p>	<p>8. Enabling businesses to innovate, adapt and become more resilient, City Region partners will work together to provide additional business support with a focus on digital and decarbonisation.</p> <p>9. Applying a Community Wealth Building approach to reduce the amount of V&DL across the City Region, bringing land back into use for commercial, greenspace, or community benefit.</p> <p>10. Developing an action plan that will help our most disconnected residents overcome the barriers – affordability of connection, lack of skills, or lack of interest – that lead to digital exclusion. We will also work with the private sector to accelerate the roll out of digital infrastructure across the City Region</p>



To: Council

On: 17 December 2020

Report by: Chief Executive

**Heading: Impact of COVID-19 on Renfrewshire's Communities – Social
Renewal Plan**

1. Summary

- 1.1 On 24 September 2020, Council considered a report on the impact of COVID-19 within Renfrewshire's communities. It was recognised within the report that the pandemic had impacted on all parts of daily life, and in some cases had exacerbated existing vulnerabilities or created new difficulties for people in relation to for example health and wellbeing or income and employment.
- 1.2 In addition, it was recognised that the pandemic will have impacted different groups in different ways, and that there was a requirement to identify the impacts on women, young people, people with a disability and on black and minority ethnic communities in particular.
- 1.3 It was agreed that officers would work with partners to develop a Social Renewal Plan for Renfrewshire, which would recognise the significant inequalities that exist in Renfrewshire and set out joint plans to address these in light of COVID-19. It is intended that this will be finalised in early 2021.
- 1.4 To support the development of the Social Renewal Plan and to develop a deeper understanding of COVID-19 on local people and communities, partners have commenced a *community impact assessment*. This paper provides an update on progress and findings for elected members.

- 1.5 Specifically, partners have been working together to assess the data available on the local and national impact of COVID-19, with a particular initial focus on income and employment, financial insecurity, community support and health and wellbeing. Initial data in relation to these key areas is summarised in Section 3 of this report.
- 1.6 In addition to the ongoing data analysis, work has also commenced on a programme of listening events involving local people and representative groups. These events are important in terms of identifying the issues that are being experienced, whilst also providing an opportunity for the Council and its partners to involve local people and community level organisations in developing solutions. Section 4 of this paper highlights the engagement that has taken place to date and the events which are planned during December 2020 and January 2021.
- 1.7 Overall the work undertaken has highlighted that local people and communities across Renfrewshire are continuing to experience significant impacts on their lives as a result of the pandemic. Initial data and findings from the engagement events indicate that people on low incomes and/or who have insecure employment have been severely impacted, and most notably women and young people. The impact from loss of income or employment has been difficult, as local businesses and organisations have responded to the lockdown and restrictions since March 2020.
- 1.8 There is also increasing evidence that low income rather than unemployment, is the driving factor for people seeking support to access food or help with fuel costs locally. Whilst issues in relation to low income have been a significant focus for partners in recent years, the pandemic has undoubtedly exacerbated the issues being experienced.
- 1.9 The Council is working closely with both Renfrewshire wide and local community-based organisations to ensure people get access to the support they need, with an enhanced focus on ensuring that local people receive support and advice to maximise household income wherever possible. In addition, the organisation is working with partners to roll out targeted employability programmes such as the Kickstart programme, the youth job guarantee scheme and support to businesses themselves.
- 1.10 Ongoing issues in relation to social isolation and wellbeing also continue to be experienced across communities, with mixed views being expressed currently in terms of the use of digital technology to support social connection. Whilst some of the emerging evidence suggests that people have valued being provided with devices and connectivity through local and national programmes, it is clear that people miss being able to meet face to face to

undertake social activities, and there remain issues for people in terms of digital exclusion and loneliness and isolation more generally.

- 1.11 Further work is now required in terms of assessing the particular impact of the pandemic on specific groups including carers, young people, people from a black and minority ethnic background and women. This will be progressed through various listening events in December and January 2020.
- 1.12 More detailed analysis of the key issues being experienced will also be available through the findings of the Public Services Panel survey, which was recently distributed to 1500 local people. The panel findings will also be used to inform discussions at a community level through the Local Partnership meetings scheduled in February 2021.
- 1.13 Work will continue to gather and analyse available data and community engagement feedback on the impact of the pandemic in Renfrewshire. This will inform the final drafting of a Social Renewal Plan in Renfrewshire by March 2021, which will be fully aligned to the Economic Recovery Plan submitted for Council approval on 17 December 2020.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members note:
 - the progress that has been achieved in terms of assessing the impact of COVID-19 on local people and communities to date; and
 - the emerging issues which have been identified by partners through this initial programme of work.

3. Background

- 3.1 As outlined in the paper to Council in September 2020, the coronavirus pandemic is now recognised as being the most significant challenge to have faced the international community in modern times. Since the crisis unfolded in early 2020, many local people and businesses have been impacted by the crisis, through for example bereavement, loss of income and isolation and loneliness.
- 3.2 The Council remains very much in the response phase in terms of supporting local people, communities and businesses that have been impacted by the pandemic. Whilst a significant number of services had been permitted to restart under the Scottish Government's Routemap to recovery, in recent weeks a number of restrictions have been introduced which have again impacted service delivery. In particular, the move to Level 4 restrictions recently required leisure services and non-essential businesses to close until 11 December 2020. Restrictions on hospitality, travel and indoor gatherings also remain in place.

- 3.3 The Council continues to be required by the Scottish Government to put into place new or enhanced levels of support and services in response to the pandemic, including the provision of support to vulnerable people, to those isolating, and also in the form of business support grants. Services are working in close partnership with communities, businesses and residents to ensure that essential services continue to be provided across Renfrewshire and that vulnerable people receive the support and protection that they need.
- 3.4 Notwithstanding the need to balance both the immediate and longer term response to the pandemic, local partners have been working closely to develop a Social Renewal Plan for Renfrewshire. As agreed by Council in September 2020, the Social Renewal Plan will be closely aligned to the Economic Recovery Plan that has been developed for Renfrewshire, in recognition of the crucial link between income and employment and overall health and wellbeing. It is intended that the Social Renewal Plan will set out how the Council will work with partners to learn from the pandemic, and build on this experience to tackle the inequalities that exist across Renfrewshire's communities.
- 3.5 In order to support the development of the Social Renewal Plan, Council also agreed that the organisation would work with partners to develop a deeper understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on Renfrewshire's people and communities through a community impact assessment. This was agreed following analysis of initial data on the impact of the pandemic, which highlighted that COVID-19 has fundamentally impacted local people, businesses and communities, but in many different ways. For some people, COVID-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities or wellbeing issues, whilst for others it may be the first time that certain issues such as unemployment or ill health have been experienced.
- 3.6 It is also anticipated that the true impact of the pandemic on individual wellbeing will take time to fully emerge, particularly around issues such as physical and mental health, domestic violence, alcohol and drug misuse and wider risk of harm. Some groups of people will have been more disproportionately impacted than others, with potentially more significant impacts on women, young people, people with a disability and within the local BAME population. Much will depend on the starting point of each individual, with potentially more significant impacts on those people already experiencing wellbeing issues.
- 3.7 As well as supporting the Council and its partners to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on local communities, it is recognised that the community impact assessment process also provides a meaningful opportunity to involve local people in identifying solutions to the issues that are being experienced across communities.
- 3.8 **This learning and listening approach**, is very important as it will continue to strengthen relationships between the Council, local people, communities and

partners, whilst allowing partners over the longer term to adapt what they do and to target or even redirect resources, to where they are most needed.

- 3.9 It was recognised by Council that the community impact assessment would take place over a period of a number of months, and section 4 of this report provides a summary of some of the key findings to date from this work.

4 Community Impact Assessment – initial analysis

- 4.1 Services have been working to progress the community impact assessment with partners, which has three core elements:

- Analysing all of the information that partners have on the use of key services and how this is changing over time
- Using local and national research to consider the impact of COVID-19 on specific groups within local communities
- A community voices campaign - engaging with local people and community groups and organisations to understand their experiences of COVID-19, and to strengthen the Council's relationships with these groups.

- 4.2 In terms of the first of these two parts of the community impact assessment, further analysis has been undertaken of all data available across a broad number of themes, with an initial focus in relation to income and employment and health and wellbeing. Key messages from the data analysis are highlighted in the sections below for each theme:

COVID transmission

- As at 7 December 2020, there had been 4953 confirmed cases of coronavirus through a positive test (878 positive cases reported to Council in September 2020)
- As at 29 November, 271 deaths relating to COVID-19 had been reported by National Register Scotland (206 deaths reported to Council in September 2020)

Employment

- The COVID-19 restrictions in place since March 2020 have had a dramatic impact on the national and local economy and will have implications for the Renfrewshire economy especially in the short to medium term. These are covered within the accompanying Economic Recovery Plan report to full Council, which recognises that COVID has had the biggest impact on those on low incomes and in the least secure jobs.
- The [October 2020 Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development \(SLAED\) report](#) notes:

“Early indications are that changes in the labour market brought about by COVID-19 will have the biggest impact on those on the lowest incomes and in the least secure jobs. It is also expected that there will be a disproportionate impact on young people, women, those with disabilities and minority groups, which will in turn increase existing social and economic inequalities. Those leaving education are likely to be displaced and without a next positive destination, and many young people previously employed will become unemployed as businesses cease to operate”

- In terms of Renfrewshire’s position, the Claimant Count (reflecting those on Universal Credit and seeking work) in October 2020 was 7,230, representing an 80% increase since March (6.3% of the working age population).
 - The increase in female claimants from March to October is particularly pronounced, increasing 92% from 1,360 to 2,160.
 - The increase in claimants aged 18-24 is also marked, increasing 91% from March to October (745-1,425).
 - Claimants aged 50+ also increased considerably from 1,000 in March to 1,845 in October, an increase of 85%.
- The number of people in receipt of Universal Credit in Renfrewshire increased by 70%, from 7,604 in March to 12,943 in August 2020, slightly higher than the percentage increase for Scotland as a whole in the same time period (64%).
- At its peak in August 2020, 28,300 people in Renfrewshire were registered with the UK-wide furlough scheme, with 8800 people remained registered on the scheme at the end of October 2020.
- Grant support for businesses affected by the COVID-19 restrictions since March 2020 has resulted in approximately £28.5m being paid out to individual business with premises in Renfrewshire. Primarily focused on retail, hospitality and leisure sectors the various grant schemes have resulted, more than 2,500 businesses have been supported. Similar grants will continue to be payable (monthly in arrears) to businesses affected by the individual tiered restrictions in place from October 2020.
- Around 4,000 self-employed businesses in Renfrewshire have taken advantage of UK Government’s Self- Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) since its inception in March 2020. Designed to compensate for the loss of income for such businesses we estimate this has had a value to date of approximately £9.6m.
- In a recent Scottish Government survey across Scotland, 22% of people polled thought that COVID-19 represented a high or very high threat to their job.

Financial Insecurity and Community Support

- The Advice Works Service provided support to 3952 people between April and October 2020. 2725 people were in the recognised priority groups for Child Poverty, including 1378 who were part of a family with a disabled adult or child and 413 lone parents. Work has been ongoing to increase signposting to Advice Works, including through community groups who are supporting people with food. An advice worker has also been embedded within Renfrewshire FoodBank to enhance referrals.

- 6225 crisis grant applications were made between April and October 2020, an increase of 1030 on the same period last year. At a national level it was recently reported that Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grant applications were 30% higher in September 2020 than in September 2019.
- Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau (RCAB) provided support to 4242 clients between April and end October 2020 an increase of 446 on the same period last year, with over 6000 contacts received. Benefit issues are consistently the number one reason for contacting RCAB, with almost 50% of those contacting about a benefit issue seeking advice about Universal Credit.
- Home Energy Scotland have estimated that COVID-19 may lead to an increase in fuel bills of up to 37% as people stay at home more. This translates to an extra £32.31 per month on fuel bills - £387 over the year for a household.
- The Energy Advocacy service has continued to operate over the phone during the period of the pandemic and has supported 290 clients to achieve savings of over £90k.
- Many community based organisations have become involved in providing fuel vouchers for those in need of top-ups for their pre-payment meters. STAR Project, Renfrewshire Foodbank and others are providing vouchers, and organisations can register with Home Energy Scotland to provide this service. Renfrewshire Affordable Credit Alliance (RACA) ran a recent seminar for practitioners with Home Energy Scotland to encourage sign up and more general links to Home Energy Scotland, who can provide a variety of advice and assistance with regard to energy saving and reducing bills.
- Renfrewshire Foodbank has provided food support to 3148 adults and 1200 children to date this year which is broadly in line with the previous year, as increasing numbers of people also seek support from local community groups and organisations. The main reason clients are attending the foodbank has changed from Benefit Issues (which has historically been the most reported issue) to Low Income.
- A Community Food Network has been in place since April 2020, at first distributing food funded by the Scottish Government, and since the end of September, food funded by the Council via the charity FareShare. Leaflets with details of Advice Works and Advice Renfrewshire have been issued to all these groups and introductions to Advice Works have taken place for those not already linked. Organisations within the network have started referring clients to Advice Works.
- Council officers are also working to link community food organisations to other support, such as affordable credit providers, energy advice and mental health support.
- STAR Project are a well established Renfrewshire wide organisation that has been working with the Council during the pandemic. Since April 2020 they have supported 7968 adults and children with food. Pre-Covid, STAR Project were reporting roughly 350 visits per quarter to their Community Fridge and Pantry, so this is an increase of more than 6700. STAR

commenced a shopping service in June using funding from Scottish Government via Community Anchor organisation, Linstone Housing. The shopping service has been used by 218 individuals to date.

- Neighbourhood Hubs were set up in spring 2020 to provide additional support to people who were shielding during the lockdown period. The purpose of the Neighbourhood Hubs is to provide support to improve the quality of life for people referred to the Hubs by the Local Assistance Team that was in direct contact with residents. The hubs can help people to access food, support, and befriending amongst many other aspects. Up to 20 November, Neighbourhood Hubs have dealt with a total of 510 referrals and 107 prescription referrals.
- The neighbourhood hubs have led on the Connecting Scotland programme and by end of this year 1250 devices and/or connectivity will have been distributed to vulnerable people directly or through partner organisations.

Impact on health and wellbeing

At a Scottish level, the impact of COVID-19 on health provision is being closely monitored with regular reports produced by Public Health Scotland. These indicate:

- The number of A&E attendances nationally decreased to 40% of normal pre-COVID-19 levels in the week ending 29 March. Since then, A&E attendances increased steadily and have remained between 75% and 90% of normal levels since the week ending 21 June. The latest data shows that A&E attendances are at 75% of normal levels.
- The number of emergency admissions nationally dropped to 60% of normal pre-COVID-19 levels in the week ending 29 March. Since then, emergency admissions increased and have remained between 85% and 95% of normal levels since the week ending 21 June. Latest data shows emergency admissions are at 90% of normal levels.
- The number of planned hospital admissions nationally dropped to 27% of normal pre-COVID-19 levels in the week ending 19 April. The number of planned admissions has been increasing gradually since then, rising to 80% of normal levels at mid October. The week ending 25 October saw a slight dip, with planned admissions at 71% of normal levels.
- There has been a reluctance from people to seek non-COVID-19 healthcare treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic. National surveys suggest that at the end of October between 25-28% of people agreed or strongly agreed that they would avoid contacting a GP practice at the moment even if they had an immediate medical concern (not related to Coronavirus).

At a Renfrewshire level, there has also been an impact on service provision and demand. As reported recently to Renfrewshire IJB for example:

- Percentage of routine occupational therapy referrals allocated within 9 weeks, has seen a decrease in performance from 42% at March 2020 to 18% at June 2020.
- There has been a reduction in the uptake rate of the child health 30- month assessment from 95.5% at March 2020 to 83% at September 2020, which can be directly attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. This figure increases to 87% when including children who were seen slightly late due to lockdown impacting on assessments.

Mental health and wellbeing

- In Scotland wide Ipsos MORI surveys carried out between May and July 2020 report that between 53-59% of people felt lonely some/most/almost all or all of the time.
- RAMH First Crisis service has had 283 referrals since 1st April 2020– with the top 3 reasons for contact being anxiety/stress, depression/low mood and suicidal thoughts/behaviours.
- The Hear For You Helpline has received 62 referrals since being established in April. 3 top reasons are anxiety/stress, depression/low mood and loneliness. This is seen more as an emotional support line, also providing signposting and info on practical support and is complemented by other organisations such as ROAR and Active Communities providing a similar service for their users.
- RAMH Counselling Service received 399 referrals between April and October, 210 of which went on to receive counselling and 814 appointments took place.

4.3 In terms of the Community Voice Campaign, partners have been working to develop a programme of listening events over winter 2020, with the findings being used to inform the overall community impact assessment and resulting Social Renewal Plan.

4.4 An overview of findings from recent sessions is provided in the following sections. It is clear from this initial work that:

- The impact of the pandemic on people with low incomes or who are in more insecure employment is increasingly apparent to community groups and support organisations across Renfrewshire.
- Food insecurity and fuel poverty are seen as being particular issues, with high ongoing demand for community based supports.
- There are particular concerns with the ongoing nature of restrictions and the health and wellbeing of local people, particularly in relation to loneliness and isolation and the impact that this can have on mental health and wellbeing. Young people were a particular area of concern.
- Digital exclusion was flagged as an issue, with many groups and organisations stating that online provision had worked well in some instances, but that significant issues remained in terms of access and engagement through online means.

- Engagement indicates that some specific groups are also experiencing potentially a greater impact as a result of the pandemic, including those from black and minority ethnic communities, women, and carers.
- 4.5 Further targeted engagement with these groups will be prioritised going forward. During December and January 2021, further sessions are planned with the Community Resilience Group, the Diversity and Equality Alliance Renfrewshire Group and with local womens groups.
- 4.6 An overview of feedback provided to date through the listening events programme is summarised in the sections below.

Engagement through Get Heard Scotland Programme

Services have worked with *Get Heard Scotland* (GHS), a programme coordinated by the Poverty Alliance and funded by the Scottish Government as part of *Every Child Every Chance*, the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

Between August and October 2020, the Poverty Alliance carried out interviews with 11 organisations that work with people living on low incomes in Renfrewshire. These interviews focused predominantly on the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had both on the organisations themselves and on the people that they work with, with a particular focus on the themes of employment; mental health; digital exclusion, and community support.

Key issues raised:

- Reduced income experienced by many people in-work as a result of unemployment or furlough, with a disproportionate impact felt by women (particularly women with children), people from Black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, and young people. Some people were being supported that were previously unknown to organisations.
- The pandemic was said to have exposed existing issues, for example the prevalence of insecure employment for young people whose income even from part time working had collapsed.

"You cannot be well when you are worried about your financial stability."

- The mental health impact of the pandemic on people on low incomes living in Renfrewshire has been significant. For people living with mental health issues prior to the crisis, the loss of vital supports and connections was said to have made their issues more acute. At the same time, many people have been experiencing mental health issues for the first time.
- Some supports that had been set up in response to the pandemic were highlighted as important, for example the helpline for mental wellbeing support that had been established by Renfrewshire HSCP in partnership with local organisations.
- Digital exclusion has had a significant impact on people living on low incomes through the course of the pandemic. A number of initiatives aimed at tackling digital exclusion were viewed positively - the provision of laptops, smart phones and tablets by Renfrewshire Council, local housing associations and third sector organisations was said to have made a positive impact.
- Many outreach services have not been operational during the pandemic but have been delivered online or by phone. Engagement suggests it is really important to re-establish these face to face services to promote access.

- It was highlighted that many local organisations are not fully engaged with black and minority ethnic(BAME) communities. As a result, the needs of BAME communities in Renfrewshire may not be fully known or understood. It was also suggested that some BAME communities may be less likely to seek support from services due to perceived stigma.

Community Resilience Group

- Officers from the Chief Executive's Service have worked with Engage to establish a local group which supports shared conversations between community based organisations around resilience and changes in demand and need.
- The group has met three times since September 2020 and it is clear that community groups are still supporting a significant amount of demand in relation to access to food, and support for isolation and wellbeing.
- Groups noted ongoing work to sustain their services by accessing all available funding and the valuable roles that volunteers can have in supporting the work that they do.
- In terms of social isolation and loneliness, the group has shared experiences about what has worked and what hasn't worked, and the innovative solutions that they have come up with to keep in contact with vulnerable people. Whilst the use of digital to support online activities was hugely welcomed, it was recognised that it was not accessible or positive for everyone. Particular challenges had been noted in terms of engaging with young people through social media, particularly where here had been good engagement previously to undertake spirts on wellbeing activities on a face to face basis pre COVID.

RYV - Unheard Voices Project

Supported by Renfrewshire Council's Youth Services, Renfrewshire Youth Voice's 'Unheard Voices Campaign' – began in spring 2020. Its purpose was to understand how COVID 19 and the 'lockdown' has impacted the lives of both young individuals and those of an older age group. The campaign has been recognised by Young Scot as good practice.

They devised various ways to gather data about the impact of the pandemic. Including journal entries, surveys, vlogs, podcasts and selfies - to make participation as accessible as possible. The purpose of this exercise was to provide Renfrewshire Youth Voice with information to help ensure that support provided will meet the needs of young people during the pandemic and how services can be better informed of the impact of COVID-19 after lockdown and restrictions are removed.

The findings from the campaign are currently being reviewed by RYV.

4.7 In addition to the listening events, a significant piece of research and survey work is currently being undertaken through the Public Services Panel. The Panel is a representative group of approximately 1500 local people who have agreed to complete at least one survey per year to inform the work of the Council and its partners. The panel was refreshed prior to COVID-19 and in late November 2020, panel members received the 2020 Public Services Panel by either post or by email in line with their preference at recruitment.

4.8 The 2020 panel survey is wholly focused on assessing the impact of COVID on local people with a range of questions asked on issues such as:

- Mental health and wellbeing

- Managing income
- Issues or concerns within the home
- Community support
- Access to digital technology

4.9 It is anticipated that initial results from the Panel survey will be available in early January, and will be then be used to support the development of the Social Renewal Plan in early 2021. Importantly the findings will also inform discussions with each of the Local Partnerships on the impact of COVID across local communities. This will be a key focus of the Local Partnership meetings scheduled for February 2020.

5. Emerging priorities and next steps

5.1 Overall the work undertaken to date has highlighted that local people and communities across Renfrewshire are continuing to experience significant impacts on their lives as a result of the pandemic. Initial data and findings from the engagement events indicate:

- people on low incomes and/or who have insecure employment have been severely impacted, and most notably women and young people.
- There is also increasing evidence that low income rather than solely unemployment, is the driving factor for people seeking support to access food or help with fuel costs locally. Whilst issues in relation to low income have been a significant focus for partners in recent years, the pandemic has exacerbated issues being experienced.
- Ongoing issues in relation to social isolation and wellbeing also continue to be experienced across communities, with mixed views being expressed currently in terms of use of digital technology to support social connection.
- There is a need to more fully assess the particular impact of the pandemic on specific groups including carers, young people, people from a black and minority ethnic background and women.

5.2 The Council is working closely with both Renfrewshire wide and local community-based organisations to ensure people get access to the support they need, with enhanced focus on ensuring that local people receive support and advice to maximise household income wherever possible. In addition, the organisation is working with partners to roll out targeted employability programmes such as the Kickstart programme and youth job guarantee scheme and support to businesses themselves.

5.3 Work is also ongoing with the HSCP and a range of local groups and organisations across sector to provide support at a community level, through for example neighbourhood hubs, community food provision, support for

isolation, mental health and wellbeing helplines and the provision of digital devices and connectivity to support digital inclusion.

- 5.4 In terms of the next steps of the community impact assessment process, further work is now required in terms of assessing the particular impact of the pandemic on specific groups including carers, young people, people from a black and minority ethnic background and women. This will be progressed through various listening events in December and January 2021.
- 5.5 More detailed analysis of these key issues will also be available through the findings of the Public Services Panel survey, which was recently distributed to 1500 local people. The panel findings will also be used to inform discussions at a community level through the Local Partnership meetings scheduled in early 2021.
- 5.6 Work will continue to gather and analyse available data and community engagement feedback on the impact of the pandemic in Renfrewshire. This will inform the final drafting of a Social Renewal Plan in Renfrewshire by March 2021, which will be fully aligned to the Economic Recovery Plan which has been submitted for Council approval on 17 December 2020.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – the pandemic has had and will continue to have a significant impact on the resources available to the Council. Given the anticipated longer term financial challenges facing the Council, the requirement for targeting of resources in priority areas will be essential.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - the commitment of the Council's workforce since the pandemic emerged has been fundamental to the ability of services to continue to support local people, businesses and communities. A significant proportion of the Council's workforce live locally in Renfrewshire, and many of the social impacts outlined in the report are also being experienced by our employees. Targeted support is being offered to employees in order to address issues such as financial insecurity and mental health and wellbeing.
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** - none
6. **Information Technology** – none
7. **Equality and 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. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health and Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – none
11. **Privacy Impact** - none
12. **COSLA Policy Position** - none
13. **Climate Risk** – none

List of Background Papers

Author: *Laura McIntyre, Head of Policy and Commissioning*



To: Council

On: 17 December 2020

Report by: Chief Executive, Director of Communities, Housing and Planning Services and Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: Housing-led Regeneration and Renewal Programme for Renfrewshire

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines ambitious proposals for a major programme of investment in housing-led regeneration and renewal in Renfrewshire that will not only significantly enhance the Council's housing stock but will also contribute to the wider transformation of Renfrewshire as a place, and will be central to the economic and social recovery of Renfrewshire. The investment programme will bring forward additional investment of at least £100 million over the next ten years to deliver modern, high quality, energy efficient, affordable housing. The programme has been developed by a team led by Housing and drawn from across the Council including senior officers from Regeneration, Children's Services, Environment and Infrastructure, Finance, Policy and Commissioning and the Health and Social Care Partnership.
- 1.2 Authority is sought to progress a 10-year programme of investment in Council housing which will involve enhanced investment in existing housing (including works to the external fabric of properties and environmental improvements) as well as the construction of new Council housing. This programme of housing investment will be taken forward as a key Council priority, having regard to the wider condition and socio-economic context of each of the areas identified and designed to ensure maximum benefit for local communities and Council-wide services.
- 1.3 Renfrewshire Council is the landlord for a stock of some 12,000 homes located in communities across Renfrewshire. In delivering this role, good quality, affordable, safe and warm housing is fundamental to the health and well-being of individuals and families as well as the sustainability of local communities and the success of the local economy.

- 1.4 Over the past decade the Council has delivered major programmes of investment in its housing stock, most notably the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, a £147m 5-year investment programme that was delivered over the period from 2010 to 2015.
- 1.5 Beyond this through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan, supported by the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Programme, more than 1,000 new affordable homes will have been completed in Renfrewshire by the Council and its RSL partners in the period to 2022, including over 200 new Council homes.
- 1.6 During the last year, officers have been progressing a fundamental review of the financial model underpinning the Housing Revenue Account's 30 year business plan, supported by advice from external housing finance consultants. Alongside this, a strategic review of housing stock performance and long-term sustainability was also undertaken. This considered current operating costs as well as capital investment requirements and demand and turnover issues across the whole of the Council's housing stock and identified that around 15% of the housing stock is poorly performing and in need of intervention to address issues of low demand, neighbourhood quality and to better meet the needs of current and future tenants.
- 1.7 The review of the HRA business plan has highlighted that an opportunity exists to support a transformational programme of additional investment in Council housing of at least £100m over the next 10 year period. This is in addition to investment of £75 million in the approved HRA Capital Investment Plan for the three year period to 2022/23.
- 1.8 The investment will deliver a step change in housing conditions for tenants of Council homes in the areas in scope and will also support the delivery of wider Council Plan, Community Plan and Local Housing Strategy priorities, including:
- providing a pipeline of construction work with opportunities for job creation, community benefits, training and benefits to the local supply chain as a means of contributing to the COVID-19 **economic recovery** plan and with the potential to lever in external investment.
 - contributing to the COVID-19 **social renewal** plan, with the investment programme providing a catalyst for engagement with local communities in the development and delivery of these ambitious plans.
 - ensuring the design and specification of improvements maximises opportunities to future proof homes, including the use of technology where practical and appropriate, and improve the **health and wellbeing** of tenants. Improving the quality of housing and the places people live helps to improve the quality of people's lives, with positive benefits for both physical and mental health and general wellbeing.

- enhancing the **quality of environment** in estates, addressing issues such as bin storage, back courts, common entrances, and open spaces to promote their positive use and to enhance recycling activity.
- contributing to the Council's **placeshaping** agenda, providing a framework for improving the quality of the places where people live and supporting local communities to be actively involved in shaping change, impacting positively on the attractiveness of Renfrewshire as a place to live and encouraging economic investment.
- improving the quality and appearance of **neighbourhoods** and delivering a consistent and cost effective approach to the maintenance and management of estates. As well as benefiting local tenants and residents, this will bring positive benefits for a range of Council services, such as open space maintenance, waste collection and recycling. Improvements to the physical environment will encourage more people to use outside spaces (this is particularly important in the context of Covid) and encourage physical activity.
- contributing to the achievement of **climate change** ambitions and the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan and addressing fuel poverty through the use of the highest standards of energy efficiency practices in newbuild construction and retrofit technologies, along with a proposed demonstration innovation project.

1.9 This first phase of investment will be targeted to around 1,100 Council homes located in eight areas across Renfrewshire as detailed in paragraph 4.11 below. Comprehensive regeneration place plans will be developed, individually tailored to each area, and subject to a process of consultation and engagement with local communities, tenants, residents and owners. Initial assessment of the eight areas has indicated that the regeneration proposals will include a mix of improvements and retention of existing housing, some demolition, and investment in around 300 new build Council homes.

1.10 The report notes that further areas for regeneration and renewal investment have been identified and that proposals will be brought forward for housing in these areas as a second phase of the overall 10-year programme of investment.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Council:

- (i) agree to a 10 year programme of investment in improvements and regeneration of Council housing as set out in this report;
- (ii) approve the investment, of some £86 million in the comprehensive regeneration and improvement of the Council's housing stock, including around 300 new homes, and note that this constitutes around £29 million from existing financial plans and around £57 million from the new financial additional investment capacity identified in the long term business plan;

- (iii) authorise the Director of Communities, Housing and Planning to put in place the necessary arrangements and resources for the planning and delivery of this investment, with future reports being brought forward to the Communities, Housing and Planning Board;
 - (iv) note that the first phase of this regeneration programme will focus on 8 areas as set out in the report and notes that work will continue on scoping future phase of housing regeneration which will be reported to the Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board;
 - (v) note that this programme of investment will contribute to the achievement of climate change targets by significantly improving the energy efficiency performance of the homes within the regeneration areas; and
 - (vi) agree that a funding proposal to support the proposed demonstration project as outlined in Section 5 of this report should be presented to the Climate Change Sub-Committee for consideration.
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3. Strategic Context

- 3.1 It is widely recognised that housing is a key driver of public health. A 2019 study published by Glasgow Centre for Population Health advocated that: “Housing is not just a physical shelter, but also a foundation for social, psychological and cultural wellbeing”.
- 3.2 This is also recognised at a local level in both the Renfrewshire Community and Council Plans, in which access to good quality affordable housing is viewed as being central to the work of the Council and its partners in building strong and resilient communities.
- 3.3 As elected members will be aware, Renfrewshire is an area in which significant inequalities exist. Approximately 25% of local communities (or datazones) are ranked amongst the 20% most deprived within Scotland, and there are significant differences in life expectancy, wellbeing and wider life outcomes being experienced. In terms of income and deprivation, a high proportion of local people are employed in low income and insecure employment, with 16% of children identified as living in low income households.
- 3.4 The Council has been working to address these inequalities with partners and had made significant progress in recent years, including in areas such as educational attainment and some aspects of health and wellbeing as well as ongoing improvements to housing and the provision of newbuild affordable housing. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on people across Renfrewshire, with initial evidence indicating that many groups of people across the area have experienced disproportionate impacts, in terms of loss of or reduction in income and employment, mental health and wellbeing and increasing levels of social isolation and loneliness.

- 3.5 The importance of place and of being rooted within a supportive community environment has become more important than ever before, and there is a real opportunity to support communities as they respond to the longer term impact of COVID-19 by ensuring that people have enhanced access to good quality and affordable housing which meets the changing needs of local people. This includes the ability to support learning and work in a home environment, improved physical and digital connectivity, the flexibility to change with the needs of the household over time and good quality outdoor spaces.
- 3.6 In addition, the critical role that high quality and sustainable housing can make to the wider climate change aspirations of the Council has been identified through the work of the climate emergency working group. There is an opportunity to build and invest in housing to significantly reduce carbon emissions and ongoing fuel costs for residents. The Scottish Government in its recent Programme for Government outlined plans to enhance standards for Scottish Government grant-funded homes for carbon, greenspace, homeworking space and digital connectivity. This will be detailed in the 'Housing to 2040' route map which is expected to be published early next year. Section 5 of this report includes details of how this proposed programme of investment will help support the achievement of climate change and energy efficiency targets.

4. Housing Investment and Housing-led Regeneration Programme

- 4.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan covers a 30-year period and while it is primarily a financial document that focusses on activities that are relevant to the management of the Council's housing portfolio it is underpinned by a Strategic Asset Plan which sets out priorities for the physical care and improvement of the stock and related assets, using housing stock condition information to inform the framework within which decisions on investment are made.
- 4.2 Over the past year work has progressed on a fundamental review of the financial model underpinning the HRA 30 year business plan as well as a review of stock performance. As previously outlined to members, a number of factors continue to have a positive financial impact on the HRA's long term 30 year business plan. These include:
- accelerated payment of existing HRA debt linked to asset lifecycle planning and prudent financial management,
 - better than expected performance in core housing management areas including rent collection and the management of rent arrears
- 4.3 As a consequence, the HRA has financial capacity that is expected to emerge over a medium to longer term basis. The absolute scale of this more positive financial outlook will be subject to a range of influencing factors over the long term including ongoing rent levels. However, at this stage it is anticipated that the more positive financial outlook will confidently allow £100 million of additional investment over and above the existing programme of investment contained within the HRA business plan. Additionally, longer term financial modelling has confirmed that this additional investment capacity is able, on a sustainable basis, to be made available to support an enhanced programme of investment over the next 10 years.

- 4.4 In this financial context, there is the opportunity to support a transformational investment programme to both fundamentally address conditions in the poorest performing elements of the Council's existing housing stock and support additional investment in a substantial new build Council housing programme over the next 10 year period.
- 4.5 The 30 year HRA business plan contains allowances for lifecycle replacements and capital investment in each property amounting currently to some £17m per annum for existing stock, with £24m allocated to support new build and regeneration in the three-year period to 2022/23. This proposal represents a step change in the level of investment in new build and regeneration with an additional £100m allocated to this over the next decade, more than trebling the planned investment in housing regeneration and new build.
- 4.6 As a parallel exercise, external consultants carried out work to assist the Council in developing a Strategic Asset Management framework to inform future capital investment decisions in the Council's housing stock. Using a mixed range of indicators relating to current costs (void rent loss, responsive repairs, void repairs and management costs), future investment costs and housing demand factors (turnover, low demand), all properties were assessed in terms of stock performance and impact on the HRA. Around 16% of the housing stock was identified as having high current and future costs, poor demand profile and unsustainable for the HRA in the current form.
- 4.7 Further work was undertaken to consider the spatial location of this housing, identify the main groupings of the lowest performing stock and develop a sound understanding of the key drivers influencing stock performance and the extent to which these factors could potentially be addressed through management activity or investment.
- 4.8 From this work, an initial list of eight areas of Council housing was identified for the programme of housing-led regeneration. These areas include properties which tend to be unpopular with tenants and prospective tenants, failing to meet current aspirations with higher turnover rates, higher management costs and low demand. The areas include a range of different stock types of varying quality, some of which have layouts and attributes that are dated, difficult to maintain, and no longer meet modern day expectations. External environmental factors, common areas and perceptions about the local neighbourhood can also contribute to low demand and high turnover.
- 4.9 While drawing heavily on the evidence base of the Strategic Asset Management framework, this work was further validated through site visits and engagement with operational managers, drawing on their local knowledge and experience, to confirm that the areas most in need of intervention were identified for the proposed housing regeneration and renewal programme.

4.10 To further strengthen this approach, more detailed analysis was undertaken to review these areas against the latest Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data which was published in January 2020. This demonstrated a strong link between poorly performing housing stock and deprivation, with all or part of each of the eight areas identified within the 5% or 5-10% most deprived areas in Scotland. Housing factors have a very low weighting in the SIMD calculation (only 2%) and are therefore not a determining factor in the overall SIMD assessment. People living in the most deprived areas are likely to experience income and employment deprivation and poorer health. Therefore, in addition to investing in housing in these areas, there is also a need for a holistic approach, with input from a range of Council and HSCP services to address underlying deprivation and health inequalities.

4.11 The eight areas identified for the first phase of the proposed housing-led regeneration programme are:

Area	House Types	Indicative Property Numbers	Main Date of Construction
Moorpark, Renfrew	Tenement flats and 4-in-a-block flats	170 Council, 94 private	1930s-1950s
Thrushcraigs, Paisley	Tenement flats	90 Council, 6 private	1930s
Broomlands, Paisley	Deck Access flats, tenement flats	141 Council, 94 private	1960s, 1919
Howwood Rd area, Johnstone	Mainly own door flats	286 Council, 87 private	1930s
Waverley Rd, Foxbar	Tenement flats	115 Council, 5 private	1950s
Howard St area	Tenement flats	134 Council, 41 private	1930s
Auchentorlie / Seedhill	Tenement flats	61 Council, 17 private	1930s
Springbank Rd area	Deck access flats and maisonettes	149 Council, 103 private	1960s

4.12 Over the last six months, potential investment options have been developed by a corporate team involving chief officers from across Council services including Housing, Regeneration, Policy & Commissioning, Finance, Children's Services, Environment & Infrastructure and the Health and Social Care Partnership to ensure that this housing-led programme of investment is shaped by the Council's wider policy priorities and delivered as a core corporate programme of investment.

4.13 The investment options being considered are designed to improve both housing provision and the quality of places across the eight identified areas. In developing and assessing options, the corporate team has reviewed a wide range of housing-related information about the areas and has taken account of wider factors relating to:

- Housing demand
- Area regeneration and sustainable communities
- Economic well-being objectives
- Social well-being objectives
- Opportunity to leverage additional funding
- Integration across Council services, priorities and outcomes
- Deliverability

4.14 The investment proposals will be tailored to take account of each of the specific areas, the needs of current and prospective tenants, and also the tenure mix in the area. Options will include a mix of new build, selective demolition, and investment in the external and internal fabric of the buildings, including common areas where appropriate, and the external environment. An options appraisal exercise concluded that with appropriate investment addressing factors such as energy management, and dealing with problematic areas such as common closes, backcourts, bin stores etc, much of this stock can become attractive and meet the needs and demands of current and future tenants.

4.15 It is recognised that, to achieve the transformation required, this needs to be a programme that goes beyond investment in the physical nature of the stock. To be successful, this programme will need to address not only the fabric of the buildings, and the general environment, but also require a step change in the quality of estate management, and seek at the same time to improve quality of life, and health and wellbeing of the residents.

5. Climate Change, Investment in Energy Efficient Homes and Tackling Fuel Poverty

5.1 The investment programme is set in the context of national climate change commitments including the target for all social housing stock to achieve EESSH2 (SAP rating B) by 2032 and the Council's target of net zero by 2030.

5.2 Housing is a key source of carbon emissions. Evidence and data gathered by the climate emergency working group estimated that 900,000 tonnes of Co2 was emitted in Renfrewshire in 2017, of which 20-30% related to domestic or household emissions from for example heating or waste.

5.3 The Council provides housing for some of the lowest income households in the area and it is estimated that around 44% of social rented sector tenants in Renfrewshire are living in fuel poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic, which is having a disproportionate impact on lower income households and people in insecure employment, will be compounding difficulties for people who were struggling to heat their homes before March 2020. Home Energy Scotland have estimated the impact of COVID-19 as an increase of 37% on fuel bills as people stay at home more. This translates to an extra £32.31 per month on fuel bills.

- 5.4 Through investment in fabric improvements and energy efficiency measures, the Council is making good progress towards achievement of EESSH1 targets with 80% of Council housing stock meeting the Band C rating by December 2020. Plans are actively being developed to ensure all Council housing meets the EESSH2 target by 2032 with an estimated 10% of existing stock already meeting this standard as a result of improvements delivered through ongoing External Wall Insulation works.
- 5.5 The Housing Capital Plan includes allowances for lifecycle replacement of building elements that will contribute toward the achievement of this enhanced standard, and members will be aware that the Council has been awarded over £18.4 million to date in HEEPS:ABS funding through the Scottish Government. This has enabled over 3,500 homes across Renfrewshire to benefit from external insulation and has brought 1,430 Council homes up to EESSH1. A reduction of around 250,000 tonnes of carbon is estimated as an output from this work, contributing to climate change objectives.
- 5.6 The investment in retained stock in these 8 priority areas will contribute to the achievement of the EESSH2 standard, and where practical the use of innovative construction technologies for whole house retrofit will be considered to achieve EnerPHit standards. Given the range of property types, the design of the fabric improvements will necessarily be tailored to each property type. The long term benefit of this investment will provide tenants with significantly reduced energy bills and reduced future maintenance costs to the HRA.
- 5.7 Newbuild Council homes are currently built to a minimum 'Silver Standard Active' level, as set out in the Building Regulations, with a SAP rating at the higher end of the 'B' rating and above the 2032 EESSH standard. Based on standard assumptions about energy usage, it is anticipated that the total cost of heating, hot water and lighting will be around one-third lower for newbuild Council homes than the current average cost for existing Council properties.
- 5.8 As the available technologies advance, heating systems will continue to be installed which are affordable to tenants in order to address fuel poverty, while also maximising opportunities for carbon reduction. Where practical, the aim will be to achieve Gold Standard and net zero operational carbon homes in the future.
- 5.9 Proposals will be developed for a demonstration innovation project which seeks to work with the construction industry as well as research and academic institutions, drawing on international best practice, to build a small number of prototype houses, using the latest energy efficiency technologies, and which would be added to the housing stock on completion, to demonstrate achievable benefits in terms of carbon reduction, reduced fuel costs for tenants and deliverable construction methods. It is proposed that funding is allocated from the Councils approved Climate Change Fund to support the development of this project.

6. Implementation and Delivery

- 6.1 The scope of works which will be included in the proposed investment programme is necessarily complex and for each area a master planning and community engagement approach will be required to inform the development of the detailed investment and regeneration proposals. Developing the planning framework for these proposals will commence as a first stage in the process with area-based proposals being brought forward for each area to future meetings of the Communities Housing and Planning policy board for approval.
- 6.2 The work will continue to be progressed with cross service input at a senior level as we move from planning to implementation and delivery, ensuring appropriate alignment of the housing regeneration work to broader council priorities.
- 6.3 Over the following months more detailed analysis and planning will be taken forward with early engagement with communities and residents and with the involvement of other Council services. This will inform the local investment proposals and the development of a phasing plan and development plan for each of the areas.
- 6.4 The Council has recent experience in delivering high quality newbuild housing as part of the regeneration project at Johnstone Castle which can be drawn upon to inform broad indicative timeframes for the proposed new programme of investment. Where projects are complex and involve the rehousing of existing tenants, acquisition of private housing, demolition and newbuild, plans may be taken forward for an area in different phases and will take a number of years to complete. Where possible, indicative delivery timescales will be included in reports to the Communities, Housing and Planning Policy
- 6.5 Based on the strategic asset management review, further areas for regeneration investment have been identified which include around 1,400 additional Council properties which will require attention as a future phase of comprehensive investment. Further analysis and proposals in relation to these areas will be brought forward to a future meeting of the CHAPS Policy Board with the expectation that these will form a future phase of investment within the 10 year time horizon.
- 6.6 The housing investment requirements relating to the areas identified at paragraph 4.10 have been analysed. The 30 year HRA business plan already includes allowances for lifecycle investment and meeting statutory requirements and targets relating to housing and energy requirements. Taking account of provision already included within the financial plan for investment in the properties in scope, there is an additional requirement of around £57 million for this first phase of investment, including provision for around 300 newbuild Council homes, assuming the current level of subsidy for the affordable housing programme continues.

- 6.7 The financial analysis confirms that there is capacity for a future phase of investment as highlighted in paragraph 6.5 and for additional newbuild Council housing. Work to scope the requirements and options relating to this further phase will be progressed over the next months and further details will be brought forward to future meetings of the Communities, Housing & Planning Board.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The proposals set out in this paper will be funded through financial sustainable borrowing on the HRA. A strategic review of the 30 year HRA business plan model has confirmed that there is sufficient headroom to support this investment and a future phase of investment and new build housing. To allow for long term investment planning to be progressed with confidence, £100 million of additional investment capacity can be relied upon and which this will be subject to ongoing review as part of the annual update of the HRA 30 year business plan. As the investment programme is progressed over the medium to longer term, there may be scope for this scale of investment to grow further and this will be subject to future reporting as appropriate.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – The investment programme will require additional staffing resources to enable planning and delivery of the programme.
3. **Community/Council Planning** –
 - Our Renfrewshire is well – The investment programme will contribute to improved wellbeing and quality of life for residents.
4. **Legal** – *None at this stage*
5. **Property/Assets** -The investment programme will impact on the Council housing as detailed in section 3.14 of this report.
6. **Information Technology** - None
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. A more detailed assessment of any implications will be made as the detail of each of the housing regeneration areas is developed. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** - none

9. **Procurement** – A procurement strategy will be developed for the proposed investment programme which will seek to maximise support to the economic recovery plan in terms of employment and training opportunities and other community benefits.
10. **Risk** - A risk management approach will be developed to support the strategic regeneration plan.
11. **Privacy Impact** – n/a
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – n/a
13. **Climate Risk** - The investment programme will assist the Council in responding to the Climate Change Emergency by improving energy efficiency and cutting carbon emissions.

List of Background Papers

MC/FC/LM
4 December 2020

Author: Mary Crearie, Director of Communities, Housing & Planning



To: Council
On: 17 December 2020

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Final Report of Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission

1. Summary

- 1.1 During 2018, Renfrewshire Community Planning Executive Group agreed to establish an Alcohol and Drugs Commission. This was prompted following ongoing concern in relation to the impact of alcohol and drug use across Renfrewshire's communities.
- 1.2 Comprising of a range of local and national experts, the Commission met for the first time in March 2019, undertaking an extensive programme of engagement and evidence gathering which involved over 300 local people and groups. The final stage of the Commission's work was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however this resumed in late August 2020.
- 1.3 This covering report provides a summary of the work programme undertaken by the Commission and provides an overview of key findings and recommendations which were endorsed by the Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership Executive Group on 25 November 2020. The full report is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.4 In its report the Commission makes **27 recommendations** which provide clear direction to community planning partners on the action that must be taken to fundamentally address the impact of alcohol and drug use in Renfrewshire. The recommendations are bold and ambitious and focus on what needs to change to support:

- People who use alcohol and drugs
- Families impacted by alcohol and drug use
- Young people experiencing issues in relation to alcohol and drug use and mental health issues and;
- Local communities that are impacted by alcohol and drug use within their local areas

1.5 Priority actions are identified in relation to:

- Urgently addressing issues in relation to **mental health** service provision, including provision for young people.
- Considering **trauma as part of everything that partners do** in Renfrewshire – this is fundamental to reducing or preventing problems with alcohol and drug use and supporting recovery.
- Introducing a **whole system approach** to supporting people with their alcohol and drug use.
- Increasing **the reach and capacity** across the whole system of support for people using alcohol and drugs.
- Making **urgent changes to the buildings** from which services are provided.
- Reviewing the **support that is available to families** impacted by drug and alcohol use – at all stages of life.
- Partners providing **leadership around alcohol** supply, promotion and availability.
- **Valuing lived experience** as part of the approach to recover in Renfrewshire: - developing meaningful relationships with recovery organisations and building strong partnership peer support models.
- **Tackling stigma** around alcohol and drug use and supporting opportunities for **social connection** across Renfrewshire to support recovery.

1.6 The report recognises the positive basis on which these recommendations can be taken forward in Renfrewshire, given the strength of joint working and the collective ambitions of local partners.

1.7 In recognition of the work of the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission during 2019, and ahead of the planned publication of the Commission's report in Spring 2020, £2m of funding was allocated to support its recommendations in the Council budget approved on 9th March 2020. Given the impact of COVID-19 on local communities, officers have worked at pace with key partners to discuss the Commission's findings and recommendations and have jointly developed proposals which would allow initial allocation of the Council's agreed funding envelope, to target the priorities identified as being most urgent by the Commission.

It is envisaged that this funding will be used to pilot new ways of working across the community planning partnership, with the opportunity to use this learning to transform the way in which people receive support across Renfrewshire in the medium to longer term.

- 1.8 Funding proposals which recommend the initial allocation of £1.34 million of the £2m funding allocation agreed by Council, are set out in section 6 of this report.
 - 1.9 A key focus of the Council's response will be to reach out to help people most at risk of harm from alcohol and drug use, to ensure that support wraps around individuals and their families to support recovery. Targeted support in relation to mental health and supporting people at points of crisis will also be developed, with particular focus on supporting young people with complex needs and working with schools and other learning establishments to support young people, staff and families affected by drug and alcohol use.
 - 1.10 Working with communities to target loneliness isolation and stigma will also be a significant local priority, recognising the strength and opportunity that exists within Renfrewshire's local communities to support recovery.
 - 1.11 Section 7 of this covering report sets out the key next steps that will be undertaken in terms of driving the implementation of the local response to the Commission's recommendations. A partnership board will be established, with a commitment to meaningfully involving local people with lived and living experience in its ongoing programme of work. It is proposed that 6 monthly progress updates will be provided to the Leadership Board, with a detailed action plan provided to the board in February 2021.
-

2. Recommendations

2.1 Council is asked to:

- Welcome the findings and recommendations of the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission, as set out in the Commission's final report attached at Appendix 1, and commend the contribution of the Commission members, frontline staff, partners and local people and communities to this process.
- Agree the funding proposals set out in Section 6 to allocate £1.34m of the £2m funding agreed by Council in March 2020, with these proposals forming the Council's initial response to the Commission's findings.
- Note that the Commission's report and funding proposals detailed in Section 6 of this report will be presented to Renfrewshire Integration Joint Board on 29 January 2021, to gain formal support for the implementation of the proposed partnership response to the Commission's findings.

- Note that a detailed action plan on the Commission’s findings and recommendations will be submitted to the Leadership Board in February 2021, with further funding proposals also submitted at that time.

3. Background

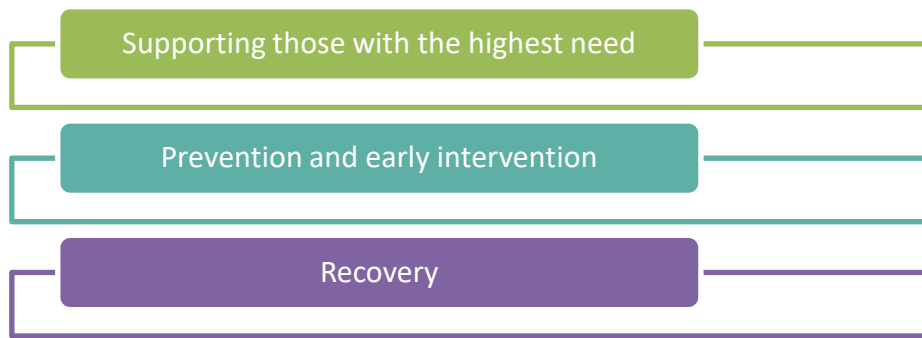
3.1 In late 2018, Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership Executive Group agreed to establish an independent Commission to consider the true impact of alcohol and drugs across Renfrewshire’s communities. This was the first Commission of its kind, in that community planning partners wanted it to focus on both alcohol and drugs.

*Commission remit: to establish a **true picture** of drug and alcohol and use in Renfrewshire and to make recommendations on **what partners can do together** to support local people and communities adversely affected by drug and alcohol use to **improve life outcomes**.*

3.2 The Commission was supported by officers within Renfrewshire Council, who worked to establish the Commission and to recruit a number of local and national experts and professionals. It was agreed that the Commission would be chaired by Councillor Jacqueline Cameron, current chair of the Renfrewshire Integration Joint Board. Professor Phil Hanlon, a retired public health professional, local resident and chair of the Accord Hospice, supported the Commission meetings as a facilitator. A full list of Commission members is provided within the Commission’s report at Appendix 1.

3.3 It was originally anticipated that the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drug Commission would meet and conclude its findings over a period of 12 months, with the first meeting of the Commission taking place on 19 March 2019. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 caused the Commission to pause its work, however this resumed in September 2020, with the final meeting held on 5 November 2020.

3.4 In its initial phase, Commission members were provided with the opportunity to hear from local partners about Renfrewshire as a place, and to learn more about some of the issues and challenges experienced by local people and communities. Following initial discussion, Commission members agreed a programme of work based around **3 key pillars or themes**, which would ensure the Commission was able to come forward with recommendations which community planning partners would have the levers and resources to address:



A Listening Commission

- 3.5 In Renfrewshire, local drug and alcohol services had recently been subject to an independent review and there was clear direction of travel to move to a new integrated and person centred service model which better supported recovery. This was identified however as only one piece of the jigsaw, and the Commission undertook an extensive programme of engagement and evidence gathering to ensure that the impact of alcohol and drug use was considered as broadly as possible, rather than focusing solely on services which support treatment. Over 330 people were involved in the engagement programme, which included visits to organisations and services by small groups of Commission members as well as a large scale event in partnership with the Sunshine Recovery Café and the Scottish Recovery Consortium.
- 3.6 In addition to the information gathered through the listening programme, Commission members were also provided with a range of opportunities to hear presentations and to receive briefings from local partner organisations, service providers and innovative projects that have been delivered elsewhere in Scotland and more widely. The Commission also considered the emerging findings of the National Drug Deaths Taskforce and the Dundee Drug Death Commission to explore learning for Renfrewshire.

4. Impact of COVID-19

- 4.1 As outlined previously, the work of the Commission was forced to pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Just prior to lockdown in March, the Commission members had been in the process of finalising key messages and recommendations. Given the fundamental impact that the pandemic has had across all of Renfrewshire's communities, it was important that the Commission took time to consider the impact of COVID-19 when the work programme resumed in late August 2020.

- 4.2 The Commission undertook follow up sessions in September and October 2020, involving a range of participants from its initial engagement programme. This final stage was very important in order to reflect and sense check the Commission's findings and to make sure that the views and experiences of the people that the Commission had spoken to were accurately reflected in the report. It also provided an opportunity to hear what impact the global pandemic had had on local people, families and services across Renfrewshire.
- 4.3 Whilst the true impact of COVID-19 is not yet fully understood, initial local and national information indicates real concerns in relation to the impact that the pandemic has had in terms of alcohol and drug use.
- 4.4 At a local level there is concern that levels of alcohol and drug use continue to increase, and that existing issues have been exacerbated by the pandemic and associated restrictions. A national survey commissioned by Alcohol Focus Scotland and Alcohol Change UK survey found that in Scotland people who were already drinking at high levels before the pandemic were more likely to have increased their drinking during lockdown, and stress was a key factor. The representative Opinium survey of 550 adults in Scotland showed that over a quarter (27%) of respondents reported drinking more than usual during lockdown, with this figure increasing to a third for those drinking at higher levels before lockdown (33% of those drinking seven or more units on a single occasion).
- 4.5 In recognition that the longer term impact of COVID-19 may take some time to be fully assessed, community planning partners in Renfrewshire are currently undertaking a Community Impact Assessment to develop a deeper understanding of the issues impacting local people and communities. The impact of the pandemic on alcohol and drug use and on those affected by alcohol / drugs will be considered as part of this approach, with a key focus on mental health and wellbeing.
- 4.6 The Council's response with partners to the Commission's recommendations through the initial funding proposals set out in section 6, will be fundamental to supporting local people experiencing alcohol and drugs during the pandemic.

5. Key Messages and recommendations

- 5.1 In December 2020, the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission published its final report.

The report is a comprehensive document which sets out the Commission's main findings and 27 recommendations for community planning partners to respond to either collectively or as individual organisations where appropriate.

5.2 In its report the Commission recognised:

- the breadth of work that takes place every day to support people impacted by drug and alcohol use in Renfrewshire;
- the significant changes to alcohol and drug services which are being progressed by Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership following an independent review; and
- the ambition from partners to think beyond statutory services and to work in different ways to promote recovery, recognise trauma and tackle issues of stigma and culture in a positive way.

5.3 The key findings of Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission can be summarised as follows:

5.3.1 High levels of harm exist in Renfrewshire

- Levels of harm in relation to alcohol and drug use is increasing and the nature of this harm is changing. The availability of drugs in particular is evolving and street drugs like Etizolam have significantly increased risk of harm and the number of drug related deaths. People told the Commission that it had never been as easy or as cheap to access these types of drugs. The profile of people using drugs has also changed with people tending to consume a range of different drugs, as well as increasing numbers of people using drugs over many years and consequently suffering very serious ongoing health conditions.
- Research and engagement indicated high levels of hidden harm in Renfrewshire with many people reporting significant levels of consumption of alcohol and drugs. The Commission recommended that this was something that partners needed to get to grips with quickly, to better understand how to support people, many of whom will never come into contact with a formal alcohol or drug service.
- The country's relationship with alcohol is not a positive one, and the Commission explored the link between availability and promotion of alcohol in Renfrewshire and the strong link that this has to the very high levels of alcohol related harm in Renfrewshire. However, data on alcohol related harm was limited and needs to improve.

5.3.2 Supporting people with complex needs

- Alcohol and drug services are moving towards a recovery orientated model of care, but this needs to move faster and should involve people with lived experience and their families to a greater extent.
- Frontline staff across a range of different services were committed to the people that they were supporting, and noted examples of positive practice and relationships, particularly in relation to young people with complex needs. Staff were positive about moving towards a recovery orientated

model and saw the benefits of moving to a more holistic model of care and support with all partners and working together in a trauma-informed way.

- The reach of alcohol and drugs services locally is potentially lower than it is in other areas – meaning that people who need support are not always in contact with formal services or through other community and voluntary sector organisations. Support needs to be available to support the full range or continuum of needs that people have – through engagement we heard of specific gaps in terms of the availability of a 24/7 crisis service and rehabilitation services.
- Through the engagement undertaken, the Commission came to the view that building based services were not fit for purpose. The location and physical structure of these buildings did not always provide a safe, welcoming or trauma informed environment for either staff or service users. Service users and families also had to go to multiple buildings to get support with different issues.

5.3.3 Support for mental health issues is perceived as being difficult to access or not there at all

- One of the clear findings of the Commission, is that there was a significant disconnect between people using services and services themselves on the support that was available in Renfrewshire in terms of mental health. People who used alcohol and drugs services told the Commission that they didn't know where to turn to get the help they needed to deal with the trauma they were trying to deal with and felt they waited long times to see mental health professionals. The Commission heard that people often just wanted to speak to someone who knew what they were experiencing and needed a positive peer relationship to support their recovery. Services felt that a comprehensive range of services and supports were in place and were keen to understand why this disconnect had developed.
- Commission members were particularly concerned about the impact of poor mental health on young people. Whilst high quality services like the RADAR service supported young people with issues relating to alcohol and drug use, it was clear that mental health services for young people needed to be made available to support all different levels of needs. There was evidence of counselling and peer support in schools, but it was clear that a whole systems approach is required to ensure that young people do not fall through the cracks and experience poor outcomes.

5.3.4 Impact on families

- The Commission found that the impact that alcohol and drugs have on families and relationships is stark. This is true at all stages of life:- from children and young people affected by parental drug or alcohol use, to siblings and elderly parents trying to support adult relatives with their drug or alcohol use.

The Commission heard evidence about the stressful situations that families found themselves in, often feeling like they had nowhere to turn. This included situations where families felt there was a risk to a person's life.

- Alcohol and drug use is a significant factor in many children in Renfrewshire requiring care and protection. The trauma that children, young people and wider families experience as a result is life changing – this is reflected strongly in findings of The Promise national care review and there was significant evidence of this in Renfrewshire.

5.3.5 Alcohol and drugs surround people whether they want them to or not

- The impact of alcohol and drug use on young people was a particular focus of the Commission's work and engagement programme. Young people made a short film about their experiences, and about how easy it was to get access to alcohol and drugs and the negative impact it had on themselves, their families, friends and communities.
- For young people experiencing more complex needs, it was disturbing to hear that most felt that nothing could have prevented their drug or alcohol use, and that they were always destined to be this way. The value and strength of their relationships with support workers however shone through and there was real hope for the future.
- Over and above the impact on young people, it was clear that the availability and presence of drugs and alcohol was an issue for people across all age groups.

5.3.6 There is strength in local communities to support recovery

- Lived experience can be the bridge between services and supporting people with their recovery. The recovery community in Renfrewshire has been gaining momentum with groups like the Sunshine Recovery Café building many positive relationships and opportunities to support recovery at a community level.
- The Commission heard about the importance of social relationships and social connection to support recovery. It was clear that there needed to be more opportunities for social connection in Renfrewshire, and that there was as significant opportunity for all partners to value lived experience more fully through the development of peer support models.
- Recovery needs to be supported by all partners in Renfrewshire – from the recruitment of staff with lived experience, to tackling stigma and language around alcohol and drug use, to the training staff about trauma and the way in which services are delivered.

5.4 The Commission noted that all partners in Renfrewshire were ambitious for its people and its place, and that frontline staff were committed and focused on building positive relationships with people using services and their families. It was felt that this represented a positive basis on which to improve outcomes in Renfrewshire.

5.5 The Commission's report sets out **27 recommendations** which partners should prioritise in order to respond to the Commission's findings. These can be broadly grouped across the following themes:



5.6 **Priority actions** are identified with the Commission's report in terms of:

- Urgently addressing issues in relation to **mental health** service provision, including provision for young people.
- Considering **trauma as part of everything that partners do** in Renfrewshire – this is fundamental to reducing or preventing problems with alcohol and drug use and supporting recovery.
- Introducing a **whole system approach** to supporting people with their alcohol and drug use.
- Increasing **the reach and capacity** across the whole system of support for people using alcohol and drugs.
- Making **urgent changes to the buildings** from which services are provided.
- Reviewing the **support that is available to families** impacted by drug and alcohol use – at all stages of life.
- Partners providing **leadership around alcohol** supply, promotion and availability.
- **Valuing lived experience** as part of the approach to recover in Renfrewshire: - developing meaningful relationships with recovery organisations and building strong partnership peer support models.
- **Tackling stigma** around alcohol and drug use and supporting opportunities for **social connection** across Renfrewshire to support recovery.

- 5.7 The full report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 5.8 Members are asked to note that the report and its recommendations were fully endorsed by the Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership Executive Group on 25 November 2020. At this meeting, which was attended by several Commission members and local representatives from the recovery community, partners committed to collectively supporting the implementation of the recommendations. All community planning partners have been encouraged to submit the report for discussion within their own respective organisations.

6. Renfrewshire Council's response to the Commission's Final Report

- 6.1 In recognition of the work of the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission during 2019, and ahead of the planned publication of the Commission's report in Spring 2020, £2m funding was agreed to support its recommendations in the Council budget approved on 9th March 2020.
- 6.2 The allocation of this funding provides a major opportunity for the Council to drive an ambitious programme of change which will seek to fundamentally reduce the impact of alcohol and drugs on local people and communities across Renfrewshire. This is particularly important given the impact of COVID-19 in Renfrewshire, which has exacerbated issues being faced by individuals, families and communities in relation to alcohol and drug use and mental health in particular. Community planning partners in endorsing the Commission's recommendations, recognised therefore that partners needed to respond to these with urgency.
- 6.3 Officers have worked closely with key partners in the HSCP to discuss the Commission's findings and recommendations and have jointly developed proposals which would allow initial allocation of the Council's agreed funding envelope, to target the priorities identified as being most urgent by the Commission. It is envisaged that this funding will be used to pilot new ways of working across the community planning partnership, with the opportunity to use this learning to transform the way in which people receive support across Renfrewshire in the medium to longer term.
- 6.4 It is proposed that £1.34 million is allocated initially to support the following specific developments at Table 1. It is anticipated that the majority of these initiatives will be supported over a 18-24 month programme, and work will be undertaken to lever external funding to support the implementation of the Commission's recommendations wherever possible. A key focus of these initiatives will be to ensure that any resulting changes to services are financially sustainable for the Council and partners, and there will be a clear link between the implementation and ongoing evaluation of these initiatives and the Right for Renfrewshire programme.

Risk of Harm

- **£200,000** to implement an outreach model to engage with people who are not in contact with local drug and alcohol services
- **£10,000** to fund a research study into levels of hidden drug and alcohol use in Renfrewshire

Mental Health

- **£160,000** to pilot a crisis mental health service to support individuals and families when they need this most
- **£100,000** to support the Trauma Informed Renfrewshire programme, ensuring that all partners, services and frontline staff respond effectively to the impact of trauma on local people and communities.

Children and Families

- **£250,000** to pilot an intensive mental health support programme for children and young people who may be experiencing difficulties in relation to alcohol and drug use and mental health, lead by Children's Services.
- **£100,000** to provide enhanced education and training in relation to alcohol and drugs issues across Renfrewshire's learning establishments. This will closely align to the work young people have been leading in terms of personal and social education on these issues.
- **£20,000** will be allocated to fund a review of family support services locally in relation to alcohol and drugs services locally.

Recovery

- **£150,000** to establish a Recovery Change Fund in Renfrewshire, providing an opportunity for community and voluntary sector organisations to access funding to support tests of change in relation to mental health, recovery, stigma and social isolation in particular.
- **£200,000** will be allocated to support the development of a peer support model in Renfrewshire. This will recognise the value of lived experience and the importance of positive relationships to support local people in their recovery journey.

Early Intervention and Prevention

- **£50,000** will be allocated to support health improvement activities in relation to alcohol, with a particular focus on working with partners and across communities to drive changes in behaviour and culture in relation to alcohol consumption.

Implementation

- **£100,000** will be allocated to support the implementation of the Commission's recommendations and to ensure that all funded projects and initiatives are delivered.

- 6.5 The funding proposals will also be submitted to Renfrewshire Integration Joint Board on 29 January 2021, in order to gain formal support for the work programme outlined in this report.
-

7. Next steps

- 7.1 This is a significant programme of council led investment, and it is critical that there is a strong partnership response to the Commission's recommendations in order to achieve the scale and pace of change which is required across Renfrewshire's communities.
- 7.2 A detailed action plan which will set out the Council and its' partners response to the Commission's report and recommendations will be prepared and submitted for consideration by elected members at the next meeting of the Leadership Board in February 2021. This will clearly identify the intended impact and outcomes in terms of each of the actions being progressed, including those initiatives which are being supported through Council funding. Proposals in relation to the remaining £0.66m of Alcohol and Drug Commission funding set aside by Council in March 2020, will also be brought forward for consideration and approval in February 2021.
- 7.3 The delivery of the action plan and the resulting programme of work will be driven by a Programme Board chaired by the Chief Executive. Operational delivery of the Alcohol and Drug Commission programme will be led by the Head of Policy and Commissioning, with a co-ordinator post put into place to support the implementation and delivery of all new initiatives. The co-ordinator post will also support the ongoing evaluation of the impact of these initiatives and facilitate collaboration with partners on the Commission's recommendations.
- 7.4 Six monthly reports will be submitted to the Leadership Board in order to ensure that there is ongoing scrutiny by elected members of the progress that is being achieved in terms of the Commission's recommendations and the delivery of all initiatives receiving funding as a result.
-

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - On 9 March 2020, Renfrewshire Council agreed its budget with a commitment of £2 million to support priorities emerging from the Alcohol and Drugs Commission.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - *None*

3. **Community/Council Planning** – The Commission was established by Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership and the report has been endorsed by the Community Planning Partnership Executive Group.
4. **Legal** - *None.*
5. **Property/Assets** - *None*
6. **Information Technology** - *None*
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - *None*
 - (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. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website. (Report author to arrange this).
8. **Health & Safety** - *None*
9. **Procurement** – *Not applicable*
10. **Risk** – *No risks have been identified.*
11. **Privacy Impact** – *Not applicable*
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – *Not applicable.*

List of Background Papers

- (a) n/a

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Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission



Final Report 2020

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1. Foreword by Councillor Jacqueline Cameron, Chair of the Commission

Thank you for reading this report and for finding out more about the work we are doing in Renfrewshire to improve the lives of people impacted by alcohol and drugs.

I was delighted to be asked to chair this Commission, and I am very proud of the work that has been achieved to date and the way in which the Commission has listened to the views of so many different people who are affected by these issues locally. Some of these conversations were really difficult as they reflected the painful experiences that many people and families have had. However, they were vitally important in ensuring that the Commission focused on the human impact of alcohol and drugs in Renfrewshire.

It's important that we now listen to these voices and work together to use all of the opportunities and resources that are available across our communities to achieve real change in the way in which we work and think about drugs and alcohol in Renfrewshire.

The recommendations from the Commission provide a way forward for us locally, allowing us to build on the work that is being undertaken to develop a recovery orientated approach in Renfrewshire. The recommendations recognise this work but also indicate a range of further areas which local partners should prioritise to improve these services.

The recommendations also focus on the potential of community and peer led support and the importance of relationships and social connection. Renfrewshire is home to many strong and resilient communities, as has been demonstrated as we have responded locally to the COVID19 pandemic. As partners it is more important than ever that we work together to make the best use of all the strengths and resources that we have, and to tackle some of the most fundamental issues that our communities face.

I look forward to working with partners in the future to take forward these recommendations and to effect the real change which these Commission findings can help us to achieve in Renfrewshire.





2. Key Messages

Renfrewshire is similar to many other areas in Scotland and the UK in that it has continued to experience a range of issues across communities in relation to alcohol and drugs. Local partners have been very concerned about the levels of harm being experienced by local people and established an independent Commission in order to assess the true impact of alcohol and drugs in Renfrewshire.

Many leading experts at a local and national level agreed to join the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission as it was different to others—it focused on both drugs and alcohol and represented a significant opportunity for all partners to come together to support real change across communities.

In Renfrewshire, local drug and alcohol services had recently been subject to an independent review and there was clear direction of travel to move to a new service model which better supported recovery. This however is only one piece of the jigsaw, and the Commission undertook an extensive programme of engagement and evidence gathering to ensure that the impact of alcohol and drug use was considered as broadly as possible, rather than focusing solely on services which support treatment. It is important to stress that this was a LISTENING Commission where lived and living experience and the views of families and frontline staff were fundamental to the approach taken.

The Commission's findings are:

High levels of harm exist in Renfrewshire

- Levels of harm in relation to alcohol and drug use are increasing and the nature of this harm is changing. The availability of drugs in particular is changing and street drugs like Etizolam have significantly increased risk of harm and the number of drug related deaths. People told us that it had never been as easy or as cheap to access these types of drugs. The profile of people using drugs has also changed with people tending to consume a range of different drugs, as well as increasing numbers of people using drugs over many years and consequently suffering very serious ongoing health conditions.
- Research and engagement indicated high levels of hidden harm in Renfrewshire with many people reporting significant levels of consumption of alcohol and drugs. This is something that partners need to get a handle on quickly, to better understand how to support people, many of whom will never come into contact with a formal alcohol or drug service.
- The country's relationship with alcohol is not a positive one, and the Commission explored the link between availability and promotion of alcohol in Renfrewshire and the strong link that this has to the very high levels of alcohol related harm in Renfrewshire. However, data on alcohol related harm was limited and needs to improve.

Supporting people with complex needs

- Alcohol and drug services are moving towards a recovery orientated model of care, but this needs to move faster and should involve people with lived experience and their families.
- Frontline staff across a range of different services were committed to the people that they were supporting, and we saw examples of positive practice and relationships, particularly in relation to young people with complex needs. Staff were positive about moving towards a recovery orientated model and saw the benefits of moving to a more holistic model of care and support with all partners and working together in a trauma-informed way.
- The reach of alcohol and drugs services locally is potentially lower than it is in other areas—meaning that people who need support are not always in contact with a formal services or through other community and voluntary sector organisations. Support needs to be available to support the full range or continuum of needs that people have—through engagement we heard of specific gaps in terms of the availability of a 24/7 crisis service and rehabilitation services.

- Through the engagement undertaken, the Commission came to the view that building based services were not fit for purpose. The location and physical structure of these buildings did not always provide a safe, welcoming or trauma informed environment for either staff or service users. Service users and families also had to go to multiple buildings to get support with different issues.

Support for mental health issues is perceived as being difficult to access or not there at all

- One of the clear findings of the Commission, is that there was a significant disconnect between people using services and services themselves on the support that was available in Renfrewshire in terms of mental health. People who used alcohol and drugs services told us they didn't know where to turn to get the help they needed to deal with the trauma they were trying to deal with and felt they waited long times to see mental health professionals. We heard that people often just wanted to speak to someone who knew what they were experiencing and needed a positive peer relationship to support their recovery. Services felt that a comprehensive range of services and supports were in place and were keen to understand why this disconnect had developed.

- Commission members were particularly concerned about the impact of poor mental health on young people. Whilst high quality services like the RADAR service existed for young people with issues relating to alcohol and drug use, it was clear that mental health services for young people need to be made available to support people with all different levels of needs. There was evidence of counselling and peer support in schools, but it was clear that a whole systems approach is required to ensure that young people do not fall through the cracks and experience poor outcomes.

Impact on families

- The impact that alcohol and drugs have on families and relationships is stark. This is true at all stages of life:- from children and young people affected by parental drug or alcohol use, to siblings and elderly parents trying to support adult relatives with their drug or alcohol use. The Commission heard evidence about the stressful situations that families found themselves in, often feeling like they had nowhere to turn. This included situations where families felt there was a risk to a person's life.
- Alcohol and drug use is a significant factor in many children in Renfrewshire requiring care and protection. The trauma that children, young people and wider families experience as a result is life changing—this is reflected strongly in findings of The Promise national care review and there was significant evidence of this in Renfrewshire.

Alcohol and drugs surround people whether they want them to or not

- The impact of alcohol and drug use on young people was a particular focus of the Commission's work and engagement programme. Young people made a short film about their experiences, and about how easy it was to get access to alcohol and drugs and the negative impact it had on themselves, their families, friends and communities.
- For young people experiencing more complex needs, it was disturbing to hear that most young people felt that nothing could have prevented their drug or alcohol use, and that they were always destined to be this way. The value and strength of their relationships with support workers however shone through and there was real hope for the future.
- Over and above the impact on young people, it was clear that the availability and presence of drugs and alcohol was an issue for people across all age groups.

There is strength in local communities to support recovery

- Lived experience can be the bridge between services and supporting people with their recovery. The recovery community in Renfrewshire has been gaining momentum with groups like the Sunshine Recovery Café building many positive relationships and opportunities to support recovery at a community level.
- The Commission heard about the importance of social relationships and social connection to support recovery. It was clear that there needed to be more opportunities for social connection in Renfrewshire, and that there was a significant opportunity for all partners to value lived experience more fully through the development of peer support models.
- Recovery needs to be supported by all partners in Renfrewshire—from the recruitment of staff with lived experience, to tackling stigma and language around alcohol and drug use, to the training staff about trauma and the way in which services are delivered.

It was clear all partners in Renfrewshire were ambitious for its people and its place, and that frontline staff were committed and focused on building positive relationships with people using services and their families. The Commission found a positive basis on which to improve outcomes in Renfrewshire. Whilst COVID has created many new challenges, there remains a strong commitment to working together to support people impacted by alcohol and drug use.

The Commission's recommendations for change are set out in section 9 of this report and include priority actions on:

- Urgently addressing issues in relation to mental health service provision, including provision for young people.
- Considering trauma as part of everything that partners do in Renfrewshire—this is fundamental to reducing or preventing problems with alcohol and drug use and supporting recovery.
- Introducing a whole system approach to supporting people with their alcohol and drug use.
- Increasing the reach and capacity across the whole system of support for people using alcohol and drugs
- Making urgent changes to the buildings from which services are provided.
- Reviewing the support that is available to families impacted by drug and alcohol use—at all stages of life.
- Partners providing leadership around alcohol supply, promotion and availability.
- Valuing lived experience as part of the approach to recover in Renfrewshire: - developing meaningful relationships with recovery organisations and building strong partnership peer support models
- Tackling stigma around alcohol and drug use and supporting opportunities for social connection across Renfrewshire to support recovery.





3. The Work of Renfrewshire's Alcohol and Drugs Commission

Renfrewshire's Alcohol and Drugs Commission was asked by Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership to establish a true picture of drug and alcohol use in Renfrewshire, and to make recommendations on what partners could do together to support local people and communities adversely affected by drug and alcohol use and to improve life outcomes.

The scope of the Commission was therefore broad, and very different to those that have gone before, with the evidence purposefully focusing to a greater extent on the voices of local people, partners and staff, rather than on data or research on the most effective forms of treatment.

The Commission has considered what is under the direct influence of community planning partners, and other agencies who can deliver change. The result is a set of recommendations which are ambitious and challenging, not only for the community planning partnership but also for Scottish policy.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact that this has had and will continue to have over a longer period of time, it is recognised that there will be a need to prioritise the actions that community planning partners take in response to these recommendations.

The terms of reference for Renfrewshire's Alcohol and Drugs Commission can be found in Appendix A.

Membership

Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission was chaired by Councillor Jacqueline Cameron, Chair of Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board, and included experts from a wide range of local, regional and national organisations. The Commission was supported by an independent facilitator, Professor Phil Hanlon, a retired public health professional and current chair of the Accord Hospice in Renfrewshire.

Each of the Commission members gave their time and input to this work freely, drawing on professional expertise, taking time to build a picture of Renfrewshire and its communities, providing challenge and raising the ambitions of local partners.

A full list of Commission members can also be found in Appendix A.

Approach

The Commission recognises that the approach taken in Renfrewshire has been very different to other reviews and commissions that have taken place in Scotland and across the UK. Community planning partners were very keen that the Commission focused its activities on considering the impact of both alcohol and drugs across Renfrewshire's communities, and felt that this would allow some of the issues to be considered in a fundamentally different way.

'I was keen to be involved as I knew the Commission would be connecting with existing strategies active in Renfrewshire around education, poverty, culture, employment—all areas of work that Renfrewshire's Third Sector Network has connections, as well as commitments to. The Commission's activity adds to Renfrewshire's partnership approach—an approach which is seeking to achieve the best possible outcomes for Renfrewshire as a whole, as well as for individuals who require our care and support.'

Alan McNiven, Commission Member and Chief Executive of Engage Renfrewshire

It was originally anticipated that the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drug Commission would meet and conclude its findings over a period of 12 months, with the first meeting of the Commission taking place on 19 March 2019. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 caused the Commission to pause its work, however this resumed in September 2020, with the final meeting held on 5 November 2020.

In its initial phase, Commission members were provided with the opportunity to hear from local partners about Renfrewshire as a place, and to learn more about some of the issues and challenges experienced by local people and communities. Following initial discussion, Commission members agreed a programme of work based around 3 key pillars:

- supporting those with the highest need;
- early intervention and prevention; and
- recovery.

In taking forward its programme of work, the Commission identified five key questions to guide its approach:

1. What is the impact of drug and alcohol use?
2. How are we collectively responding?
3. How do those impacted feel?
4. What could we do differently?
5. What does research and evidence tell us?

Given this Commission was sponsored by Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership, these questions were key to ensuring that the Commission was able to come forward with recommendations which partners have the levers and resources to address wherever possible.

A Listening Commission

From the outset, Commission members were clear that this would be a "Listening" Commission, which would put local people, service users, staff and partners at the heart of its work. The approach to be taken would be a human one, with a clear focus on what could be achieved collectively to better support people impacted by alcohol and drug use in Renfrewshire.

A full programme of listening and engagement sessions was undertaken, with Commission members visiting local groups, organisations and places to meet with service users, their families and staff in a more informal way. This has allowed the Commission to tackle the disconnect between individuals and services in perceptions of access to services, acknowledge where things are not working and reset relationships.

The full programme of engagement activities is provided at Appendix C.

Providing a platform for individuals and family members with lived experience to discuss their priorities and influence change has been essential to the Commission and it is important that participants can see the difference that their involvement has made. A significant number of individuals who met with the Commission said that they would welcome the opportunity to have their say and work with partners to help shape service provision. They cited the recovery conversation event held by the Commission at the Lagoon Leisure centre as an example of how best this can be taken forward. There is some evidence that some level of engagement is already happening in Renfrewshire.

In addition to the information gathered through the listening programme, Commission members were also provided with a range of opportunities to hear presentations and to receive briefings from local partner organisations, service providers and from innovative projects that have been delivered elsewhere in Scotland. Commission members played a key role in identifying who they wanted to hear from, based on their own professional knowledge and experience, and also in response to the feedback they were receiving through the engagement events. This included responding to some of the emerging recommendations of the national Drug Death Taskforce which was initiated by the Scottish Government during the life of the Commission. The Commission also reviewed the findings of Dundee's Drugs Commission and considered the recommendations in relation to Renfrewshire.

That is where we started, here is our journey...

'BTHA, Renfrew Project service users and staff were delighted to be asked to be part of this consultation, this allowed us as a local service to be heard and our service users were supported to share their very honest opinions and lived experiences.

The members of the Commission were genuinely interested which was very important to us, we felt they had listened and taken on board our views of services and areas for improvement and would then take this forward to shape things for the future.'

Service Manager, Blue Triangle Housing Association



4. Renfrewshire—the place and its people

Renfrewshire is a local authority area in the West of Scotland, with a rich history of creativity, innovation and culture. Approximately 179,000 people live in a number of towns and villages, with Paisley recognised as Scotland's largest town. Renfrewshire is also home to Glasgow International Airport, a key gateway into Scotland and beyond.

In common with other areas across Scotland, Renfrewshire was badly impacted by the decline of many traditional industries which had previously generated much growth and prosperity. Significant inequalities developed across Renfrewshire's communities in terms of health and poverty, with some areas being recognised as amongst the most deprived in Scotland.

Over more recent years, stronger economic growth has been evident with many global and local businesses developing their operations in Renfrewshire. Partners have been working together to drive economic growth and are taking forward ambitious capital investment programmes. Linked to the City Deal programme £274m of investment has been secured to develop core infrastructure projects which includes the development of the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District near Glasgow Airport. In addition, ambitious plans have been developed to transform Renfrewshire's town centres and to provide new purpose and opportunities for local people and businesses.

The Council with its partners has progressed an extensive programme of cultural and economic regeneration and has established the Future Paisley programme which aims to harness the area's heritage and culture to improve lives.

Partners have also been working with local people and communities to tackle the inequalities experienced across Renfrewshire. Significant progress has been achieved in terms of supporting people on low incomes through the Tackling Poverty Commission and Programme. New ways of delivering services and of tackling issues such as the poverty related attainment gap have been prioritised, and local partners can already evidence success in terms of the difference this work is making to local children and families.

Whilst great progress is being achieved, it is recognised that these inequalities can lead to deep rooted issues for individuals and families which are challenging to support. Particular issues are recognised due to factors such as poverty, mental health, alcohol and drug use and other vulnerabilities. Renfrewshire has the fourth highest number of looked after children in Scotland, with a clear link to issues such as parental neglect and alcohol and drugs issues. In terms of the Scottish Index of Multiple deprivation, 25% of Renfrewshire's local communities (or datazones) are rated as being amongst the 20% most deprived in Scotland.

Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board



Key Facts—Renfrewshire

- On 30 June 2019, the population of Renfrewshire was 179,100. This is an increase of 0.7% from 177,790 in 2018. Over the same period, the population of Scotland increased by 0.5%.
- In the year July 2019-Jun 2020 unemployment in Renfrewshire was 3.5% of the economically active population compared to a Scottish average of 3.3%.
- Over the same period, employment for those aged 16-64 was higher in Renfrewshire with 76.5% in employment compared to 74.6% in Scotland.
- Wages for people resident in Renfrewshire are significantly higher than for those working here. Gross weekly pay for full time workers resident in Renfrewshire for 2019 averages at £626.90 (Scottish average £577.70). For those employed in workplaces in Renfrewshire, the gross weekly pay for a full time worker in 2019 averaged at £536.10.
- In Renfrewshire the percentage of children living in relative low-income families is 16.9%. This figure is less than the Scottish average of 18.1%.
- The most recent Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data was published on 29 January 2020. The figures show that levels of deprivation have fallen in Renfrewshire compared to SIMD 2016 but remain high. The majority of Renfrewshire's 225 data zones improved on their 2016 ranking and fewer of Renfrewshire's data zones are now identified as the most deprived in Scotland (from 61 in 2016 to 56 in 2020 within the 20% most deprived in Scotland).
- The new rankings show two of Renfrewshire's data zones in the ten data zones identified as the most deprived in Scotland—both of these are in Ferguslie Park.
- The gap between minimum and maximum male life expectancy in the communities of Renfrewshire is currently 14.97 years (2013-2017).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, partners in Renfrewshire were clear that greater collaboration and focus on those people experiencing issues in relation to alcohol and drugs was a priority for local partners, with concern over levels of alcohol and drug related hospital admissions and record numbers of people dying through drug related deaths.

Many of the issues that local people experience in relation to levels of vulnerability are likely to have worsened due to the pandemic, and there is a need more than ever to prioritise support for those impacted by alcohol and drug use.



5. What we know about Alcohol and Drugs in Renfrewshire

The Commission considered a range of information and data in relation to alcohol and drugs, which was gathered from a range of local and national sources. The most up to date local and national information has been considered, with key statistics highlighted in following tables:

Alcohol

- As at 31st March 2020, there were 1001 individuals attending alcohol services in Renfrewshire. (Source- Waiting Times Framework)
- In 2017/18 there were 50 alcohol specific deaths in Renfrewshire. (Source - NRS (June 2019))
- Renfrewshire had the 7th highest rate of alcohol specific deaths in Scotland in 2018. (Source—NRS (June 2019))
- 807.71 hospital admissions per 100,000 population were recorded in Renfrewshire in 2018/19, compared with a rate of 669.13 for Scotland. (Source—SCOTPHO profiles)
- In 2018/19 in Renfrewshire, alcohol was available at 439 licenced premises. (Source: Renfrewshire Council Liquor Licensing Statistics 2018/19)
- 53 Renfrewshire under 18's treated for acute alcohol intoxication in 2018-19. (According to local data provided by NHS GGC)
- 47% of those who drank alcohol in Renfrewshire had drunk 6 or more units if female, or 8 or more if male on a single occasion in the previous year. (Source - Renfrewshire HSCP Health and Wellbeing Survey 2017/18)
- 1 in 3 men and 1 in 6 women in Greater Glasgow and Clyde are drinking to harmful levels. (Source—The Scottish Health Survey 2018, Scottish Government)

Drug Related harm

- As at 31st March 2020, there were 1098 individuals attending drug services in Renfrewshire. (Source - Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership)
- In Renfrewshire, there were 50 drug-related deaths registered in 2018. This was the largest number recorded in the past decade. Etizolam was implicated in, or potentially contributed to the cause of death in 36 of these deaths. (Source - NRS July 2019)
- Drug related hospital admissions increased to a record high position in Renfrewshire over the two year period 2016/17 to 2018/19, to a rate of 210.38 per 100,000 population. This is slightly above the Scottish average but below that over the period for the NHS GGC health board area which stood at 270.32 per 100,000. (Source - PHO)
- In 2015/16, there were an estimated 2,700 people who use drugs in Renfrewshire with a prevalence rate of 2.36% (the defined population described here is opiate and benzodiazepine users rather than all people who use drugs). (Source - ISD Scotland (2019))
- The Injecting Equipment project has 8 outlets across Renfrewshire and during 2019/20 there were 1,269 clients and 112,16 transactions. (Source—NHS GGC)
- 605 people were referred to drug support services in 2018/19. (Source—Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership)

Children and Young People

- Between 2011 and 2017, surveys indicated that early initiation of substance use amongst Renfrewshire secondary pupils decreased significantly from 48% to 29%. (Source - ChildrenCount Survey, Renfrewshire Council/Dartington Service Design Lab)
- In 2019/20 146 young people received a service from RADAR, Renfrewshire Council. (Source—Renfrewshire Council)
- As at 22 October 2020, there were 70 children/young people on the Child Protection register, 38 of whom had parental alcohol and or drug use as a concern. (Source - Renfrewshire Council)

Communities

- Approximately 75% of cases handled by daily tasking and community wardens involve incidents of alcohol and/or drug use. (5,000 cases per annum). (Source-Renfrewshire Council)
- Between 1 April 2019 and 31 January 2020, there was a 9.2% decrease in drug crimes overall. Conversely, during this period there was a 27.2% increase in supply of drug crimes. (Source - Police Scotland)
- In 2019, 59.3 drug related crimes were recorded in Renfrewshire per 10,000 population, compared with a rate of 81.32 in 2009. (Source—SCOTPHO)
- Of the 1,026 tests carried out when entering prison in 2016/17, 79% of people were positive for drugs (including drugs prescribed as part of a treatment programme) and 76% were positive for illegal drugs (including illicit use of prescribed drugs). (Source -Scottish Prison Service)
- The Scottish Prison Service regular survey of prisoners suggests that around two-thirds of young people were under the influence of alcohol when they committed their most recent offence. Around 8 out of 10 had used drugs in the 12 months prior to entry to prison and half reported being under the influence of drugs at the time of their most recent offence. (Source - Scottish Prison Service)



6. What services and support are available in Renfrewshire

The Commission recognises the breadth and range of services and support provided across Renfrewshire. These include:

- Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership currently provides:
 - » Drug Service—a community drug treatment and care service
 - » Torley Unit—a specialist day service provision
 - » Integrated Alcohol Team—a community alcohol treatment and care service
 - » Acute Addiction Liaison Service—a nurse led service working into the Royal Alexandra Hospital
 - » Kershaw Unit, Gartnavel Hospital—inpatient alcohol and drug detox beds

As at 31st March 2020, there were 1001 individuals attending alcohol services in Renfrewshire and 1098 individuals attending drug services in Renfrewshire (this includes shared care).

- Royal Alexandra Community Maternity Unit, Special Needs in Pregnancy Service
- Renfrewshire Council, Children's Services:
 - » Support to young people through Renfrewshire Adolescent Drug and Alcohol Resource (RADAR)—146 young people used the service in 2019/20.

- » Social work pre/post birth team, providing assessment and support to pregnant women and their partners, where the child is likely to be a child in need—173 individuals were open to the service in 2019/20 (this included both adults and children).
- Renfrewshire Criminal Justice Services, within Children's Services, provides a range of statutory services for individuals whose offences relate to their substance use, which include:
 - » Drug Treatment and Testing Orders (DTTO)—court orders imposed on individuals where their offending is clearly linked to problem drug use, with the focus of addressing drug use to reduce the risk of further offending and harm—approximately 25 people annually.
 - » Diversion—where individuals are diverted from prosecution in relation to offences which can include possession of substances, including Class A drugs, and are supported by DTTO staff/referred to appropriate addiction services—approximately 120 assessments and 43 cases annually are diverted (although data is not available on how many are related specifically to alcohol / drugs). Most Fiscal Work Orders (approximately 40 annually) relate to cannabis possession at festivals.

- » Interventions with individuals subject to licence or community orders where addiction is a factor in their offending, including the Womens' Community Justice Service, which is co-located with addictions, allowing a one stop shop for women with chaotic lifestyles—data on this is not currently available, however, alcohol and drug counselling accessed as other activity as part of the unpaid work and other activity requirement is approximately an eighth of the other activity accessed by individuals—although more than an eighth of those accessing these services have substance related offending. Voluntary processes also exist to link individuals into services:
- » Throughcare Addiction Service (TAS), supporting those released from short sentences, linking them in with services to address their addiction—approximately ten young people annually.
- » Arrest Referral (AR)—supporting those in court appearing from custody, linking them into services to address their addiction issues—approximately 600 assessments are undertaken annually, however, data is not currently recorded on the numbers who engage with addictions services following referral.

• A range of services and support are provided across the third sector and community organisations, some of which are funded by Renfrewshire Council/ Renfrewshire HSCP. Some of these include:

- » The Sunshine Recovery Café
- » Renfrewshire Family Support Group
- » Changing Stages Drama Group
- » Youth Interventions
- » Active Communities/KAIROS
- » Our Place, Our Families
- » Barnardo's Threads
- » Tannahill Centre
- » Life Church
- » RCA Trust
- » CRISIS Counselling
- » RAMH
- » Renfrewshire Council on Alcohol
- » Turnaround Service—a Community Justice Division centrally funded residential service for chaotic offenders, where addiction is often one of the areas addressed within the lifestyle collapse.

A CORRA funded, Just Recovery post was created for 12 months, following a successful ADP backed bid to the CORRA Foundation to analyse and create pathways into addiction services for individuals at all stages in their journey through the criminal justice system. The implementation of the post has been delayed by COVID-19.

Review of local alcohol and drugs services

According to evidence provided, Renfrewshire HSCP's Drug and Alcohol Service provision is in a transition period and is working towards a fully integrated, recovery focused treatment and care service for drug and alcohol. This shift has required significant service re-design, with staff and stakeholder engagement. Work is underway to implement the future service model for Renfrewshire which will align to the national strategy 'Rights, Respect and Recovery: Alcohol and Drug Treatment Strategy'.

It is intended that the redesign exercise will also allow for greater co-location of services—which are currently structured as separate provision and in separate locations. The creation of a Recovery Hub will also allow the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and Council run services to be delivered alongside third and community sector support with groups and organisation using facilities within the hub.

The service redesign was influenced by the independent review of addiction services commissioned by Renfrewshire HSCP during 2018/19. The purpose of the review was to consider all aspects of service and care delivery to ensure that they are person-centred, recovery focused and have clear pathways in and out of services. As a result, a series of recommendations were agreed and are summarised as follows:

1. Introduction of a clear and visible single service model for Renfrewshire;
2. Establishment of a single access or receiving team for all alcohol and drugs referrals;
3. Review the model of care within Renfrewshire Drugs service and consider the adoption of a community-based provision;
4. Extend the model of care provided by the Integrated Alcohol Team to include alcohol home detoxification;
5. Development of an integrated community rehabilitation facility;
6. Review the Renfrewshire GP local Enhanced Service with the aim of establishing a Renfrewshire shared care model;
7. Explore opportunities to establish a dedicated shared care team to manage the proposed new provision; and
8. Explore the possibility of commissioning of a recovery/aftercare hub.

Since the review was undertaken, there have been a range of national developments which local partners should consider—including, the establishment of a National Drug Deaths Taskforce and the Drugs Commission in Dundee.



7. Overarching Findings

Introduction

In setting out its findings and recommendations, the Commission must firstly recognise the evidence heard from Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership in relation to the independent review of alcohol and drugs services. It was clear that the review had generated a number of appropriate recommendations to improve the services that were provided by the HSCP, in order to ensure that they were recovery focused and person centred going forward.

Whilst evidence was presented that the recommendations of this review were being progressed, this was at an early stage in some areas and some changes were not yet visible in many cases to service users and families. The Commission therefore acknowledges the work planned by the HSCP to date, however urges the HSCP to progress this work at pace and in partnership with local stakeholders including service users and families. It is important the service review is also cognisant of the wider findings of this Commission as well as national developments such as the emerging recommendations of the national Drug Deaths TaskForce.

Levels of harm are concerning in Renfrewshire

It is important to note that whilst the Commission was asked by the Community Planning Partnership to consider the impact of drug and alcohol use in Renfrewshire, data was much more readily available on drug rather than alcohol related harm at both a local and national level. This could often skew discussion towards drug related issues, which was recognised on several occasions by Commission members. The value of the engagement sessions undertaken by the Commission became very important here, as it allowed Commission members to hear about these issues with a human rather than statistical lens.

It was clear from the evidence heard, that there are high levels of drug and alcohol related harm impacting individuals and communities in Renfrewshire. In terms of some of the data the Commission considered, Renfrewshire's levels of harm were not out of kilter with other local authorities within NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde or with Scotland, but they remained unacceptably high as detailed in subsequent sections of this report.

People often have very complex needs that they need help with

It was recognised by Commission members that there was a high level of complexity in terms of the support that individuals and families needed, and a real jigsaw of services that had to be assembled to provide different levels of support at different times to people.

This was a key focus of some of the discussions that Commission members had with staff across partner organisations and with service users and their families. The Commission heard that there was often a perception that services are not always flexible and at times can be difficult to access.

Both people using services and their families and frontline staff, told the Commission that a whole systems approach to supporting people who use drugs and alcohol and also their families, would be hugely beneficial. Wrapping support around people as partners and communities in a radical and person-centred way, was viewed as one of the most important things that could be done to improve outcomes for people using drugs and alcohol, their families and communities overall.

Support for mental health issues is perceived as being difficult to access or not there at all

There was a fundamental disconnect between what service users, families and frontline staff told the Commission about access and availability of mental health services in Renfrewshire, compared to the views of senior managers in the HSCP. Service users and families told us how stressful it was to wait to see a psychologist or mental health service, and that the trauma or depression they were experiencing was a particular barrier to them making the next steps in their recovery. Family members spoke of very dark times and situations, where they had to call in first responders such as the police, as they felt there was a risk to life.

A common theme was that often service users or families just wanted to speak to someone and to talk about some of the trauma that they were dealing with in their lives. Many would have benefited from just one person (like a key worker, navigator or mentor) to help them navigate their way through and advocate on their behalf.

Commission members were particularly concerned about the impact of poor mental health on young people. Whilst high quality services like the RADAR service existed for young people with issues relating to alcohol and drug use, it was clear that mental health services for young people must be made available to support people with all different levels of needs. There was evidence of counselling and peer support in schools, but it was clear that a whole systems approach is required to ensure that young people do not fall between the cracks and experience poorer life outcomes as a result of mental health issues.

Hidden harm is all around us

The engagement that the Commission undertook also indicated that there was a significant amount of harm that was being experienced which didn't necessarily mean that a person or family would contact a support organisation or service—whether informal or statutory. Identifying hidden harm and understanding the changing nature of harms are essential to connect people to the right support at the earliest stage.

In practice this means partners need to think about strengthening community-based supports which can reach or help people in different ways to formal services.

Alcohol and drugs surround people whether they want it to or not

The impact of alcohol and drug use on young people was a particular focus of the Commission's work and engagement programme. Young people made a short film about their experiences, and about how easy it was to get access to alcohol and drugs and the negative impact it had on themselves, their families, friends and communities.

For young people experiencing more complex needs, it was disturbing to hear that most young people felt that nothing could have prevented their drug or alcohol use, and that they were always destined to be this way. The value and strength of their relationships with support workers however shone through and there was real hope for the future expressed by young people and their support worker.

Over and above the impact on young people, it was clear that the availability and presence of drugs and alcohol was an issue for people across all age groups.

There is strength in local communities to support recovery

All of the people the Commission engaged with discussed ways to reduce the harms of alcohol and drugs, including supporting community based recovery and tackling some of the stigma and relationship issues which alcohol and drug can lead to. This is an area of significant opportunity at a Renfrewshire level given the ambition of local recovery organisations, the strength of existing partnership working and the capacity for change within local communities.

The key findings of the Commission are explored further in the following sections. These have been grouped under a number of themes which help us to explain the Commission's findings in the easiest way.



Findings—Risk of Harm

Through its work, the Commission has explored the risk of harm and impact of alcohol and drugs on individuals, families and communities. Through a public health lens, Commission members firstly considered why levels of drug and alcohol use were so concerning in Renfrewshire, and in Scotland more widely.

As noted within the introductory sections of this report, the area of Renfrewshire was badly impacted by the decline of traditional industries. Post-industrial decline is often cited as one of the reasons for the West of Scotland's (including Renfrewshire's) poor health profile.

In terms of the relationship between the population and alcohol, it is clear that levels of alcohol consumption have increased over many decades as the population adapted to significant levels of social disruption and change. It is well documented that in the 50s and 60s, alcohol consumption was generally very low and confined largely to men drinking within pubs. Illicit drug use was considered uncommon.

From the 1970s onwards, deindustrialisation in Renfrewshire and across the West of Scotland changed the alcohol culture and heralded the onset of a new and evolving drugs culture. Deindustrialisation deprived many communities of jobs, a sense of purpose and social solidarity. The gap between those on higher and lower incomes widened.

Alcohol became cheaper, more widely available and was consumed in much larger quantities by a much wider range of age, gender and social groups. Similarly, drugs became increasingly available and affordable.

Looking back at the way in which the country's relationship with alcohol and drugs has changed over time, and considering the reasons for this, is an important first step in terms of identifying what needs to change in the future.

Profile of harm

During the early stages of the Commission's work, a detailed profile of drug and alcohol related harm was developed. The Commission initially identified that there was a gap in some of the data specifically relating to alcohol harms. Some of the data considered by the Commission members is highlighted in section 4 of this report.

The profile highlighted a significant level of complexity in Renfrewshire with large numbers of individuals accessing multiple public services including addictions services, mental health services; criminal justice, children's services; and housing services etc. This was also reflected in the caseloads of frontline staff.

Approximately 2100 people are in contact with local alcohol and drug services in Renfrewshire. Waiting times are broadly in line with Local Delivery Place Standards which require that at least 90% of people should wait no more than 3 weeks to access drug and alcohol services and exceeds the Scottish Government target. Whilst this is in many ways positive, Commission members felt that waiting times in many ways could be seen as an arbitrary way to view access to services and that there was an opportunity to implement some of the emerging findings of the national Drug Deaths Taskforce around rapid access to treatment through for example “same day prescribing” of opiate replacement therapies.

Drugs

Based on data presented to the Commission, there is growing evidence of a shift in the demographic profile of people who use drugs, with an increasing number of people aged over 40 years. This suggests that people who have been using drugs for many years are living longer and are more likely to have complex health issues as a result.

It is well documented that the number of drug related deaths in Scotland increased by 27% between 2017 and 2018. Similarly, in Renfrewshire, the level of drug related deaths reached 50 in 2018 which is the highest number recorded in the past decade and an increase of 17% since 2017. This was also the 7th highest number of drug deaths across Scotland’s local authorities. The Commission found this deeply concerning.

Based on the data available, it was found that most drug related deaths were attributed to individuals consuming more than one drug (poly-drug use,) with Etizolam (also known as street Valium) contributing to 68% of deaths. Etizolam is highly addictive, inexpensive, dangerous and illicit class C drug which is relatively easy to purchase. Etizolam was described as “the story of Renfrewshire’s drug related deaths”. Each one of these deaths was noted with sadness, recognising that every person who had died was a son or daughter and family member or friend. A significant number of people who had died were also parents.

The Commission heard about the work that Police Scotland were doing to disrupt the production and supply of Etizolam in Renfrewshire. Managers from the HSCP also updated the Commission on work being done locally to inform people using services and their families, about the dangers of Etizolam. There was some indication that some of the people who had suffered a drugs related death where Etizolam was a factor, were known to services and had been considered reasonably stable in their treatment or use of drugs prior to their death.

An important consideration for the Commission was the reach of services, in order to ascertain whether access to services was appropriate, and importantly whether people were receiving the support they needed. The Commission reviewed data in relation to the scale or prevalence of drug use in Renfrewshire and found that the number of people in contact with local drug services didn’t correlate as expected. The Commission heard that in the views of some experts, treatment and care services would typically be in contact with in the region of 60% of people experiencing problem drug use, and in Renfrewshire this was below 50%.

In trying to understand this, the Commission discussed levels of caseload and whether services in Renfrewshire were supporting people with much higher levels of need than in other local authority areas. Both complexity and caseloads were felt to be high and Commission members were strongly of the view that local drug services needed to both change the model of service delivery, and boost capacity to increase the reach and number of people that could be supported in Renfrewshire.

The Commission noted some of the work being undertaken by We Are With You (formerly Addaction), whereby a Scotland wide survey using social media channels found that significant numbers of people were assessed as being at high risk of harm from alcohol or drug use, but were unlikely to be or were not in contact with formal services. Several hundred people were identified in Renfrewshire through this survey, indicating that there is potentially a significant population that don’t currently access local drug or alcohol services. It is important to gain a better understanding of this ‘hidden’ population in order to support them better going forward.

The Commission agreed that an assertive outreach model should be developed in Renfrewshire to reach those most at risk of serious harm, including people who may not be known to or engaging with services currently, in relation to their drug or alcohol use. This would ensure services engage with people at the earliest stage possible and reduce serious risk of harm to individuals.

Blood borne viruses

People using certain types of drugs can be at high risk of harm from blood borne viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis C. The Scottish Government has been, and remains, committed to eliminating Hepatitis C within Scotland’s population.

Alcohol and drug services play a critical role in supporting this objective and are required to ensure that 90% of service users have received at least one test for Hepatitis C, and to ensure 80% are tested on annual basis. In terms of HIV, it is recommended that alcohol and drug services ensure that those with highest levels of risk are supported to receive tests every 3 months.

Testing levels in Renfrewshire have continued to improve, however these remain below the targets set. Low testing levels are of particular concern in light of increasing levels of HIV among those who inject drugs. In the Glasgow City area, there have been significant outbreaks of HIV over the course of the last couple of years, with a small number of cases also identified this year in Renfrewshire. It is critical that local services continue to support testing, particularly for those with higher levels of risk.

Naloxone

Naloxone is a medicine which can temporarily reverse the effects of an overdose caused by opiates and opioids such as heroin, methadone or morphine. The Commission recognises that naloxone saves lives and is an effective antidote for opiate overdose and directly heard local examples of its critical impact.

Within Renfrewshire and across NHS GGC, there are two types of supply route for naloxone. Individuals at risk of opioid overdose, friends and family members of individuals at risk of opioid overdose and individuals likely to witness opioid overdose, can all receive a brief intervention on overdose prevention and how to identify and respond to an opioid overdose. Individuals are then provided with a physical naloxone kit or a kit can be prescribed on a prescription. The acute addiction liaison team offer and provide naloxone, with provision additionally via RAH.

There are a number of opportunities to further promote the roll out of naloxone within Renfrewshire, with potential to train staff and volunteers across the Community Planning Partnership and community anchor organisations. Family members supported this approach and went further to suggest that naloxone should be more widely accessible. These include:

- Encourage more non-drug treatment centres such as housing support, supported accommodations, homelessness organisations, mental health organisations and criminal justice organisations who provide services to individuals at risk of opioid overdose to consider participation.
- Development of Peer Supply Model.
- Promotion of naloxone provision in Shared Care practices and GP practices.
- Development of provision via family services.

In light of the current pandemic, prescribing supply rights have been extended to non-drug treatment services staff (for example, residential housing services) to allow them to not only hold a stock of naloxone to use in an emergency, but also to make supplies to their service users. Relevant services in Renfrewshire can use this exemption to extend supplies of naloxone to at risk individuals and those likely to witness an opiate overdose.

Alcohol

The Commission found that the data available in relation to alcohol was significantly less comprehensive than that available for drugs. This was disappointing and suggested that fundamental improvements need to be made to enhance the level of information available on alcohol related harm at a Renfrewshire level. Without this information, it will be impossible for partners to assess the scale of the issue over time, and what needs to be done to address this collectively.

The Commission also recognises the impact of the implementation of Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) for alcohol which has been enshrined in legislation in Scotland in recent years. A minimum price for alcohol sets the lowest price an alcoholic drink can be sold for. In Scotland, the minimum price per unit of alcohol was set at 50p per unit of alcohol, from 1 May 2018. Prior to this:

- Alcohol was 60% more affordable than 30 years ago; and
- 52% sold at less than 50p per unit.

Public Health Scotland is undertaking an evaluation to look at the impact of MUP and its report will be published in 2023. Studies on the short-term impact of MUP have indicated high levels of compliance, reduced consumption rates and limited impact on the alcohol industry.

In terms of local data, in a health and wellbeing survey undertaken by Renfrewshire HSCP for the period 2017/18, 48% of participants said they never drank alcohol. One in ten (10%) drank alcohol at least twice per week. People living in Renfrewshire were less likely to drink alcohol than those across NHS GGC (52% Renfrewshire; 65% NHSGGC).

Those who drank alcohol were asked how often they had drunk above the levels set for men and woman (6 or more units if female, or 8 or more if male) on a single occasion in the last year. In total, 47% of drinkers had drunk alcohol at this level in the last year—1% had done so daily/almost daily, 12% weekly, 12% monthly, and 22% less than monthly.

Since 1981/82, there was a steep and sustained increase in general acute alcohol-related hospital admissions until 2007/08 reaching a rate of 855 admissions per 100,000 population; this has now fallen to 669 per 100,000 population.

There were 1,136 alcohol-specific deaths in Scotland in 2018 (where alcohol was the underlying cause of death) - an increase of 16 (1.4%) more than in the previous year. In Renfrewshire, alcohol specific deaths were the 7th highest in Scotland and alcohol related hospital stays were 6th highest at 1130 stays for 996 patients.

The Commission found that data and intelligence was more readily available for drugs than for alcohol. It considered that improvements could be made to ensure that alcohol information and intelligence was made available to Community Planning partners to help inform future policy making and to assess the impact of decision-making, including through the production of an annual profile. It is recognised that Alcohol and Drug Partnerships are likely to be required to undertake local reviews of alcohol related deaths in the future. Given concerns in relation to data in this area, it is strongly recommended that local partners in Renfrewshire implement this now.

Harm to families

The impact that parental alcohol and drug use has on children is well documented. In terms of alcohol specifically, it must be recognised that the impact of alcohol consumption is not limited to the health of the drinker. Alcohol can have a serious impact on family life with 26% of current (October 2020) child protection cases in Renfrewshire related to alcohol. Even in less extreme cases, children report feeling unsafe, worried or left out by adults drinking.

The impact on families is not limited to children and young people being impacted by parental alcohol or drug use. The Commission also heard evidence of the negative impact that alcohol and drug use has on spouses, parents, siblings and other family members.

Family members reported having to care for and support adult relatives and were very frank about the significant impact that this had on them and the wider family. There were also examples of elderly parents having to support grown up children. Many of those in recovery who the Commission spoke to were also keen to highlight the impact of their previous alcohol / drug use on their families and that they felt that family members did not always have access to support needed.



Harm within communities

The Commission heard some, but not particularly extensive, evidence on the impact that drug and alcohol use can have on communities in terms of issues such as community safety, crime and overall quality of life.

The Commission heard how alcohol and drug use can significantly undermine perceptions of community safety with approximately 75% of cases handled by Renfrewshire Council's Community Protection Team linked to alcohol or drugs in some way.

Data published by Police Scotland also evidences the link between the use of alcohol and crime, and in particular violent crime. Around half of all violent crime victims in Scotland believe the offender was under the influence of alcohol. Nearly two fifths of those serving custodial sentences in Scotland report being drunk at the time of their offence.

Drug related crime can also impact on communities and in Renfrewshire as at January 2020, there had been an increase of 27.2% in supply crimes although there had been a decrease of 9.2% in drug crimes. This was in the context of a 24.8% increase in overall detections.

Whilst it is helpful to review impact in terms of community safety and crime, it is also important to consider the link between alcohol and drug use and levels of vulnerability. People who use alcohol and drugs can also be subject to significant levels of harm from other people, in terms of violence and intimidation or in extreme cases trafficking and prostitution.

In considering the risk of harm to communities, the Commission explored the tension which is often thought to exist between balancing the economic value of the night-time economy to a local town or community, to the wider harm that alcohol use can cause within communities. This is discussed in greater depth later in this report, with specific consideration given to the role of licensing.

Availability

The availability of alcohol and drugs was explored by the Commission. Some of the evidence provided indicated that it has never been as easy or as cheap to access drugs in Renfrewshire and indeed across Scotland.

Illicit benzodiazepine like etizolam or street Valium, have never been cheaper or more available.

Dr Carole Hunter, Lead Pharmacist, Alcohol and Drug Services, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

The Commission heard examples of how young and vulnerable people have been coerced into selling drugs in order to pay off their drug debt and agree that serious and organised criminals who are dealing in drugs are dangerous and ruthless and care nothing about the misery they inflict on individuals, families and communities.

The Commission heard from the Director of Public Health from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and from Alcohol Focus Scotland that environmental factors such as how cheap alcohol is, how readily available it is, and how heavily and attractively it is marketed, all serve to encourage and normalise alcohol consumption.

Evidence presented by Alcohol Focus Scotland and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde expressed that the impact of alcohol is disproportionately felt by people living in more deprived communities. Although more people in higher income groups consume alcohol, research indicates that those in lower income groups tend to consume a greater amount. Also, people in deprived communities are also more likely to experience other health and social issues which place them at increased risk, with people living in deprived areas being six times more likely to die from an alcohol related disease or illness.

As of November 2019, there were 439 licenced premises in Renfrewshire while 510 occasional licences were granted in 2018-19. Data presented indicated that Renfrewshire has 62 off-sales premises in the most deprived parts of Renfrewshire, compared to 11 in the least.

It is important to note that there may be many reasons for this variation, including ability or tendency to drive to supermarkets from less deprived areas, or indeed a variety of other factors which deprivation alone does not explain. Possible actions in relation to alcohol availability are outlined later in this report.

The role of trauma

Throughout our discussions with individuals and families with lived experience, frontline staff and experts in the field, trauma has been identified as being intrinsically linked with the use of alcohol and drugs. Commission members heard about the trauma faced by individuals, families and communities and from workers trying their best to support people facing complex trauma while feeling not fully equipped to do so.

The 2019 Hard Edges Scotland report commissioned by Lankelly Chase and The Robertson Trust and authored by Heriot-Watt University, highlights the significance

of trauma as a route into alcohol and/or drug use. This can be due to trauma in early life or in childhood, or due to significant events that have impacted people during their life. It was clear that the Hard Edges report findings mirrored local experience. In the conversations that Commission members had with local groups, service users and families, it was clear that there were significant issues of trauma that had been experienced by people using drugs and alcohol and their families. We heard that people often didn't feel that they were getting help to deal with their traumatic experiences. As mentioned elsewhere, this related to both young people and adults that had experienced trauma at different stages in their life.

Hard Edges Scotland

Hard Edges Scotland was commissioned by Lankelly Chase and the Robertson Trust and authored by Heriot-Watt University. The research highlights the complexity of the lives of people facing multiple disadvantage. In particular, the report illustrates the mismatch between the multiple disadvantages people face and the fact that services are often set up to address 'single issues'.

'My son has a diagnosis of bipolar condition and began self-medicating to the point of dependency in response to his illness before he was identified as needing psychiatric treatment. At present, he doesn't receive appropriate support for his needs from either the recognised drug services or the health services because his problems cross two disciplines. This means he can't be treated medically while he has drug problems and he can't be supported properly by drug services as his mental health issues pose difficulties. He falls through every crack there is...except when criminal justice is involved'

Family Member

Access to multiple services

The Commission spent some time considering the findings of the Hard Edges report, and members were grateful to discuss this further with one of the report writers, Professor Glen Bramley. The Hard Edges report discusses the disadvantages that many people face, and the difficulties they have in accessing support in a joined up way to help them manage these complex needs. The report suggests that statutory services such as housing and criminal justice are often those which have to help people pick up the pieces in terms of crisis. This view was reinforced by some of the frontline staff and families that Commission members spoke to.

A key example of this in the Hard Edges report is in relation to housing, with homeless services described as 'carrying the can' for supporting those individuals with multiple complex needs. The Hard Edges report suggests that the wraparound support provided by the Housing First model can work well for people with complex and multiple needs and highlighted the importance of peer support.

The Commission recognises that a safe and secure home is the best base for people to build their lives and enjoy good health and wellbeing. We believe that for those who are homeless, the provision of settled mainstream accommodation as early as possible, with appropriate support, is a key element in helping individuals and families affected by alcohol and drug use to rebuild their lives.

Renfrewshire was the first local authority in Scotland to fund a Housing First Service, in partnership with Turning Point Scotland. This type of housing support model is a critical part of Renfrewshire's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

The Commission also acknowledges the success of the following initiatives and is keen to ensure that these continue to be supported and built upon:

- Housing First Renfrewshire
- The Resettlement Team within Homeless Services
- The Shared Tenancy Initiative which is a partnership with the Simon Community which supports single people to share the tenancy of a property; and
- Make it Your Own, where homeless people are supported to make / recondition furnishings to help turn their new house into a home.

Access to drug and alcohol services

During the engagement undertaken by the Commission with service users, families and frontline staff, it was clear that most people who engaged in the process were not yet aware of the changes to the model of service delivery that the HSCP had agreed to implement following the independent review of drug and alcohol services. This was understandable in some respects, as it had only recently finished, however it does mean that the views expressed by service users are current and need to be addressed in the Commission's findings:

The Commission heard:

- Concerns about the location and environment of building based alcohol and drug services at Back Sneddon Street and to a lesser extent Dykebar. Individuals highlighted the following barriers:
 - » Public transport availability and cost.
 - » Paisley centric service provision.
 - » Personal safety in and around the building at Back Sneddon Street.
 - » Stigma associated with accessing drug and alcohol services at both Back Sneddon and Dykebar Hospital.
 - » Encountering individuals who service users would otherwise avoid for fear of relapse.
- That people had experienced issues with waiting times for services, including for mental health support and services which were impacting their ability to cope. The Commission heard that people needed to know how to access other forms of support whilst they were waiting on these services. Evidence provided to the Commission also highlighted the fact that perhaps people may not need mental health services if other forms of support were available and accessible.
- That service users and families felt more services could be commissioned to support them and the issues they were facing as a result of a family member's drug or alcohol use. Community based services were felt to be good but could be developed and funded differently so that people didn't always have to use statutory services.
- That it would be beneficial to see more workers and volunteers with lived experience who can provide peer support. It was widely recognised that people with lived experience play an important role in promoting recovery, reducing stigma and improving services, using personal experience to support others. It was felt that this will allow individuals to see that recovery is an empowering, accessible and achievable treatment goal.
- That service users and families felt that there are some gaps in service provision in Renfrewshire. On a number of occasions, Commission members heard that provision would improve if it included access to residential rehabilitation services.
- Families told the Commission that sometimes they struggled to know where to turn to help their friend or family member and that a 24/7 crisis service would be invaluable.

In addition, the need for greater flexibility for individuals and families to be able to access services on a drop-in basis rather than having to try to attend appointments on time was highlighted. In particular, family members highlighted the need for the right support to be provided at the right time, particularly given the vulnerability of their loved ones. Perceived long waiting times and multiple appointments during times of crisis were highlighted as a concern. It was clear that building based services needed significant investment and that the concerns raised through engagement sessions needed to be addressed urgently.

The potential positive impact of moving from building based services to community-based services was highlighted by service users, family members and staff and the Commission also recognises that there is a key role for peer support / navigators in providing invaluable support for individuals and to help manage pressure on formal services. Some evidence of the use and development of peer support models was beginning to be emerge in Renfrewshire.

The Commission also heard evidence about access to services and support for people leaving prison. This highlighted that it was important that people had access to prescriptions for Opiate Replacement Therapy on a timely basis on returning to the community and for local relationships with prison services to remain robust. While this was not felt to be an issue locally by services, it was highlighted nationally. A number of individuals also described to Commission members how they returned to the community with nothing more than the clothes they had worn when they were incarcerated. Hospital liaison and hospital discharge were also highlighted as high-risk transitions for people, and that support needed to be better at these points.

Workforce support

The importance of giving Renfrewshire's workforce the support they need to provide effective services is recognised by the Commission. The frontline staff who engaged with the Commission told of the importance of the relationships with other services and organisations. Staff were very committed across all of the different partner organisations, and were keen to develop greater networks and to work more closely together.

Greater training on trauma informed approaches and improved signposting of local services and supports needs to be in place as a priority to support these local workers going forward. The local response to trauma informed practice and service delivery was an area in which the Commission felt that partners could be much bolder and ambitious.



Findings—Mental Health

The Commission recognises the impact that poor mental health has on individuals and it was clear from the evidence heard that accessing appropriate mental health support and services is a significant barrier to people experiencing issues with alcohol and drug use.

The interconnection between mental health and addiction was discussed at almost every conversation and engagement session undertaken by the Commission and by service users, family members, GPs and frontline staff. Professional staff supporting service users and families, felt they didn't always have the right information or contacts to access support for mental health issues.

There was a clear disconnect between what individuals, families and frontline staff told the Commission about access to mental health services and the information which services reported on usage, which indicated that a high percentage of local people are engaged with community mental health teams, and that a wide range of support services were felt to be currently available.

Some of the barriers identified by individuals, families and frontline staff regarding mental health services included:

- Not meeting the high clinical thresholds to access existing services.
- Lack of clear pathways.
- Multiple and repeat referrals from one service to another with no support from a lead professional.
- Lack of crisis and 24/7 support.

People using services talked about long waiting times to see specialists and often feeling that they just needed to speak to someone about anxiety, loneliness or the trauma that they had experienced and required support to deal with. On occasion individuals expressed how they were unable to cope which resulted in them self-medicating and using substances including street valium.

Families provided examples of the severe impact that they felt this was having on them and their family member(s). They shared personal experiences of crisis situations and how they feel alone and isolated and on occasion had to turn to emergency responders such as Police at these times. Police Scotland reflected this concern and highlighted a rise in officer time being spent responding to individuals in crisis.

As indicated previously, national research highlights that many people attending alcohol and drug services are thought to have a history of trauma, as well as being particularly vulnerable to experiencing further trauma. This was reflected in the discussions with frontline staff who directly attributed trauma to alcohol and drug use. Conversely, individuals described traumatic experiences, however, they didn't recognise it as trauma as they saw it as part of their normal life. This was evident throughout the Commission's engagement activity and many people cited that they used alcohol and drugs as a means of coping with, and managing, these experiences. The Commission recognises that addressing this complex and deep-rooted trauma—both by supporting those who are suffering from its effects currently and by addressing the underlying causes to protect future generations—will bring the longer term improvements needed.

The Commission heard very concerning evidence in terms of the impact of mental health on young people and their use of drugs and alcohol. This is covered within the next section of this report.



Findings—Prevention and early intervention at all stages of life

In taking forward its work, the Commission recognised that the Community Planning Partnership was keen to explore opportunities for working together more collaboratively to support greater early intervention and prevention around alcohol and drug use.

Whilst the Community Planning Partnership was keen to explore opportunities in terms of children and young people it also heard in its evidence of the impact that alcohol and drugs can have at all stages in a person's life. For example, in response to traumatic events such as a bereavement, relationship breakdown or health issues. The Commission reflected that it is equally important to consider opportunities for early intervention or prevention at all stages of life.

Impact of alcohol and drug use within the family

The Commission recognises that alcohol and drugs within the family environment, can have a significant impact on children and young people. The evidence heard during the programme of engagement as well as from frontline staff, highlighted that the seeds of later alcohol/drug use are often sown in childhood in the form of trauma, abuse and neglect.

Parental drug use is one of the reasons behind many children being accommodated by the local authority in foster care or placed with extended family members in kinship care. The issue of parental drug use is a factor in almost half of the situations where children are accommodated locally.

The impact of alcohol on children can also begin even before a baby is born. Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) results from alcohol exposure in the womb and is preventable yet is the most common neurodevelopmental condition in Scotland. Research undertaken by Glasgow Royal Infirmary found that in one-in-seven of all babies born there were at high risk of FASD, which suggests a much higher prevalence than previously thought. FASD affects neurodevelopment, attainment, physical and mental health and without adequate support, it reduces life expectancy to around 34 years of age.

Whilst the Commission did not review local data on FASD, it was agreed that services in Renfrewshire should consider what is done currently to highlight the "No Alcohol, No Risk" message to potential parents and to identify and support those who are affected by FASD. Commission members felt that it was vital that all women are supported not to drink during pregnancy and consideration must be given as to how best to do this.

Given the important link between early childhood experiences and positive life outcomes, the Commission would like to highlight the importance of children, young people and families having access to the right support at the right time. The Commission welcomes the findings of the Independent Care Review and endorses the findings of the national group on holistic family support and The Independent Care Review's Intensive Family Support Principles:

- Community Based
- Responsive and Timely
- Work with Family Assets
- Empowerment and Agency
- Flexible
- Holistic and Relational
- Therapeutic
- Non-Stigmatising
- Patient and Persistent
- Underpinned by Children's Rights

Through its programme of engagement, the Commission saw examples of services which strongly reflected these principles—most notably, Renfrewshire Council's Home Link Service where there was a positive, rights-based approach to supporting families and young people to maintain their education. It was clear that the Home Link team is highly valued and trusted by young people, families and communities.

The team has very low staff turnover and workers have built up trust and are well established in schools and in the community. The importance of consistency, long term relationships, persistency and assertive outreach undertaken by the team was highlighted.

The Commission believes that the principles of this service should be considered as a blueprint for others across Renfrewshire in terms of providing person centred support.

Children and Young People

A key focus of the Commission's early work in this area was also around children and young people and views on alcohol and drugs. This was important to the Commission in being able to determine what could be done differently to reduce levels of harm in the future from alcohol and drugs.

'It's all around you, all the time'

Unknown contributor

The Commission considered the impact on children of alcohol consumption both in the home and in the wider community. This included work by the Scottish Children's Parliament which had conducted an investigation into an alcohol free childhood, and what this means in Scotland. The findings from the report 'It's all around you, all the time' which was published in September 2019, were presented to the Commission.

The children who participated in this national investigation spoke about how visible and available alcohol is and the negative impact that this has on their lives. They described encountering alcohol when they open the fridge in the morning to get their breakfast, in adverts on their way to school and on sale in shops when they go to get snacks, as well seeing adults drinking at home and in public spaces. They spoke of feeling 'unsafe' and 'ignored' when people around them are drinking.

Through input from Alcohol Focus and the Director of Public Health at NHS GGC, the Commission considered some changes that partners could make to alter the culture and the acceptability of alcohol consumption in Renfrewshire. It was agreed that community planning partners could provide leadership in terms of restricting alcohol advertising, ensuring that school fetes and fayres never involve alcohol tombolas or raffles, and also consider the provision of alcohol on premises and during events. This linked to wider discussions about the important role of licensing boards at a local level to implement relevant legislation to improve public health.

Anyone operating premises or organising events that include the sale or supply of alcohol must have a licence. Renfrewshire Licensing Board considers liquor licence applications for the Renfrewshire area. The board has a quasi-judicial status, which is distinct from the main governance arrangements for Renfrewshire Council.

The main piece of legislation that controls the sale of alcohol is the Licencing (Scotland) Act 2005 which underpins the licencing regime in Scotland, based on five licensing objectives:

- preventing crime and disorder
- securing public safety
- preventing public nuisance
- protecting and improving public health, and
- protecting children and young persons from harm.

With the support of Public Health professionals, there is potential to strengthen national licensing policy, as well as to provide greater information to members of the Licensing Board to better inform decision making. This particularly relates to Public Health information which the board may not presently have access to. It is recognised that licensing boards are required to operate within the parameters of existing legislation and that lobbying of Scottish Government is required to strengthen legislation even further.

Local engagement with young people aged between 12 and 17 years illustrated the significant impact that alcohol and drugs have on them and their peers. Alcohol and drugs were both felt to be readily available, and it was suggested that social media was making access to drugs much easier. Although many of the young people we spoke to in S3 and above, didn't use cannabis, they did feel its use was normalised among their peer group.

Some older young people (16+) reported that their parents allowed or helped them to access alcohol. The Commission considered that advice should be made available to parents on the risks of providing alcohol to their children and how to manage this.

Young people also spoke about requesting adults to purchase alcohol on their behalf (this is known as a 'jump in' or a proxy purchase). The nature of 'jump ins' varied and while some young people approached strangers to purchase alcohol for them, others knew people that would be waiting in close proximity to a local shop and would buy alcohol for them for a charge. On some occasions young people reported having their money or alcohol stolen.

The Commission considered that the Police and Council, could strengthen joint work with local retailers and communities to tackle proxy purchase. The Commission also recognises that while young people themselves did not identify proxy purchase as a risk, it is a criminal offence and also a child protection issue and should be highlighted as such.

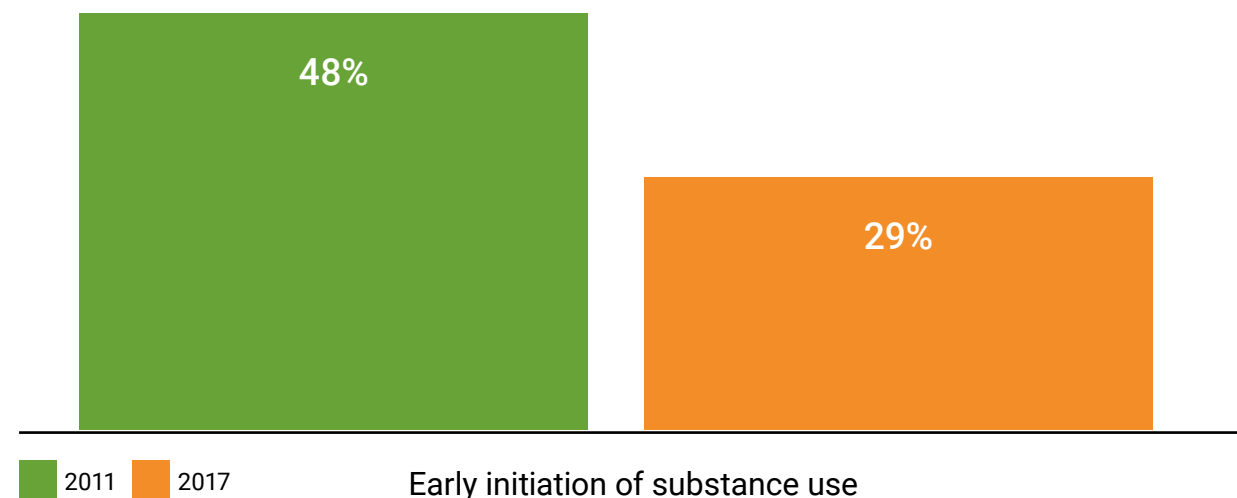
Third sector workers echoed concerns about the availability of drugs and alcohol, suggesting they had become normalised and speaking of a 'vicious cycle' of use by parents and young people in some cases.

Despite some of these very significant concerns, local data from surveys of local children demonstrates that progress has however been made in the last ten years in terms of initiation of alcohol and drugs amongst young people in Renfrewshire.

The ChildrenCount wellbeing survey undertaken by Dartington Service Design Lab on behalf of Renfrewshire Council, Children's Services found that between 2011 and 2017, early initiation of substance use amongst Renfrewshire secondary pupils decreased by nearly half. This is positive and the results of the next survey will be of great interest in terms of tracking the scale of these issues in Renfrewshire.

Whilst alcohol use seemed to be lower amongst children and young people than in the past, the Commission expressed serious concern that 53 children under the age of 18 had required emergency treatment for alcohol intoxication in 2018-19.

Secondary school pupils



Support to make the right choices

The Commission recognises the importance of prevention and early intervention in supporting young people to make positive choices around alcohol and drugs. Commission members highlighted the need for positive role models and messaging around the issues young people face. Young people and staff working in schools told us that the inputs received during Personal And Social Education (PSE) on alcohol and drugs needed to improve, particularly in S3 and above. Young people told us that they would like to hear from people with lived experience and would also like to learn about how to keep themselves and their friends safe and well.

Staff working with young people in schools recognised that more specialist support to meet the ever-changing needs of young people would be beneficial. It is recognised from research that preventative approaches that focus on supporting children and young people to develop the self-confidence and skills to make positive choices and to keep themselves safe have a greater impact than those which try to scare young people. The Commission heard about the local work that was being led by young people to develop support and educational materials and looks forward to seeing this launched across learning establishments in Renfrewshire.

In addition, some young people, family members and staff indicated that the presence of community-based police officers in schools (dedicated campus cops) was a missed opportunity to engage and build relationships. Whilst these are not currently funded and provided in Renfrewshire, partners should make a clear commitment to multi-agency partnership working, explore examples of good practice in neighbouring local authorities and give consideration as to whether campus cops could be put into place in Renfrewshire.

Preventing higher levels of need

Renfrewshire Adolescent Drug and Alcohol Resource (RADAR) works with young people age 12–20 whose alcohol and/or drug use is having an impact on their wellbeing. RADAR is an outreach service which works flexibly to ensure that young people get the support they need when they most need it. The service works with young people and their families to make positive changes to their lives and to reduce the harm that they experience from their drug or alcohol use.

Young people involved with RADAR highlighted the positive impact of the service on reducing their alcohol and/or drug use and on their wellbeing more generally. It was clear that young people and staff had excellent relationships and trusted each other, which seemed to be genuinely valued by the young people we spoke to. The team at RADAR had a "stickiness" to the young people and were there to help them with all aspects of their life in a truly person-centred way.

The Commission was saddened to hear the fatalistic views of some young people about their past alcohol and drug use. It was clear from some of the conversations with young people, that they felt their life was always meant to turn out this way due to the impact of alcohol and drugs on their own family life.

'My life would never have been any different, this is the way it was always going to be.'

Renfrewshire teenager accessing RADAR service

Concerns were raised by young people and staff about the transition to adult services as they were worried that they wouldn't receive the same holistic and individually tailored support. Young people were also concerned about the stigma associated with accessing Renfrewshire Drugs Service and that they didn't want to need to use a drug or alcohol service at all.

In a number of different sessions including one at the RADAR service, young people told us that S2 was often a key turning point in terms of their alcohol and drug use, with this being the point that they felt that it had begun to negatively impact on their lives or become a more serious issue.

Although stated previously, it is important to emphasise that young people also identified mental health service provision as a priority and although school counselling and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services are available, they felt that there still remained a gap in terms of low to moderate tiered support. This was also reflected during the engagement sessions with frontline staff.

The young people also spoke to Commission members about their ambitions and aspirations. They recognised that they faced a number of challenges, but their aspirations were the same as those that would be expected of any young person, and included:

- a stable life
- a house
- a stable relationship
- a job
- wanting to be good parents to their children

The Commission heard some examples at an individual level, where young people were being supported to access innovative training and employment opportunities.

How do we know who needs help and when?

The Commission recognises that a significant number of people affected by alcohol and/or drugs will not be in contact with public services which makes early intervention and prevention challenging. Members discussed the research undertaken by the organisation We are With You in other local authority areas, which had highlighted that significant numbers of people were using drugs and alcohol on a very regular basis but had never been in contact with an alcohol or drugs services. It also found that often people were trying hard to maintain jobs and relationships against the backdrop of this heavy drug or alcohol use.

Commission members representing support organisations, also talked about some of the evidence that was available about the changing nature of alcohol and drug use that they were seeing from contacts to their organisations, including an increase in the use of drugs like cocaine. There is limited local data on these issues, and the Commission felt that it would be beneficial to undertake further work to gain a clearer picture in terms of trends in Renfrewshire.

The potential of the third sector to offer lower level community support which is accessible to all who require it, was highlighted to the Commission on several occasions. At present, very few groups/organisations in Renfrewshire are directly commissioned to provide support of this kind. Lessons from other parts of Scotland are that the third sector and mutual aid groups can provide significant support to people on their recovery journey, however, those in public services need to be aware of and to have confidence in these options in order to actively promote them to those in recovery.

'It was really encouraging when the Commission made the effort to meet with frontline staff and young people. Marginalised young people are not used to being listened to, and it was great to see how happy they were to share their views on services and also identify what could be better. Engagement events are not always easy to run, but I felt that the Commission members and the young people worked really hard to make it a meaningful process. We look forward to the outcome of the work and will continue to look for opportunities for young people to remain involved in the shaping of services that they receive.'

Senior Social Worker, RADAR



The Commission also heard how the issue of stigma can act as a significant barrier to people accessing the help they need and sustaining their recovery. It is important that services work collaboratively with individuals and families with lived experience—as well as with frontline workers—to reduce stigma and to ensure that people feel able to access the support they need when they need it.

Action is required to increase understanding of, and support for, recovery in Renfrewshire. The Commission heard about the work of the Sunshine Recovery Cafe in Renfrewshire and the development of the new Recovery Hub, as well as the role of the Scottish Recovery Consortium in supporting and connecting such communities across Scotland. The Commission proposes that a “Year of Connection” is co-produced with those in recovery, to engage people across Renfrewshire in developing a culture of recovery.

Criminal justice services

The Commission identified the importance of diverting people from the justice system wherever possible. Criminal and community justice services in Renfrewshire remain under significant pressure given factors such as the presumption against sentences of 12 months or less, and there are opportunities to support the awareness and development of community alternatives to custody. The importance of the close link between addiction, criminal justice and mental health services was also recognised, with potential to further strengthen partnership working.

The Commission heard evidence that the focus nationally is on reducing custodial sentences and the use of remand for those who do not present a risk of serious harm. This involves providing interventions at as low a level as possible - such as diversion which can provide a short term focus on the issues which impact on offending. Additional funding has been provided to local justice services in 2020 to extend diversionary services and implement structured deferred sentences and bail supervision. Progressing these services during a pandemic—where the primary focus remains on existing face to face provision for those who present the highest risk—is recognised as challenging.

The role of wider community justice partners including addiction and mental health services is therefore key where the issues impact on an individual’s behaviour. As reflected in the Lankelly Chase report, criminal justice has become a safety net for those suffering severe and multiple disadvantage where other services have not met needs. Sheriffs know that individuals subject to court orders will receive a statutory service, and thus be compelled to engage with services (with sanctions available for non-engagement). Sadly, sanctions are often a short sentence which disrupts the lives of individuals and their families, and does not address the needs of vulnerable individuals.

It is essential that analysis of need is undertaken for those involved with justice services and that co-ordinated services and pathways are established through the Community Justice Partnership, within Community Planning Arrangements. This would then allow consultation with Sheriffs and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service as to greater focus on earlier intervention within Renfrewshire. The role of the CORRA Just Recovery post could also assist in taking this forward.

Findings—Recovery

According to the national strategy ‘Rights, Respect and Recovery’ recovery is a journey for people away from the harm and the problems which they experience, towards a healthier and more fulfilling life.

Recovery means different things to different people, and the Commission recognises that recovery is unique to every individual and that people have the right to health and life, they are respected and achieve their recovery. In order to achieve this, a person-centred approach is required which respects that people’s recovery must be focused on their aspirations.

This reflects what some individuals, families and frontline staff told the Commission during the various engagement events held locally. It was felt this approach to recovery could be improved upon in Renfrewshire and that for some this had not been the case for them, with people reporting that they had been told that they would be on medically assisted treatment ‘for life’. Staff supporting individuals however viewed this at times differently in terms of being there for as long as people need them.

There was a plea for better access to psychosocial interventions which would help people reconnect into society and that these should be accessible throughout the recovery journey. Evidence provided to the Commission from frontline staff, highlighted that staff in the alcohol and drugs services provide these

interventions, but that due to the size of caseloads and the number of service users overall, it can make this approach difficult to deliver intensively. Staff and service capacity issues are also highlighted in the Hard Edges Scotland study, with time/capacity constraints often making it difficult for frontline workers across the country to take a strengths-based approach to providing support rather than just responding when individuals are in crisis.

The capacity and willingness is there

The Commission recognises that the recovery community has much to offer in Renfrewshire, including the opportunity to harness the capabilities and capacity of local people who wish to support recovery communities and the importance of valuing lived experience as part of this approach. A key message highlighted to the Commission during the engagement sessions was the importance of peer support. This came across strongly in each and every session involving individuals and family members with lived experience. The impact of support from others who have had similar experiences cannot be underestimated. The reciprocal nature of this was also highlighted with individuals and families welcoming the support received while also welcoming the opportunity to provide support to others who need it.

‘I am grateful for the family support group because it’s where I go to let off steam, have a good cry or share my progress with people who have ‘lived experience’ of trying to cope with a son or daughter or other close relative with addiction issues. We can empathise with each other and learn from each other’s experiences. We can also lean on each other, know that we’re not being judged and we can feel ‘normal’ for a while. It’s a safe space which gives us a little bit of healing... even if only for a short time.’

Family Member

Feedback from the Commission's engagement activity and other evidence heard highlighted that local services could better recognise the strength of the recovery community in Renfrewshire and its impact on individuals. It is clear that services and supports such as the Sunshine Recovery Café are highly valued by individuals who used them and their family members who wanted to see this type of supported extended and expanded across Renfrewshire.

Individuals, families and frontline staff welcomed the proposed development of the new Recovery Hub which will provide recovery opportunities and a full programme of activities, support and events. It is clear that there is motivation and enthusiasm to make this work, however services require to work collaboratively with the recovery community and those with lived experience in all aspects of the design, delivery and ongoing development of the Recovery Hub.

Given that the initial development of the hub is well underway and staff recruitment and selection has been undertaken, the Commission would like to see the continued and full involvement of the recovery community and people with lived experience in this journey. The Commission welcomed the recent involvement of members of the Sunshine Recovery Café in the Recovery Hub steering group and during the recruitment process of key posts within local alcohol and drug services. The recovery hub was felt to be a great opportunity for stronger collaboration, by all of the groups the Commission spoke to.

'The Sunshine Recovery Café is once a week from 12.30pm to 3.30pm on Wednesdays.

It's like a phone charger—when I go out, I feel powerful but by Sunday I don't, I feel drained.'

Participant at the Recovery Conversation Event in January 2020

Relationships and Social Connections

Research indicates that Portugal has demonstrated a significant reduction in problem alcohol and drug use as a result of programs that are specifically designed to re-create connections between an individual and their community. The Commission recognises that some people use alcohol and/or drugs due to a lack of relationships and social connections that add value to their lives. The same can be said for those who struggle in their recovery journey. This results in individuals feeling abandoned, hopeless, that no one cares, that they can't connect with anyone emotionally and they fear that things and feelings won't change. The Commission was saddened by the loneliness and isolation expressed by some of the people we spoke to but also very much heartened by the hopes for the future that people had.

In partnership with the Sunshine Recovery Café and Scottish Recovery Consortium, the Commission undertook a relatively large-scale engagement event to hear feedback from people in recovery. Those who participated told the Commission that they were struggling to find things to do which would allow them to meet with other people, or to undertake purposeful activities which would make them feel valued and support their ongoing recovery.

The Commission also heard how individuals and families benefited from local groups and how the number of groups had slowly grown over time. Many of these groups were organised and managed by the third and community sectors and provide peer to peer and / or family support. However, it was highlighted that many of these groups and organisations were self-funded and regularly faced issues of sustainability.

The Commission heard consistently from individuals, families and frontline staff that support for recovery could be strengthened within communities if:

- people had better information on who to turn to in different situations and what services/supports/activities are available;
- more support was available at a community based level, it would help people to access support closer to home and not just in Paisley;
- something be done to tackle the barriers associated with the cost of transport which could hinder people from accessing support.

Lived experience can act as a bridge between services.

Jardine Simpson, Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Recovery Consortium

Family members shared their fears, stresses and anxieties when trying to support a loved one in recovery or who is unable to stop using alcohol and/or drugs. The role that they play is vital but can be very difficult as they sometimes feel like they are alone and trying to be doctor, psychiatrist and police officer all at once. Building on the GIRFEC approach already embedded within children's services in Renfrewshire, a whole systems approach should be taken when supporting individuals and families who use alcohol/drugs—with prevention and early intervention being key.



Stigma

According to the World Health Organisation, stigma is a major cause of discrimination and exclusion and it contributes to the abuse of human rights. Individuals, families and frontline staff shared their experiences of stigma in Renfrewshire, including within the community setting, accessing building based services and within the workforce. The Commission recognises that individuals with lived experience have the expertise, empathy and connections that make them experts in how best to tackle stigma and that they should be involved in the design, development and delivery of services and support.

The Commission welcomed the recommendation by Dundee Drugs Commission on the use of the 'Language Matters' resource developed by the Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies in Australia. The Commission recognises the importance of using language which is non-stigmatising, person-centred and focuses on the individual—not their substance use. The purpose of the resource is to provide guidelines on how to use language to empower individuals and reinforce a person-centred approach. Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission endorses the approach set out in the resource (see appendix D) and would welcome its use across the HSCP.

Since the Commission was established, a stigma strategy has been published by the Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce. The Commission welcomes the publication of this strategy and recognises that it should be used to inform local approaches to eradicating stigma.



8. COVID-19 Pandemic, Lockdown and Recovery

The report and recommendations are provided against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown which has had a significant impact on individuals, families and communities, and on the way, services are delivered in Renfrewshire.

In light of this and of the potential economic and social impact in the short, medium and longer term, understanding the human and financial cost of alcohol and drug use in Renfrewshire and how to ensure that resources are targeted in the most effective way has never been more important.

The Commission in its final meeting, considered additional evidence from local partners and organisations on the impact that COVID-19 and the resulting restrictions have had on individuals, families and communities impacted by alcohol/drugs and on the support and services that they rely on.

Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership's Alcohol and Drug Recovery Manager highlighted the significant impact that COVID had on service provision, with many changes required at very short notice. For example, face to face provision had to be drastically reduced and buildings closed to the public with the priority being to keep people safe—particularly those most at risk.

Vulnerable service users and staff also had to shield at home which presented a further barrier to ensuring that individuals received the support they needed. Major changes to how services were delivered had to be implemented—including how to reach service users and where and how staff operated. The service experienced barriers in terms of accommodation with the existing building at Back Sneddon Street unsuitable for use as it did not meet new health and safety guidelines. An urgent review was undertaken of how medication was prescribed, dispensed and supervised. The Whole System Review was temporarily suspended due to the pandemic.

In response to the pandemic, the immediate focus of the service was on:

- Retained service users in treatment, including prescribed medications.
- Continuing with commencement of Opiate Replacement Therapy new starts and re-starts.
- Continuing with blood-borne virus testing. Renfrewshire is one of two areas across GG&C participating in Dry Blood Spot Test pilot as a response to COVID-19.
- Safe process implemented for Injecting Equipment Provision.
- Increasing the distribution of naloxone and progressing with new 'Naloxone November' initiative.

- A Red, Amber, Green (RAG) exercise was undertaken to ensure that the most vulnerable and most at risk service users were provided with sufficient support, treatment and guidance.
- An emergency triage system was implemented to provide essential support, direction and harm reduction guidance.
- Delivery of Opiate Replacement Therapy and Welfare Checks.
- A Multi-Disciplinary Team was established to discuss complex cases and prioritise essential treatment.
- A new patient clinic was established to support urgent Opiate Replacement Therapy prescribing.

Further engagement activity was undertaken in September/October 2020 which involved follow up discussions with some of the groups and individuals who had been involved in the Commission's initial programme of engagement. These sessions were facilitated online and by telephone and provided an opportunity for Commission members to hear directly from individuals, groups and frontline staff in the statutory, third and community sector about the impact of the pandemic and restrictions.

The key themes from these sessions included:

Increase in drug and alcohol use

Frontline staff reported that alcohol/drug use has increased—although Etizolam does not seem to have been as prevalent.

Mental Health

The impact of the pandemic and restrictions on mental health—particularly young people's mental health. The mental health and wellbeing of frontline staff—both those working in the community and at home was also highlighted.

Access to services and support

It was felt that support has worked well for those already linked into services, however, for those not already engaged accessing services has been more difficult than prior to the pandemic.

Recovery

The impact of restrictions / isolation on those in recovery who were unable to participate in activities and access the support they had utilised to support their recovery.

Changes to the way services are delivered

Practice has had to adapt significantly with services having to provide support in new ways—including online and by telephone. Online support was felt to work for some but not others. Digital poverty was also highlighted as potentially impacting on some individuals being able to access support. The importance of face to face contact—digital contact cannot replace this. It was felt that relationships with / support for service users were suffering.

Improved partnership working and the positive impact of some of the changes to service provision

Partnership working was felt to have been a key strength throughout the restrictions. Partnership working of all kind was highlighted, including between statutory services; between the statutory and voluntary sector; across the voluntary sector; and between peer support groups and the voluntary sector. Some changes to service provision were felt to have been for the better—including the provision of RDS services on an outreach basis.

Young people/schools

With the work of external agencies in schools currently on hold, the role of schools in prevention and early intervention / harm reduction was felt to be key.

Peer support

The resilience of group members and their willingness to support one other was highlighted as a key strength during the restrictions. Having partner organisations that they could turn to and being able to reach out for support meant that peer support groups did not feel as isolated as they may have. The welcoming attitude of local companies was highlighted - including a local supermarket which allowed groups to meet safely and socially distanced in a space that wasn't being used.

A key message from statutory and third sector services and from individuals has been that many of the changes implemented in response to the pandemic have been very positive. It was felt strongly that there have been some significant benefits as a result and that we should not be trying to get back to 'normal' when some of the changes to provision have suited people well and have impacted them positively.

While the true impact of COVID-19 is not yet fully understood, community planning partners in Renfrewshire are currently undertaking a Community Impact Assessment to identify the impact of the pandemic and subsequent restrictions across Renfrewshire. The impact of the pandemic on alcohol and drug use and on those affected by alcohol / drugs will be considered as part of this approach. The partnership recognises that those inequalities that already existed in Renfrewshire are likely to have been exacerbated with the most vulnerable disproportionately affected by the pandemic and restrictions.

The significant impact of the COVID-19 restrictions on alcohol consumption is highlighted in a new survey commissioned by Alcohol Focus Scotland and Alcohol Change UK. The survey found that in Scotland people who were already drinking at high levels before the pandemic were more likely to have increased their drinking during lockdown, and stress was a key factor. The representative Opinium survey of 550 adults in Scotland showed that over a quarter (27%) of respondents reported drinking more than usual during lockdown, with this figure increasing to a third for those drinking at higher levels before lockdown (33% of those drinking seven or more units on a single occasion).

In times of stress some people can drink more often or more heavily. Dealing with stress was cited by around one fifth of all respondents as a reason for drinking. For those drinking more than usual, more than half (51%) said this has been a way to handle stress or anxiety. Almost half (48%) of those who reported drinking more during lockdown reported having felt concerned at the levels they are consuming. Meanwhile almost one fifth of all respondents (18%) reported feeling concerned about the amount a friend or family member is drinking during lockdown.

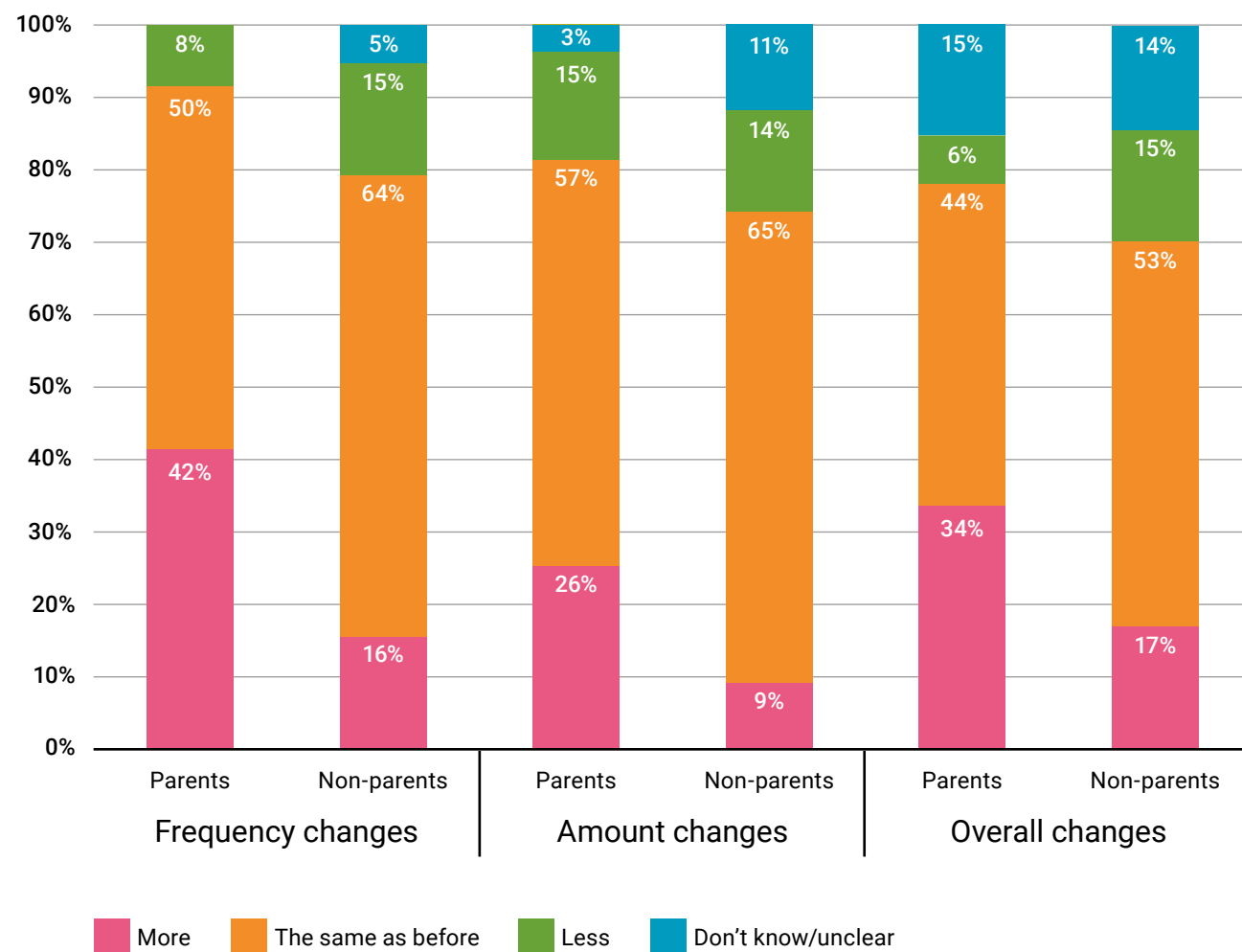
54% of those who reported drinking more than usual during lockdown had already taken steps to manage their drinking, and 59% planned to do so when lockdown eases. Almost two-fifths (37%) of those drinking more than usual expected to drink less as pubs and restaurants reopen, however a quarter (24%) expect their drinking to increase further at this time.

The table below highlights changes in alcohol consumption by parental status identified by the survey. 42% of parents indicated that they drank alcohol more frequently during lockdown that prior to lockdown compared to 16% of non-parents. 26% of parents also indicated that the amount they drank had increased during lockdown compared to 9% of non-parents.

Heavy alcohol consumption is also likely to increase the risk of poor outcomes from COVID-19. According to the World Health Organization [WHO Office for Europe, 2020, Frequently Asked Questions About Alcohol and COVID-19]: “alcohol consumption is associated with a range of communicable, noncommunicable and mental health disorders, which can make a person more vulnerable to COVID-19. As alcohol compromises the body’s immune system, there is an increased likelihood of being infected by the virus and of adverse health outcomes. Heavy alcohol use is also a risk factor for pneumonia and other lung infections and the development of acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), which is one of the main complications of COVID-19. There is preliminary evidence suggesting that chronic alcohol consumption is a probable risk factor for the severity of COVID-19, but information is currently not systematically collected from patients.”

The impact of increased alcohol consumption during the pandemic has also raised questions for the Commission in terms of a potential more urgent need to draw people’s attention to the increased likelihood of babies being born with FASD. In terms of what is known from previous pandemics, pregnancies (particularly in adolescent girls) could potentially increase significantly. A specific intervention in relation reducing alcohol intake amongst this group could have a significant impact and would have massive long terms benefits to their children.

Changes in consumption before and during lockdown (by parental status)





9. Recommendations

In making its recommendations, the Commission recognises the breadth of work that takes place every day to support people impacted by drug and alcohol use in Renfrewshire.

Many changes to the way in which alcohol and drugs services are provided have been identified by Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership through an independent review, and it is clear that there is ambition from partners to think beyond statutory services and to work in different ways to promote recovery, recognise trauma and tackle issues of stigma and culture in a positive way.

Given the current pandemic and associated impact on communities, it is more important than ever that partners in Renfrewshire demonstrate that they are listening and are prepared to give power to those with lived experience to plan and improve services.

Some services in Renfrewshire that support people and their families in relation to alcohol or drug use, are joined up and integrated—this was particularly evident when services were co-located. There are clear plans to work in a more collaborative way with other partners, but this needs to be more ambitious to ensure that the support that is available to people that use drugs and alcohol wraps around people in a more person centred and holistic way. Building based services need to fundamentally change to ensure these are provided in a welcoming, safe and stigma free environment.

The work being progressed to develop recovery orientated models of care and support needs to maintain momentum and focus, and partners need to ensure that a continuum of support is available across communities, with improved access and information on what is available. The contribution and value of third and community partners should be recognised more strongly in Renfrewshire, and it is vitally important that people with lived experience are valued and involved in the developments that take place locally and that peer support networks are established and properly supported and resourced.

Renfrewshire has a strong recovery community with an ever evolving and expanding range of support and activities. The impact of the recovery community on those with lived experience cannot be overstated and the Commission met with individuals who we identified as ‘changemakers’ within their community and are making a real difference to people’s lives.

It is critical that partners in Renfrewshire get ahead of the curve and work with children and young people to change attitudes and culture around access and use of drugs and alcohol. There is a real opportunity for strong leadership in terms of changing the conversation about alcohol in particular, through levers such as licensing.

The importance of preventing and supporting people to deal with mental health issues and trauma is fundamental to partners achieving real change in terms of the impact of drug and alcohol use in Renfrewshire.

In making its recommendations, the Commission requires that its report and recommendations are considered and reflected in any service redesign over the next five year period. The Commission also asks that partners undertake to ensure that the work of the Commission is reflected in all service planning, development and delivery and—in particular—in front line practice.

Key recommendations:

Risk of Harm

1. The Commission acknowledges the current work being undertaken to improve drug and alcohol services; however, changes must be made at greater pace and involve local service users and family members to a greater extent. The opportunity to take the review further and implement recommendations from both this Commission and the National Drugs Death Taskforce must not be missed.

[Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership](#)

2. Humans are complex and the issues they face are not in isolation. Partners in Renfrewshire must respond to the views of local services users and their families and frontline staff, and adopt a whole system approach whereby support is wrapped around those that need it. This includes mental health, housing, employability, and criminal justice services.

[Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership](#)

3. Support should move away from a focus on a buildings-based model to one that is rooted within communities. Where services and support are accessed within a building –these must be provided in modern, safe, accessible and trauma informed facilities which support front line staff and service users to work together in the most person-centred way. Existing buildings such as those at Back Sneddon Street are not fit for purpose and must be improved urgently.

[Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership](#)

4. The reach of local alcohol and drugs services needs to significantly increase, and partners must ensure that there is capacity across the whole system to support people experiencing all different levels of harm from their use of alcohol and drugs. Assertive outreach to those experiencing the highest level of harm should be a high priority for services.

[Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership](#)

5. Specific gaps in provision identified by service users, family members and frontline staff need to be addressed locally. Access to residential rehabilitation services and the availability of 24/7 crisis services were viewed as significant gaps in Renfrewshire, and with enhanced community provision, will ensure a continuum of support is available in Renfrewshire.

[Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership](#)

6. Local service providers must involve people with lived experience in the ongoing development of alcohol and drug and mental health services locally and listen to their views. There was a clear disconnect between what supports service users and families thought were available in Renfrewshire, and the views of services themselves. It was clear services do exist but that communication and signposting to these is not working.

[Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership](#)

7. There are potentially high numbers of people experiencing hidden harm from alcohol and drug use in Renfrewshire. Partners should undertake a robust joint assessment of the level and nature of harm and how this is changing over time. This should be undertaken on an annual basis in order to inform the development of services at a local level.

[Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership](#)

8. Partners need to address gaps in the local data available on alcohol related harm. This should be prioritised, and it is recommended that partners introduce an annual review of alcohol related deaths now, rather than waiting for this to become a national reporting requirement in the future.

[Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership](#)

9. Partners must provide leadership and introduce a programme of naloxone training across partners agencies, to ensure that local responders, service providers and communities are able to deliver life-saving interventions within local communities.

[Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership](#)

10. Services must strengthen work being done to protect those at highest risk of harm from blood borne viruses through drug use. This includes offering rapid testing for HIV and Hepatitis C and supporting those who receive a positive diagnosis to attend appointments and to sustain and follow medical guidance.

[NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde / Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership](#)

11. Partners should support the work of the National Drug Deaths Taskforce and maximise all opportunities to pilot or implement new and innovative approaches recommended by the Taskforce in Renfrewshire to reduce drug related harm.

[Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership](#)



Mental Health

- Partners should go further and be more ambitious in terms of establishing the local approach to trauma informed practice. Leaders must champion greater understanding of the impact of trauma and ensure that this is reflected in the way that staff work across all frontline services.

Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership

- Services must take action to improve access to and information about the services and supports which are available to people experiencing mental health issues in Renfrewshire. This must extend beyond formal health care services, with investment made in lower level support services that people can access informally at a community level when they need them.

Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership

Prevention and Early Intervention

- Community Planning Partners must demonstrate leadership in terms of alcohol provision and availability. This should include but is not limited to:

- Creating safe spaces within buildings by removing the sale or provision of alcohol
- Promoting alcohol free policies and culture within the workplace, including in school and leisure facilities.
- Supporting staff impacted by the use of alcohol.
- Promoting awareness of alcohol harm across the workforce.
- Committing to end alcohol related advertising on or within partner buildings or sites.

Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership

- Renfrewshire Licensing Board should continue to use all of its available powers to limit alcohol related harm in Renfrewshire, and Renfrewshire Council should lobby Scottish Government to ensure that the licensing board can further strengthen its role in terms of improving health and wellbeing.

Renfrewshire Licensing Board

- Statutory services must continue to ensure that Sheriffs are aware of the range of drug, alcohol and mental health services available in Renfrewshire, eligibility for these and how these can be best utilised to provide support and interventions within sentencing.

Renfrewshire Council

17. Review local level data on, and approaches to, addressing Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in Renfrewshire to consider how best to reduce the number of children impacted by alcohol prior to birth.

[Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership/Renfrewshire Council](#)

Young People and Families

18. The work that young people in Renfrewshire are leading to improve Personal And Social Education in schools on issues such as drugs and alcohol and mental health, needs to be implemented as a priority by Renfrewshire Council.

[Renfrewshire Council](#)

19. Young people should not be anxious about transferring from their existing service into an adult focused alcohol and drug service. Targeted consultation should be undertaken on this issue and should focus on the beneficial relationships that young people need to address their needs, rather than what age they are.

[Renfrewshire Council/Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership](#)

20. Recognising the at times distressing evidence that the Commission heard on the impact of alcohol and drug use for families, partners should undertake a review of existing family support provision. Particular focus must be on the support that is available to children and young people who are impacted by parental drug or alcohol use. In addition, as Renfrewshire considers its response to the Independent Care Review it should explore how the family support model developed reflects fully the principles of The Promise.

[Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership/Renfrewshire Council](#)

21. Children and young people need to be able to access the right type of support for any mental health issues including lower levels anxiety and stress. Partners should review current mental health provision for young people and ensure that this meets all levels of need.

[Renfrewshire Council / Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership.](#)

22. Partners should work with local retailers and communities to effectively target proxy purchase of alcohol in communities.

[Renfrewshire Council/Police Scotland](#)

Recovery

23. Lived experience needs to be the beating heart of the approach to recovery in Renfrewshire. This needs to be a strong and meaningful partnership for all, with lived experience being fully embedded into everything that happens –from employment to training to service development and design.

[Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership](#)

24. Alcohol and Drug Services should pilot Recovery Advocacy / Rights in Recovery in partnership with the Scottish Recovery Consortium and Reach Advocacy to strengthen Renfrewshire's rights-based approach to recovery.

[Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership](#)

Relationships and Connections

25. Recognising the value of lived experience and social connections, local alcohol and drug services should develop a peer support network to assist individuals and families to navigate services, support and activities. Investment must also be made to support the development of local groups and organisations which provide social connection and support recovery

[Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership](#)

26. It is more critical than ever given COVID-19, that barriers to recovery such as loneliness and isolation and stigma are prioritised by partners. Partners should designate 2021 as Renfrewshire's year of connection, and plan a year of action with all partners and communities involved in some way.

[Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership](#)

27. Partners must act robustly to eradicate stigma and have positive recovery conversations with communities and the workforce, including through engagement with local media. People with lived experience in Renfrewshire must play a leading role in the planning, development and delivery of this work.

[Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership](#)

Next Steps

Commission members are clear that they do not want this report and its recommendations to sit on a shelf. The recommendations have largely been informed by the voices and experiences of local people, families and frontline staff and it is important that these are acted upon and that opportunities are provided for the people that the Commission has engaged with to shape future changes.

These recommendations are made to the Community Planning Partnership, and whilst the Commission recognises the current focus of all partners on responding to the COVID19 pandemic, the Partnership is urged to retain its ambition on improving outcomes for local people impacted by drugs and alcohol.

It is for the Community Planning Partnership to identify the governance and funding that is required to implement these recommendations. It may also need to engage further with stakeholders to prioritise the actions that it takes forward in light of the constraints on resources and capacity arising as a result of the capacity.

Commission members will continue to engage with Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership and to offer support and challenge to the future programme of work that is develops.

What will success look like?



Appendix A

Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission Terms of Reference

1. Aims of the Commission

The Alcohol and Drugs Commission is being established by Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership:

:- to establish a true picture of drug and alcohol and use in Renfrewshire, and to make recommendations on what partners can do together to support local people and communities adversely affected by drug and alcohol use to improve life outcomes.

Drawing as far as possible on published data, research and reports, the Commission will invite evidence from a range of interested parties across Renfrewshire and beyond and engage with all relevant stakeholders including staff, individuals, families and communities with experiences they wish to share.

The Commission will consider evidence of what has worked elsewhere to reduce and may recommend small tests of change over the course of the work.

The Commission will prepare a report for the Community Planning Partnership, that will detail the impact that alcohol and drug use have on individuals, families and communities across Renfrewshire and make recommendations on the priority actions that are required to make a difference to the citizens of Renfrewshire.

Critically, the Commission should make recommendations which promote whole system change, recognising the levers which Community Planning Partners have at their disposal.

Key questions

In taking forward it's programme of work and considering each of these areas in turn, the Commission may wish to consider 5 key questions which will guide its approach:

- What is the impact of drug and alcohol use?
- How are we collectively responding?
- How do those impacted feel?
- What could we do differently?
- What does research and evidence tell us?

2. Members of the Commission

The Commission will be chaired by Councillor Jacqueline Cameron and will be independently facilitated by Professor Phil Hanlon.

Commission members are local and national experts who will provide a variety of skills, experience and knowledge and includes:

- Karyn McCluskey, Community Justice Scotland, Chief Executive
- Dave Liddell OBE, Scottish Drugs Forum, Chief Executive
- Alison Douglas, Alcohol Focus Scotland, Chief Executive
- Dr Saket Priyadarshi, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Associate Medical Director
- Dr Carol Hunter, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Lead Pharmacist, Addiction Services
- Linda de Caestecker, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Director of Public Health
- Catriona Matheson, University of Stirling, Professor in Substance Use and Drug Research Network Scotland, Convener
- Neil Hunter, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), Principal Reporter/Chief Executive Officer
- Jardine Simpson, Scottish Recovery Consortium, Chief Executive Officer
- Justina Murray, Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs, Chief Executive Officer
- John Goldie, Professional Adviser
- Alan McNiven, Engage Renfrewshire, Chief Executive
- Alan Murray (previously Gordon Crossan), Police Scotland, Divisional Commander 'K' Division
- Andrew Horne, We Are With You, Director
- Jennifer Davidson, Executive Director, CELCIS and Inspiring Children's Futures, University of Strathclyde
- Fiona Stringfellow, Blue Triangle, Chief Executive

It is envisaged that relevant senior officers from across the Community Planning Partnership will attend the Commission meetings in order to provide members with guidance and advice, on request.

3. Support

The Commission will receive secretariat, administrative and policy support from Renfrewshire Council.

4. Timescales

It is envisaged that the Commission will hear evidence between March to December 2019. At the final meeting of the commission, will agree its findings and recommendations to the Community Planning Partnership, Alcohol and Drugs Partnership and Renfrewshire Council for response.

The timescales may require development depending on the agreed work programme of the Commission.

5. Meetings

It is intended that meetings will be held in public, unless otherwise determined by the Commission and agreed by the Chair. Public summaries of meeting will be made available through the Council's website, with other materials available only on request.

6. Communications

A standard communications protocol will be adopted by Commission members. It is proposed that all public statements for the work of the Commission are made by the chair, Cllr Jacqueline Cameron, unless another member of the Commission is identified to provide comment as agreed in advance.

All public comments are shared with members of the Commission and any proactive communications shared with members in advance.

Any queries relating to the work of the Commission should be referred to Renfrewshire Council Communications team in the first instance.

Appendix B

The Commission undertook the following programme of work:

<p>Supporting those with the highest need/suffering most severe disadvantage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we assess this level of need in Renfrewshire? • What resources are we currently deploying? • What outcomes could we achieve if we look at issues differently? • Particular focus on drug related deaths
<p>Prevention and Early intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of trauma • Missed opportunities to engage or support at all life stages • Do we have the right supports and services in place? • Do we do the right things in terms of education and low level support • Engagement with children and young people
<p>Recovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential of communities to support • Routes to employability • Supporting cultural shift • Reducing stigma

Appendix C

The Commission heard from the following while undertaking its programme of engagement:

<p>Blue Triangle Housing Association—Renfrew Housing Support Project</p>	<p>Changing Stages Drama Group</p>	<p>Education Guidance Representatives Education—Early Years</p>
<p>The Sunshine Recovery Café</p>	<p>Renfrewshire Home Link Service</p>	<p>Primary Care</p>
<p>RADAR—Renfrewshire Adolescent Drug and Alcohol Resource</p>	<p>RCA Trust</p>	<p>Route 66 Group</p>
<p>The Torley Unit Men’s Group</p>	<p>Front line staff from engagement sessions</p>	<p>Conversation Café Event</p>
<p>Secondary School Pupils</p>	<p>Renfrewshire Family Support Group</p>	

Appendix C (continued)

The Commission also heard evidence from the following local and national experts:

John Trainer, Head of Childcare and Criminal Justice and Chief Social Work Officer, Renfrewshire Council	Professor Glen Bramley, Heriot Watt University—Hard Edges Study	Dr Saket Priyadarshi, Associate Medical Director and Senior Medical Officer, Glasgow Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service	Christine Laverty, Head of Mental Health, Addictions & Learning Disability Services, Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership	Caroline Paterson, Community Mental Health Service Manager, Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership	Karen Reynolds, Alcohol & Drug Recovery Service Manager, Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership
Dr Catherine Foley, Research Fellow with the Australian National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at UNSW and clinician with the NSW Health Service	Patrick McKay, Turning Point Scotland—Housing First	Dr Tony Martin PhD, Drug Research Associate, Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service	Oliver Reid, Head of Communities and Public Protection, Renfrewshire Council	Dr Linda de Caestecker, Director of Public Health, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde	Alison Douglas, Chief Executive, Alcohol Focus Scotland
Karyn McCluskey, Chief Executive of Community Justice Scotland	Allison Scott, Criminal Justice Services Manager, Renfrewshire Council	Dr Carol Hunter, Lead Pharmacist, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde	Elaina Smith, Health Improvement Lead Alcohol Licensing, Renfrewshire / Glasgow City HSCP	Tom Irvine, Homeless & Housing Support Services Manager, Renfrewshire Council	

Appendix D

Language matters

Language is powerful—especially when discussing alcohol and other drugs and the people who use them. Stigmatising language reinforces negative stereotypes. “Person-centred” language focuses on the person, not their substance use.

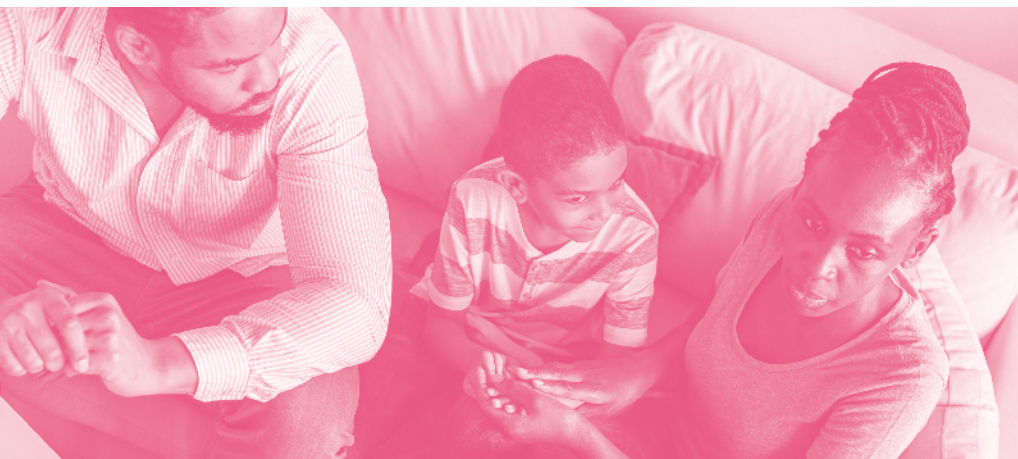
When working with people who use alcohol and other drugs...

 try this	 instead of this
substance use, non-prescribed use	abuse misuse problem use non-compliant use
person who uses/injects drugs	drug user/abuser
person with a dependence on...	addict junkie druggie alcoholic
person experiencing drug dependence	suffering from addiction has a drug habit
person who has stopped using drugs	clean sober drug-free
person with lived experience of drug dependence	ex-addict former addict used to be a...
person disagrees	lacks insight in denial resistant unmotivated
treatment has not been effective/chooses not to	not engaged non-compliant
person's needs are not being met	drug seeking manipulative splitting
currently using drugs	using again fallen off the wagon had a setback
no longer using drugs	stayed clean maintained recovery
positive/negative urine drug screen	dirty/clean urine
used/unused syringe	dirty/clean needle dirties
pharmacotherapy is treatment	replacing one drug for another

Adapted from *Language Matters* from the National Council for Behavioural Health, United States (2015) and *Matua Raki*, New Zealand (2016).



From the outset, Commission members were clear that this would be a “Listening” Commission, which would put local people, service users, staff and partners at the heart of its work. The approach to be taken would be a human one, with a clear focus on what could be achieved collectively to better support people impacted by alcohol and drug use in Renfrewshire.





To: Council

On: 17 December 2020

Report by: Director of Finance & Resources

Heading: A Prudential Framework for Capital Finance – Progress Report

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 and supporting regulations require local authorities to have regard to The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (“the Prudential Code”).
- 1.2 The Council set its prudential indicators for 2020/21 on 9th March 2020. The purpose of this report is to consider the indicators as they stand at 16th October 2020, approximately halfway through the financial year, and revise them as appropriate
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members consider this report and approve the changes to the prudential indicators as detailed in the report.
-

3. Background

- 3.1 The key objectives of the Prudential Code are to ensure, within a clear framework, that:
- Capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable;
 - Treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice and in full understanding of the risks involved;

- That these risks will be managed to an acceptable level to the organisation;
- Capital investment plans are being made in light of the overall organisational strategy and resources, ensuring that decisions are being made with sufficient regard to the long run financial implications and potential risks to the authority.

3.2 To demonstrate that local authorities have fulfilled these objectives, the Prudential Code sets out the indicators that must be used and the factors that must be taken into account. The Code does not include suggested indicative limits or ratios. These are for the Council to set itself.

The prudential indicators required by the Code are designed to support and record local decision making. The system is specifically designed to support such local decision making in a manner that is publicly accountable. They are not designed to be comparative performance indicators.

4 **CAPITAL EXPENDITURE INDICATORS**

4.1 The Council has a duty to determine and keep under review the maximum amount which it can afford to allocate to capital expenditure.

4.2 The Council is required to make estimates of the capital expenditure it plans to incur for the forthcoming financial year and at least the following two years. Separate estimates should be made for Housing and Non Housing services. The Capital Investment Programmes for Housing and Non Housing Capital Investment Programme were approved by Council on the 9th March 2020, the resulting indicators were updated to reflect the approved programme incorporating the decisions taken by the council at the budget meeting.

4.3 Council approved the following as an indicator for capital expenditure:-

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Non Housing*	95,185	130,784	48,368
Housing	30,215	39,192	23,515
Total	125,400	169,976	71,883

*The 2020/21 Non Housing estimate excludes the estimated expenditure in relation to the Private Sector Housing Grant.

4.4 Total capital expenditure to 16th October 2020 is £20.443m, of which £17.711m relates to Non Housing and £2.732m relates to Housing.

4.5 A review of the updated capital spending plan for 2020/21 suggests that the indicators need to be revised as follows for the current year. Indicators for 2021/22 and 2022/23 will be reviewed in March 2021 alongside the budget proposals.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	
	2020/21 Probable £'000
Non Housing	55,424
Housing	16,708
Total	72,132

4.6 The net decrease of **£39.761m** in the planned Non Housing capital expenditure during 2020/21 is mainly attributable to re-profiling of expenditure to 2021-22 and beyond as a result of the delays to capital work brought about by the restrictions on activity during spring and early summer 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The full net effect of the decrease is a result of the following factors:

- (i) The change in the cash flow profile of a number of programmes resulting in a net adjustment of £41.528m from 2020/21 into 2021/22 and future years as reported to relevant policy boards
- (ii) Carry forward of programmed expenditure from 2020/21 to 2019/20 totalling £0.814m.
- (iii) The addition of £3.180m funding for projects approved during 2020/21.
- (iv) Reflection of anticipated under-spend on completing programmes.

4.7 The decrease of **£13.507m** in the planned Housing capital expenditure during 2020/21 arises from the net effect of:-

- (i) Expenditure brought forward from 2019/20 into 2020/21 of £2.950m mainly as a result of the pause in Council House New Build in March 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- (ii) The change in the cash flow profile of a number of programmes resulting from the pause in capital work due to Covid-19 restrictions resulting in an adjustment of £16.457m from 2020/21 into 2021/22 and future years as reported to the Communities Housing & Planning Policy Board.

5 CAPITAL FINANCING REQUIREMENT INDICATOR

5.1 *Capital Financing Requirement.* The Council has available to it a number of ways of financing traditionally procured capital investment. The term “financing” does not refer to the payment of cash, but the resources that are applied to ensure that any underlying amount arising from capital payments is dealt with absolutely, whether at the point of spend or over the longer term. A number of financing options involve resourcing the investment at the time that it is incurred. These are:

- Application of useable capital receipts
- A direct charge to revenue for capital expenditure
- The application of capital grants

- Up-front contributions from project partners

5.2 Capital expenditure which is not financed up front by one of the above methods will increase the Capital Financing Requirement of the Council.

5.3 Members approved the following as the indicator for the Capital Financing Requirement at the end of each of the next three years at the Council meeting on 9th March 2020:

CAPITAL FINANCING REQUIREMENT			
	31/03/2021	31/03/2022	31/03/2023
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	£m	£m	£m
Non Housing	305	395	423
Housing	126	142	152
Total	431	537	575

5.4 The revised projected capital financing requirement for 2020/21, based on the position at 16th October 2020 is noted in the table below. The 2021/22 & 2022/23 requirements will be reviewed in March 2021 alongside the budget proposals;

CAPITAL FINANCING REQUIREMENT	
	31/03/2021
	Probable
	£m
Non Housing	277
Housing	115
Total	392

5.5 The decrease of £28 million in the probable Capital Financing Requirement at 31st March 2021 in Non Housing services arises from the reduced capital expenditure in 2020/21 described in 4.6 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.6 The decrease of £11 million in the probable Capital Financing Requirement at 31st March 2021 in Housing services is a result of the reduced capital expenditure in 2020/21 described in 4.7 due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

6 EXTERNAL DEBT INDICATORS

6.1 External debt is referred to as the sum of external borrowing and other long term liabilities (e.g. covenants). The prudential indicators for external debt are set and revised taking into account their affordability. It is through this means that the objective of ensuring that external debt is kept within sustainable prudent limits is addressed year on year.

6.2 External debt indicators are set at two levels: an *operational boundary* and an *authorised limit*. Both of these need to be consistent with the Council's plans

for capital expenditure and financing and with its treasury management policy statement and practices.

6.3 *Operational Boundary:* This is the focus of day-to-day treasury management activity within the Council, and is an estimate of the most likely scenario in terms of cash flow. Risk analysis and risk management strategies have been taken into account; as have plans for capital expenditure, estimates of the Capital Financial Requirement and estimates of cashflow requirements for **all** purposes. It is possible that this boundary could be breached occasionally and this should not be regarded as significant. However, a sustained or regular trend would require investigation and action.

6.4 The Council has set for the current financial year and following two years an Operational Boundary for its total external debt, identifying separately borrowing from other long term liabilities.

OPERATIONAL BOUNDARY FOR EXTERNAL DEBT			
	31/03/2021	31/03/2022	31/03/2023
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	£m	£m	£m
Borrowing	362	471	512
Other long-term liabilities	69	66	63
Total	431	537	575

6.5 The probable outturn for the current financial year is anticipated at £393 million, a decrease in the Operational Boundary of £38 million. This is mainly as a result of the reduced Capital Finance Requirement due to lower capital expenditure for both Housing and Non-Housing Services outlined in paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6. The increase in Other Long-Term Liabilities of £5m is a result of Finance Leases being recognised in advance of the change to IFRS 16 in 2021-22. There have been no breaches during the period from 1st April to 16th October which have required action. The 2021/22 and 2022/23 operational boundary will be reviewed in March 2021 alongside the budget proposals.

OPERATIONAL BOUNDARY FOR EXTERNAL DEBT	
	31/03/2021
	Probable
	£m
Borrowing	319
Other long-term liabilities	74
Total	393

6.6 *Authorised Limit:* This is based on the same assumptions as the Operational Boundary, with sufficient “headroom” to allow for unusual/exceptional cash movements. Headroom of approximately 5% has been added to the Operational Boundary to arrive at an authorised limit which is sufficient to allow for cash flow management without breaching the limit.

- 6.7 The Council has set for the forthcoming financial year and following two years an Authorised Limit for its total external debt, but identifying separately borrowing from other long term liabilities.

AUTHORISED LIMIT FOR EXTERNAL DEBT			
	31/03/2021	31/03/2022	31/03/2023
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	£m	£m	£m
Borrowing	380	495	538
Other long-term liabilities	69	66	63
Total	449	561	601

- 6.8 The revised anticipated authorised limit for this financial year is projected at £409 million, a decrease of £40 million to the estimate and in line with the operational boundary reduction as outlined in 6.5. The authorised limit will be reviewed on an annual basis and any changes will require approval by Council.

AUTHORISED LIMIT FOR EXTERNAL DEBT	
	31/03/2021
	Probable
	£m
Borrowing	335
Other long-term liabilities	74
Total	409

- 6.9 In December 2018 the CIPFA/LASAAC Local Authority Accounting Board confirmed that from 1st April 2020 the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting would be adopting the accounting standard IFRS 16 Leases. This was extended to 1st April 2021 as result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 6.10 The practical effect of adopting IFRS 16 will be to require any contract the Council has signed which provides the right to rent or lease exclusive use of an asset, such as property or vehicles, could potentially require to be recognised as an asset on the Council's balance sheet with a corresponding debt liability recognised at the present value of the future lease payments. This liability will be treated as additional borrowing, therefore, increasing the Capital Financing Requirement and other associated Prudential Indicators such as Operational Boundary, Authorised Limit and Revenue to Financing Cost ratios. A full review of all contracts that could be impacted by this is currently under way and will be factored into future Prudential Indicators once the full effect is known.

7 LOANS FUND ADVANCES

- 7.1 Loans fund accounting arrangements are governed by the provisions set in the Local Authority (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Scotland) Regulations 2016.
- 7.2 Repayment of loans fund advances are required to be made in line with the Scottish Government's statutory Guidance on Loans Fund Accounting.

- 7.3 The aim of prudent repayment is to ensure that the Council's net capital expenditure is financed over a period of years in which that expenditure is expected to provide a benefit and that the repayment each year is reasonably commensurate with the period and pattern of benefits. Housing and Non-Housing advances and associated annual repayments are identified separately.
- 7.4 Members approved the 2020/21 policy on loan fund repayments on the 9th March 2020. Statutory guidance requires the policy to be approved each year and the 2021/22 policy will be reviewed in March 2021 alongside the budget proposals.
- 7.5 The Council's current policy is as follows:
- For pre-existing loans advances made up to 31st March 2016 and for forward capital expenditure plans made after 1 April 2016, the policy for the repayment of loan advances will be the Statutory Method (option 1), with loan fund advances being repaid by the annuity method.
- 7.6 The Council is permitted to use this option during the transition period until 31st March 2021, by which time the Council should consider whether an alternative approach is more suitable, always considering the requirement to ensure both the period and annual amounts are prudent.
- 7.7 The regulations identify an additional 3 options for the calculation of repayment of loans fund advances, and there are provisions within the Guidance to allow for other options to be followed by the Council if it determines it is prudent to do so. Statute is clear that it is for the Council to determine what is prudent. The changes in regulations have brought more flexibility for the Council to apply prudent provision and support changes to future payments to repay the outstanding loans fund advances over a different period, if it can be justified as prudent to do so.
- 7.8 The Council has secured specific advice in this regard from its appointed treasury advisers, and this advice is currently being considered in advance of any policy decision which would be incorporated into the Prudential Framework which will be considered by Council in setting the capital programme for 2021/22 onwards. Consideration of a prudent repayment approach should reflect the benefits now and in the future to the community from the associated capital expenditure, and importantly should also consider the impact on the Council's medium term budget strategy to ensure it also remains prudent, affordable and sustainable.
- 7.9 The Council's latest estimates of its loan fund account information are as follows:

Year	Opening Balance £m	Advances to GF £m	Advances to HRA £m	Repayment by GF £m	Repayment by HRA £m	Closing Balance £m
2019-20 actual	270	17	28	(1)	(16)	298
2020/21	298	24	12	(1)	(14)	319
2021/22 - 25/26	319	192	49	(24)	(54)	482
2026/27 - 30/31	482	-	-	(76)	(20)	386
2031/32 -35/36	386	-	-	(75)	(20)	291
2036/37 -40/41	291	-	-	(43)	(16)	232
2041/42 - 45/46	232	-	-	(48)	(18)	166
2046/47 - 50/51	166	-	-	(51)	(23)	92
2051/52 -55/56	92	-	-	(37)	(9)	46
2056/57 -60/61	46	-	-	(28)	(4)	14
2061/62 - 65/66	14	-	-	(12)	-	2
2066/67 - 72/73	2	-	-	(2)	-	-

8 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT INDICATORS**

8.1 The prudential indicator in respect of treasury management is that the local authority has adopted CIPFA *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes* (the "Treasury Management Code").

8.2 Compliance with the Treasury Management Code requires a mid-year review of Treasury Management activity. This was reported to Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board on 11th November 2020.

9 **INDICATORS FOR AFFORDABILITY**

9.1 A key measure of affordability is the incremental impact of investment decisions on the council tax or house rents. Estimates of the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream provide an indication of how much of the Council's revenue is committed to the repayment of debt.

9.2 As reported to Council on 9th March 2020 the ratios for the next 3 years are shown in the table below:

RATIO OF FINANCING COSTS TO NET REVENUE STREAM			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Non Housing	3.99%	4.41%	4.81%
Housing	39.85%	38.17%	35.42%

9.3 The revised ratios for 2020/21, based on the position at 16th October 2020 is noted in the table below. The 2021/22 & 2022/23 requirements will be reviewed in March 2021 alongside the budget proposals;

RATIO OF FINANCING COSTS TO NET REVENUE STREAM

	31/03/2021
	Probable
Non Housing	3.92%
Housing	39.91%

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – Prudential indicators are being monitored by the Director of Finance and Resources throughout the year. They are based directly on the Council’s Capital and Revenue budgets, as detailed in the other reports considered by the Council on 9th March 2020 and reported to the Council’s Policy Boards on a regular basis.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community/Council Planning** – None
4. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** – None
6. **Information Technology** – None
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. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council’s website.
8. **Health & Safety** - None
9. **Procurement** - None
10. **Risk** - None
11. **Privacy Impact** – None
12. **Climate Risk** – None
13. **Cosla Policy Position** – None

List of Background Papers

- (a) Non-Housing Capital Investment Programme 2020/21 – 2024/25, Appendix 6: Prudential Framework for Capital Finance 2020-2023 (estimates) and Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020-23. Council, 9th March 2020.
- (b) Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2020/21. Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board, 11th November 2020.

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To: Council

On: 17 December 2020

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: Governance Arrangements until 4 March 2021

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for arrangements for the next cycle of Board meetings up to and including the next full Council meeting on 4th March 2021 and to provide an update on the acquisition of a system that would enable livestreamed hybrid meetings to take place, once restrictions to combat the Covid-19 pandemic have been eased.
- 1.2 At meetings on 25 June 2020 and 24 September 2020, the Council approved governance arrangements over the summer of 2020 and for the last two cycles of Board meetings.
- 1.3 The arrangements set out in the report aim to allow the next cycle of Board meetings to take place as efficiently as possible in the current circumstances as well as enabling the Council to continue to respond to any urgent issues arising from the continuing Covid-19 pandemic.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Council is asked to:
- a) approve the arrangements for the next cycle of Council and Board meetings set out in section 4 of this report;
 - b) note the acquisition of a system that enables hybrid meetings to take place and for those meetings to be live streamed;

- c) note that the arrangements for subsequent Board cycles will be the subject of a report to Council on 4th March 2021;
 - d) continue the temporary changes to the membership and remit of the Emergencies Board approved by Council on 25 June 2020.
 - e) agree to appoint Cllr John McIntyre to the Licensing Board in place of Cllr Neill Graham and to appoint Cllr Neill Graham to the Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board in place of Cllr Jane Strang.
-

3. Background

- 3.1 Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Council has had in place emergency governance arrangements to enable oversight of its functions and services in circumstances where it has not been possible for meetings of the Council's Boards to take place safely in Renfrewshire House.
 - 3.2 These emergency arrangements initially involved weekly meetings of the Emergencies Board, held remotely, extended emergency delegations to the chief executive and the cancellation of all Council and Board meetings up to the Council meeting on 25 June 2020.
 - 3.3 Two full cycles of Board meetings have now taken place with remote access for members using Microsoft Teams. The Emergencies Board continued to meet until 18 September 2020, also remotely.
 - 3.4 Over the summer and autumn there was a gradual easing of lockdown restrictions but the restrictions that remained in place, prevented a return to the preCovid-19 arrangements for Council and Board meetings in the Council Chamber. The resurgence of the virus over October and November resulted in the Scottish Government imposing further restrictions that delayed any possibility of the return of meetings to Renfrewshire House. Despite this, officers continued to negotiate the purchase and installation of a system that would enable socially distanced meetings to take place safely in the Council Chamber with some members present in the Chamber with others accessing the meeting remotely. These are referred to as "hybrid" meetings.
-

4. Arrangements for the January to March 2021 Cycle of Meetings

- 4.1 The dates for meetings of the Council and Boards from October 2020 to June 2021 were approved by Council on 26 September 2019. Those dates, including those for meetings during the January to March 2021 Board cycle, have remained in place as scheduled and are listed in the appendix to this report.

- 4.2 It is proposed that, subject to paragraph 4.7 below, the planned meetings in the January to March 2021 Board cycle continue to take place remotely using video or audio links with the same arrangements as previously approved for the last cycle of meetings.
- 4.3 The position in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on the possibility of holding physical meetings in the Renfrewshire House remains the same as in previous reports. Until the position is clarified, it is not possible at this time to arrange meetings in the Council Chamber or any of the committee rooms in Renfrewshire House or any other indoor venue in a way that is in accordance with government guidance.
- 4.4 Officers have continued to investigate ways of enabling public attendance at meetings held by video/audio link and at the potential for streaming each meeting as it happens.
- 4.5 There has been a significant development since the previous update to Council in that a system that would allow hybrid meetings to take place has been purchased from Public-I. This is the same company that currently provides web-casting services to the Council.
- 4.6 The system is due to be installed in mid-January 2021. This is the earliest installation date that could be secured because of demand for the system from other organisations. The system also allows for the meetings to be streamed live. It is hoped that testing of the system with elected member involvement can take place in late January 2021. However, it is not anticipated that the system will be available for use for a hybrid meeting at a Board or Council meeting in the next cycle, even if guidance permitted such a meeting to take place.
- 4.7 In any event, it is proposed to continue the discretion given at the last Council meeting to each Convener in consultation with the chief executive and the representatives of the other political groups on the Board to agree to use that system for a Board meeting once the system has been successfully tested.
- 4.8 Although the Policy Boards are now meeting regularly, the governance of the Council still needs to be sufficiently flexible to respond to the rapidly changing situation during the pandemic. Accordingly, it is proposed that the revised remit and extended membership for the Emergencies Board will continue although no meetings will be programmed at this time. Should any matters relating to Covid-19 require urgent decisions to be taken that can't wait until the next meeting of the relevant Board or Council the Emergencies Board can be reconvened quickly.
- 4.9 The arrangements for future Council and Board meetings will continue to be reviewed and will be the subject of a further report to Council on 4 March 2021.

5. Board memberships for the Conservative Group

- 5.1 At its meeting on 26 November 2020 the Council agreed to appoint Cllr Graham to replace Cllr Kerr as a member of the Licensing Board. However, following that meeting, Cllr Graham has advised that he is no longer able to take up that appointment and instead, it is now proposed that Cllr McIntyre is appointed to the Licensing Board.
- 5.2 In terms of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2006 all members of the Licensing Board require to undertake a course of training accredited by the Scottish Ministers within three months of their appointment to the Licensing Board, whether or not they have been Licensing Board members before. Assessment of training is taken under exam conditions.
- 5.3 In addition, it is proposed that Cllr Graham replaces Cllr Strang as a member of the Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None.
3. **Community/Council Planning** – None
4. **Legal** – As detailed in the report.
5. **Property/Assets** – None
6. **Information Technology** – None
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. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** – The proposals in the report recognise that it is not currently possible for formal council and board meetings to take place safely in Renfrewshire House.
9. **Risk - None**

10. **Privacy Impact** – None
 11. **Cosla Policy Position** - None
 12. **Climate Risk** - None
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List of Background Papers –

- 1) Minute of the meeting of the Emergencies Board on 20 March 2020.
 - 2) Report to the Emergencies Board on 29 May 2020 headed “Arrangements for the Council meeting on 25 June 2020.
 - 3) Minute of the Council meeting on 25 June 2020.
-

Author: Ken Graham, Head of Corporate Governance.

January 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 public holiday	2
3	4 public holiday	5 public holiday	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 - 1/3	18	19 – 1pm: Communities, Housing & Planning 3pm: Police and Fire & Rescue Scrutiny	20 – 10am: Regulatory Functions	21 – 1pm: Education & Children's Services	22	23
24 - 2/3	25 – 10am: Audit, Risk & Scrutiny	26	27 – 1pm: Infrastructure, Land & Environment	28	29	30
31 - 3/3						
February 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 – 2pm: Petitions	2 – 2pm: Local Review Body	3 – 2pm: Finance, Resources & Customer Services	4 – 10am: Regulatory Functions	5	6
7 - 4/3	8	9 – 2pm: JNC	10	11	12	13
14 - 5/3	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 - 6/3	22	23	24 – 1pm: Leadership	25	26	27
28 - 7/3						
March 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4 – 9.30am: Council	5	6



To: Council

On: 17 December 2020

Report by: Head of Corporate Governance as Monitoring Officer

Heading: Standards Commission for Scotland: Decision of the Hearing Panel of the Commission

1. Summary

- 1.1 Two complaints were made to the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland (the Commissioner) alleging that Councillor Paul Mack had contravened the councillors' code of conduct.
- 1.2 The Commissioner conducted an investigation into the complaints and concluded that Councillor Mack had contravened the code. The Commissioner subsequently submitted reports to the Standards Commission for Scotland (the Commission) on the outcome of her investigations.
- 1.3 The Commission, following receipt of the Commissioner's reports, decided to hold a hearing in relation to the complaints and this hearing took place in Renfrewshire House on 10 September 2020.
- 1.4 The Hearing Panel issued an oral decision at the conclusion of the hearing that Councillor Mack had breached paragraphs 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and paragraphs 2 and 20 of Annex C. of the Code. As Councillor Mack had not been present at the hearing, he was sent a copy of the decision and was invited to submit any comments he wished to make in respect of mitigation within five working days, before the Panel would then reach a decision on the sanction to be applied. Councillor Mack did not provide any comments in respect of mitigation or the sanction to be applied.

- 1.5 The decision of the Hearing Panel was to disqualify Councillor Mack for a period of 17 months, from being, or from being nominated for election as, or from being elected, a councillor, with effect from 1 October 2020.
- 1.6 This sanction is made under the terms of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 section 19(1)(d). The written decision of the Hearing Panel has been received and a copy is appended to this report. This sets out the reasons for the decision that a breach of the code had been proven and the factors taken into account in deciding on the sanction imposed.
- 1.7 In terms of the Ethical Standards in Public Life (Scotland) Act 2000 a council receiving a copy of findings from the Standards Commission requires to consider those findings within three months of receiving them (or within such longer period as the Commission may specify).
- 1.8 Cllr Mack has submitted an appeal to the Sheriff Principal challenging both the decision of the Commission that he had breached the Code and the sanction imposed. The appeal will be heard in Court although a date has still to be fixed for the hearing. Despite an appeal being lodged, the sanction imposed by the Standards Commission remains in place while the appeal has still to be determined.
- 1.9 Following consideration of the appeal the Court may:
- a) In respect of the Commissions finding of a breach of the Code:
 - i) confirm the finding;
 - ii) quash the finding;
 - iii) quash the finding and remit the matter back to the Commission to reconsider its decision
 - b) In respect of the sanction imposed by the Commission:
 - i) Confirm the sanction
 - ii) Quash the sanction and either substitute a lesser sanction or remit the matter back to the Commission
- 1.10 Members are reminded that training on governance (which includes the councillors' code of conduct) has been and will continue to be provided to members as part of their training and development programme. Individual members can seek advice from the Head of Corporate Governance on any issues arising from the Code.
-

2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Council:

- a) in accordance with the terms of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc (Scotland) Act 2000, note the findings of the Standards Commission on the complaints against Councillor Mack; and
 - b) note that Councillor Mack has submitted an appeal against the findings of the Commission and the sanction imposed on him and that the appeal has still to be determined.
-

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - none
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - none
3. **Community Planning** – none
4. **Legal** – in terms of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc (Scotland) Act 2000 a council requires to consider the findings of the Standards Commission within 3 months of receipt (or within such longer period as the Commission may specify).
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** – none
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The recommendation contained within this report has been assessed in relation to its 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. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – none.
11. **Privacy Impact** – none

12. **CoSLA Policy Position** – not applicable
13. **Climate Risk** – n/a

List of Background Papers – none – report on Standards Commission’s findings is appended.

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Decision of the Hearing Panel of the Standards Commission for Scotland following the Hearing held at Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, on Thursday, 10 September 2020.

Panel Members: Professor Kevin Dunion, Chair of the Hearing Panel
Ms Ashleigh Dunn
Mrs Tricia Stewart

The Hearing arose in respect of two reports referred by Ms Caroline Anderson, the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland (the ESC), further to complaint references LA/R/2257 and LA/R/3262, which concerned alleged contraventions of the Councillors' Code of Conduct (the Code) by Councillor Paul Mack (the Respondent).

The ESC was represented by Mr Martin Campbell, Director of Investigations and Solicitor to the Commissioner.

Referral

Following an investigation into two complaints received about the conduct of the Respondent, the ESC referred reports to the Standards Commission for Scotland on 27 April 2020 and 16 July 2020, in accordance with section 14(2) of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 (the 2000 Act), as amended.

The substance of the referral on the first complaint, made by Councillor Devine, was that the Respondent had failed to comply with the provisions of the Code and, in particular, that he had contravened paragraphs 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and paragraphs 2 and 20 of Annex C. The second referral concerned a complaint by Councillor Mackay and alleged that the Respondent had contravened paragraphs 3.2 and 3.6 of the Code.

The relevant provisions of the Code are:

Relationship with other councillors and members of the public

3.2 *You must respect your colleagues and members of the public and treat them with courtesy at all times when acting as a councillor.*

Relationship with Council Employees (including those employed by contractors providing services to the Council)

3.3 *You must respect all Council employees and the role they play, and treat them with courtesy at all times. It is expected that employees will show the same consideration in return.*

3.5 *You must follow the Protocol for Relations between Councillors and Employees attached at Annex C. A breach of the Protocol will be considered as a breach of this Code.*

Bullying and Harassment

3.6 *Bullying or harassment is completely unacceptable and will be considered to be a breach of this Code.*

Conduct at Meetings

3.7 *You must respect the Chair, your colleagues, Council employees and any members of the public present during meetings of the Council, its Committees or Sub-Committees or of any Public Bodies where you have been appointed by, and represent the Council. You must comply with rulings from the chair in the conduct of the business of these meetings.*

ANNEX C

PROTOCOL FOR RELATIONS BETWEEN COUNCILLORS AND EMPLOYEES IN SCOTTISH COUNCILS

Principles

2. *Councillors and employees should work in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, with neither party seeking to take unfair advantage of their position.*

Public comment

20. *Councillors should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of employees in public. Employees must accord to councillors the respect and courtesy due to them in their various roles. There are provisions in the Code of Conduct for Employees about speaking in public and employees should observe them.*

Preliminary Matters

The Hearing was scheduled for 09:30 on 10 September 2020, having been rescheduled at Councillor Mack's request. Having waited for the Respondent who had failed to attend, the Panel started the Hearing at 09:40. The Panel was satisfied it could do so in terms of the Hearing Rules as it had evidence before it that the Respondent had been provided with adequate notice of the Hearing. The Panel noted that the Respondent had attended an online pre-Hearing meeting.

The Panel proceeded to hear submissions from the Ethical Standards Commissioner's representative and evidence from the two complainers, Councillors Eddie Devine and Alistair Mackay.

It was only after having retired to deliberate, that the Panel was advised that the Respondent had sent the Standards Commission's Executive Director an email at 15:10 the previous day advising that he had been in contact with someone who had tested positive for Covid-19 and therefore felt he had to self-isolate. Given that the Executive Director had, by that time, left Edinburgh to prepare for the Hearing in Renfrewshire, this email had not been seen prior to the Panel retiring around 13:00.

The Panel considered whether it should continue with the Hearing in the Respondent's absence. It noted that he had only sent his email to the Executive Director's direct email address. He had not made any further attempts, either by telephone or to the Standards Commission's general email address, to advise the Standards Commission that he would not be attending the Hearing. The Respondent had also not contacted anyone at the Council venue where he knew the Hearing was taking place. The Panel did not consider, therefore, that the Respondent had taken all reasonable steps to advise it that he would not be attending. The Panel noted that the Respondent had not asked that the Hearing be adjourned.

The Panel noted that, despite being required to do so, the Respondent had not submitted a statement of case to the Standards Commission and had not cooperated fully with the Ethical Standards Commissioner's investigation. The Panel noted that he had not disputed that he had sent the emails that were the subject of the complaints or that he disputed the video evidence of the Council meeting on 27 June 2019, that was also the subject of one of the complaints.

Having weighed up a number of options on how best to proceed in the circumstances, the Panel was satisfied that it had sufficient evidence before it to make a decision on breach. The Panel was further satisfied that, given the opportunities previously provided, but not taken, by the Respondent to make submissions on the complaint it considered that it was reasonable to proceed to make the decision in his absence.

Having made a decision on breach, the Panel adjourned to provide the Respondent with an opportunity to submit any comments he wished to make in respect of mitigation before it made a decision on sanction.

Evidence Presented at the Hearing

The ESC's representative led evidence from the two complainers, Councillors Devine and Mackay.

The ESC's representative advised that the events that gave rise to a large part of Councillor Devine's complaint concerned the allocation of a council property to Councillor Devine's daughter. The ESC's

representative indicated that the Respondent had taken up a case on behalf of a Ms A, who believed she should have been allocated the council property in question. The ESC's representative noted that the Council's Director of Communities, Housing & Planning had reviewed the matter and informed the Respondent, in an email of 12 March 2019, that she was satisfied the allocation had been made entirely in accordance with policy and that no elected member had had any influence, or opportunity for influence, over the allocation process. Having received further correspondence from the Respondent about the matter, the Director of Communities, Housing & Planning had then asked the Council's Chief Auditor to investigate his allegations about the housing allocation process. The ESC's representative advised that the Council's Chief Auditor thereafter undertook an independent review. The Chief Auditor had also concluded that the Council property was appropriately let to the complainer's daughter and that no elected member had influenced the allocation process.

The ESC's representative advised that the Respondent and another elected member had submitted a Motion calling for an independent inquiry into the allocation of property at a full Council Meeting on 27 June 2019. The motion had been agreed unanimously. The Panel noted that the enquiry was undertaken by Audit Scotland, who prepared a report, dated 13 November 2019, concluding that there was no evidence to suggest that:

- (a) Ms A was wrongly deprived in respect of the allocation of the property;
- (b) there was deliberate manipulation of the waiting list or the property allocation process; or
- (c) there was any attempt to manipulate the allocations process by, or at the request of, elected members of the Council.

Witness Evidence

Councillor Devine stated that his complaint concerned three matters, being:

- A series of emails that were sent over a period of seven months (in March, May, June, August and September 2019) by the Respondent to various other councillors (including Councillor Devine) and senior officers. The emails predominantly related to the Respondent's allegations about the allocation of a Council property to Councillor Devine's daughter.
- Comments the Respondent made at a full Council meeting on 27 June 2019 regarding the housing allocation; and
- Comments the Respondent made in an email to him of 11 February 2020 (which had been copied to all other elected members), in relation to a motion Councillor Devine had lodged about the former Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mr Derek Mackay, remaining in his role as an MSP.

Councillor Devine advised that, in his emails, the Respondent had repeatedly accused him of seeking preferential treatment for his daughter and of inappropriately influencing the housing allocation decision. Councillor Devine advised that the accusations had escalated over time, with the Respondent then accusing senior officers of lying and bullying junior staff in order to cover up Councillor Devine's alleged involvement. Councillor Devine stated that he had not been involved in any way, in the allocation of the property and, he was in favour of the motion seeking the independent inquiry as he knew he had done nothing wrong and wanted this to be established beyond all doubt. Councillor Devine confirmed that the investigations undertaken, including the one conducted by Audit Scotland, had found no impropriety. Councillor Devine further noted that although the Respondent had alleged that he had evidence to support his claims, he had never produced this, despite repeatedly being asked to do so.

Councillor Devine said that he had been angry and embarrassed by the accusations of corruption cronyism and abuse of power that the Respondent had made in his emails and at the full Council meeting on 27 June 2019 (which was publicly broadcast). Councillor Devine noted that the Respondent had also accused officers of corruption and that he found this to be particularly frustrating as the officers had no means of defending themselves or public right of reply. Councillor Devine also found references to him not having worked for a living that the Respondent had made in the emails to be disrespectful as the Respondent knew this to be

untrue. Councillor Devine stated that he was really angry that the Respondent had repeatedly called him a liar and a bully, when he was neither of those things.

Councillor Devine indicated that he found an email the Respondent had purportedly sent to a journalist on 29 March 2019 in which he referred to an image of Councillor Devine's daughter springing up from a grave to be particularly bizarre and scary. Councillor Devine advised that he had become so concerned about the nature and content of some of the emails that he had become worried about his family's safety. Councillor Devine advised that he had therefore contacted the police, who had offered to provide panic alarms to him, his wife and daughter. Councillor Devine further advised that he had been particularly angered and disgusted by an email the Respondent sent on 16 August 2019 in which he had falsely accused him of being a "white supremacist".

Councillor Devine explained, in respect of the third matter, that after he had lodged a motion calling for the former Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mr Derek Mackay, to resign from his role as a Member of the Scottish Parliament after sending inappropriate texts to a 16 year old, the Respondent had sent him an email, copied to all other elected members, on 1 February 2020 falsely accusing him of covering up similar conduct. Councillor Devine advised that this had again made him upset and angry.

Councillor Devine's view was that, through his conduct, the Respondent was bullying and harassing him. Councillor Devine indicated that he considered the Respondent was fixated with him and sought to attack him whenever he perceived anything had gone wrong in respect of decisions or actions taken by the council.

In response to questions from the Panel, Councillor Devine stated categorically, on oath, that he had not at any time contacted any council officer regarding the allocation of the property ultimately allocated to his daughter. Councillor Devine advised that the first time he was aware of the possible allocation was when his daughter told him she had been asked by the relevant officers to consider it. Councillor Devine accepted that the Respondent was entitled to make representations on behalf of his constituent, Ms A, about the housing allocation, but confirmed it was the Respondent's insistence on making serious and false accusations about both Councillor Devine and senior council officers that was the issue. Councillor Devine further accepted that 'rough and tumble' was part and parcel of political life but that he considered the Respondent's behaviour went far beyond that.

In his evidence Councillor Mackay said that his complaint concerned an email the Respondent had sent to him on 24 April 2020 in response to one Councillor Mackay had sent on 22 March 2020 regarding an update provided by an officer on Covid-19 related matters. Councillor Mackay noted that the Respondent's email had been copied to all other elected members of the Council and other individuals, including two media outlets. Councillor Mackay advised that he had found most of the contents of the email to be offensive and insulting. Councillor Mackay further advised that he had found references the Respondent had made, in the email, to someone going round to Councillor Mackay's house to inflict violence on him to be intimidatory. Councillor Mackay explained this was because he did not know who would see the email and whether someone might take it as an invitation to fulfil the suggestion that he deserved to be the target of violence. Councillor Mackay advised that he had been sufficiently concerned on receipt of the email to contact the police. Councillor Mackay noted that his concerns had been heightened by the fact that the email was sent in response to one he had sent nearly a month before, having had no interaction with the Respondent in the intervening period. Councillor Mackay stated that he had concluded, therefore, that the email was calculated in nature rather than being one that had simply been sent in the heat of the moment.

In response to questions from the Panel, Councillor Mackay accepted that, however ill-judged, there was a possibility that the Respondent was attempting to be humorous when making references to Councillor Mackay being the subject of violence. Councillor Mackay advised, however, that he had not taken it in that way as he did not know who followed or supported the Respondent and, as such, had been concerned that someone may have acted on his suggestion to go round to Councillor Mackay's house. Councillor Mackay

advised that his initial reaction, on receipt of the email, had been disbelief but that this had turned to concern. Councillor Mackay advised that he found the personal comments about him in the email to be insulting, particularly as the Respondent knew nothing about him or his background. Councillor Mackay stated that he considered the Respondent's intention, in sending it, was to make him the subject of public ridicule.

Submissions made by the ESC's Representative

The ESC's representative contended that both witnesses had given evidence in a measured way and had been careful to be as objective and factual as possible. The ESC's representative argued that, as such, both should be considered credible and reliable.

The ESC's representative argued that, in continuing over a long period of time, to make unfounded accusations of wrongdoing about Councillor Devine and senior officers, the Respondent's conduct had been entirely disrespectful. The ESC's representative contended that this had been compounded by the fact that the Respondent had copied multiple individuals into his emails and argued that, in doing so, it was evident the Respondent was attempting to undermine and demean Councillor Devine and the officers in question. The ESC's representative noted that the Respondent had continued with his unrelenting attacks on Councillor Devine even after all the investigations had entirely cleared him of having any involvement in the housing allocation matter.

Turning to Councillor Mackay's complaint, the ESC's representative argued that the entire email was designed to be offensive and was calculated to harass.

The ESC's representative argued that the Respondent's conduct was offensive and intimidating and fell well below the standard to be expected of a councillor.

DECISION

The Hearing Panel considered the submissions made both in writing and orally at the Hearing. It concluded that:

1. The Councillors' Code of Conduct applied to the Respondent, Councillor Mack.
2. The Respondent had breached paragraphs 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and paragraphs 2 and 20 of Annex C. of the Code

Reasons for Decision

In respect of the first part of Councillor Devine's complaint, the Panel was satisfied that, as the Respondent did not dispute having sent all the emails in question and as they were signed off in his name, he was responsible for writing them and for the statements they contained. These included:

1. Stating in an email to Councillor Devine of 11 March 2019 (that was copied to all other elected members and the Council's Director of Communities, Housing & Planning), that Councillor Devine had abused his position of authority and engaged in cronyism to obtain one of the Council's most sought-after properties for his family at the expense of Ms A.
2. Accusing Councillor Devine, in an email to the Director of Communities, Housing & Planning of 22 March 2019 that was copied to all elected members, of having given his daughter the property. In the email, the Respondent accused everyone involved in the housing allocation of fraud.

3. Making comments in an email to the Chief Executive, on 28 March 2019, that was copied to all other elected members, to the effect that Councillor Devine and another councillor had abused their positions of power and had lied.
4. Accusing the Chief Executive, in an email of 29 March 2019 purportedly sent to a columnist for the Observer newspaper (which was copied to the Chief Executive and Councillor Devine), of having prevented a more deserving family from getting the council house that had been allocated to Councillor Devine's daughter. In the email the Respondent accused Councillor Devine of intimidating and bullying other members of staff.
5. Calling for the Director of Communities, Housing and Planning, Head of Planning and Chief Auditor to be suspended, in an email of 26 May 2019 to the Chief Executive and all other elected members, and stating that the Chief Executive should consider her own position. The Respondent alleged that their complete absence of any attempt to recognise the plight of the individual who had missed out on the allocation of the council property in question was "bordering on the criminal".
6. Referring, to Councillor Devine as "a White Supremacist" in an email of 16 August 2019, sent to the Commissioner, with the Chief Executive and all other elected members copied in.
7. Accusing senior officers of the Council, in an email to the Chief Executive of 6 September 2019, of "coaching witnesses and destroying and doctoring documentation" to suit their "whitewash of a cover-up", and of "bullying, intimidating and coaching staff" involved in the allocation of the Council property.

Turning to the second part of Councillor Devine's complaint, the Panel was satisfied, having viewed a video of the Council meeting on 27 June 2019, that the Respondent made the comments attributed to him in the complaint, which were to the effect or insinuated that Councillor Devine had inappropriately intervened or "meddled" in the council property allocation process to benefit himself or his family; and that the Council and its officers had covered this up. The Panel noted the Respondent had also stated that there were councillors who had "rigged" the Council property allocation system to ensure their family gained an advantage and that it was "patently obvious" the system was "rotten".

In respect of the third part of the Councillor Devine's complaint, the Panel was satisfied that the Respondent sent an email to the complainer, on 11 February 2020, with all other elected members copied in, in which he stated that there was "something creepy" about the complainer "leading the charge" on the former Cabinet Secretary for Finance's resignation. The Respondent stated that he considered the complainer had been "paid handsomely to assist in a cover-up" of crimes or conduct "of a similar nature".

The Panel accepted that the Respondent was entitled to raise concerns about the allocation of council housing, particularly if he was doing so on behalf of a constituent. The Panel noted, however, that it was the manner in which the Respondent pursued the matter that had given rise to Councillor Devine's concerns.

The Panel noted that two senior Council officers had conducted separate reviews of the Respondent's concerns and that these were then the subject of an independent inquiry by Audit Scotland. The Panel was therefore satisfied that there was evidence that officers had dealt with the Respondent's concerns and had ensured that these were investigated. The Panel nevertheless found that the Respondent refused to await and / or accept the outcome of both the internal and external reviews. The Panel found that, instead, the Respondent embarked upon a course of conduct in which he accused the complainer of lying, corruption, cronyism and covering up criminal activity. The Respondent had further accused senior officers of covering up the housing allocation matter, of bullying and intimidating staff and of engaging in conduct that was bordering on the criminal. The Panel was satisfied that the Respondent's accusations, made in his emails, and at the Council meeting on 27 June 2019 amounted to unjustified personal attacks which were offensive and

abusive. The Panel also considered that, in copying in all elected members to some of the emails, in purportedly sending one to a newspaper and in making comments at a full Council meeting, the Respondent had made his accusations public with the intention of inflicting reputational harm. The Panel was satisfied that, having been asked repeatedly by a number of individuals to provide the evidence he said he had, the Respondent had failed to do so. The Panel was of the view that the pattern of making gratuitously offensive and damaging comments was also apparent in the email, reacting to a motion for the resignation of a local MSP, in which the Respondent publicly called the complainer a White Supremacist and accused him of having been paid to cover up crimes.

In response to a question from the Panel, Councillor Devine had answered, on oath, that he had not at any time contacted any council officer regarding the allocation of the property ultimately allocated to his daughter. The Panel noted that Councillor Devine advised that the first time he was aware of the possible allocation was when his daughter told him she had been asked by the relevant officers to consider it. The Panel accepted that the investigations undertaken had found no impropriety. The Panel noted that Councillor Devine had become so concerned about the nature and content of some of the emails that he had contacted the police, who had offered to provide panic alarms to him, his wife and daughter.

The Panel determined that, in making the accusations of that nature, the Respondent had, on the face of it, failed to comply paragraph 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7 and paragraphs 2 and 20 of Annex C of the Councillors' Code of Conduct of the Code, which obliges councillors to:

- treat officers and their colleague with respect at all time, including at Council meetings;
- avoid any conduct that amounts to bullying and harassment; and
- refrain from raising matters relating to the conduct or capability of officers in public.

Turing to the second complaint, the Panel was satisfied that the Respondent had made a number of gratuitous personal comments and offensive, demeaning remarks about Councillor Mackay in his email of 24 April 2020. These included insinuating that Councillor Mackay had treated him like a servant and been under the influence of alcohol or drugs when sending an email. In addition, the Panel noted that the Respondent had made remarks about someone going round to Councillor Mackay's house and inflicting personal harm on him. The Panel noted that Councillor Mackay had found the remarks to be intimidatory in nature. The Panel considered that the contents of the email were disrespectful and, further, amounted to harassment towards Councillor Mackay, as they were publicly circulated, thus inviting public ridicule. The Panel determined, therefore, that the Respondent had also, on the face of it, breached paragraphs 3.2 and 3.6 of the Code in respect of Councillor Mackay's complaint.

The Panel noted, however, that before coming to a final finding on the complaints, it was obliged to consider the provisions of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which concerns the right to freedom of expression.

The Panel accepted that some of the Respondent's comments and statements concerned matters of public interest, namely the allocation of council housing and the resignation of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance. As such, the Panel noted that the Respondent could attract the enhanced protection of freedom of expression afforded under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Panel noted that the Courts have interpreted Article 10 widely and have found that the enhanced protection for politicians can even extend to comments which some may consider to be inappropriate, offensive and emotive. In addition, comments made in the political context which amount to value judgments are tolerated even if untrue, so long as they have some or any factual basis.

The Panel noted, however, that gratuitous personal accusations and / or comments that amount to simple offensive abuse do not attract the enhanced protection afforded to politicians. The Panel was of the view that, when viewed individually, and as whole, the comments and accusations as made by the Respondent, as quoted, were of that nature. The Panel was further satisfied that given the accusations about the housing

allocation matter had been made and publicly aired after the internal review, and continued following the independent external enquiry had concluded, there was no evidence of wrongdoing or manipulation of the process, it was not possible to say that the allegations had any basis in fact when they were made.

As such, the Panel found that the Respondent was not entitled to the enhanced protection for political expression afforded under Article 10.

The Panel further found that the Respondent's conduct was unacceptable and that, as such, it was satisfied that a finding of breach, and subsequent application of a sanction, was justified in the circumstances and would not amount to a contravention of Article 10.

The Panel concluded, therefore, that the Respondent had contravened paragraphs 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7 and paragraphs 2 and 20 of Annex C of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

MITIGATION

The Respondent was sent a copy of the decision on breach on 14 September 2020 and was invited to submit any comments he wished to make in respect of mitigation within five working days, before the Panel would then reach a decision on the sanction to be applied.

The Respondent did not provide any comments in respect of mitigation or the sanction to be applied.

SANCTION

The decision of the Hearing Panel is to disqualify the Respondent, Councillor Mack for a period of 17 months, from being, or from being nominated for election as, or from being elected, a councillor, with effect from 1 October 2020.

The decision is made in terms section 19(1)(d) of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000.

Reason for Sanction

In reaching its decision on sanction the Hearing Panel noted that, despite being provided with an opportunity to do so, the Respondent declined to offer any submissions in mitigation.

The Panel emphasised that the requirement for councillors to behave with courtesy and respect is a fundamental requirement of the Code. The Panel noted that a failure to do so has the potential to disrupt effective working relations and, further, can be a threat to reputation of the council and the role of an elected member.

The Panel considered that councillors should be able to undertake a scrutiny role and represent the public and any constituents in a respectful, courteous and appropriate manner, without resorting to personal attacks, being offensive, abusive and / or unduly disruptive. The Panel was of the view that officers, in particular, should be able to work in an environment where they are not subjected to unwarranted and serious public criticisms and accusations. The Panel was particularly concerned that the Respondent had continued to subject senior officers to repeated and unmerited abuse, despite them having agreed to review the housing allocation matter. The Panel was also concerned about the scale and seriousness of the allegations made, particularly in the context of the Respondent having not provided any evidence to support his accusations and the officers having no right of public reply. The Panel was keen to emphasise that councillors have a right to challenge officers and have a key role in scrutinising the service provided by their

local authority. The Panel reiterated, however, that this did not entitle councillors to ignore any response received and evidence provided or to make (and continue to make) unfounded accusations.

The Panel was also concerned about the nature of the Respondent's correspondence with the complainers. The Panel was concerned that he had made extremely serious wholly unfounded allegations against Councillor Devine and had subjected both complainers to offensive and demeaning personal attacks, which went well beyond what might be considered normal or even acceptable in a party-political context and, instead, amounted to harassment. The Panel was of the view that, as politicians, councillors may be expected to tolerate a degree of inappropriate, emotive or even offensive criticism. They should not, however, have to put up with being harassed or being made to feel unsafe. The Panel considered that the Respondent's conduct in this regard was completely unacceptable.

The Panel took fully account of the aggravating and mitigating factors as set out in the Standards Commission's Policy on the Application of Sanctions. It found that all of the following aggravating factors were evident:

- Repeated behaviour over a long period of time.
- Deliberate conduct.
- Previous contraventions by same Respondent.
- No understanding, reflection, insight and/or acceptance of actions.
- Lack of remorse and/or no apology.
- Failure to co-operate with investigation and/or adjudication process.
- Failure to take any opportunity to rectify.
- Continuing with the conduct/behaviour after it being brought to Respondent's attention and/or the complaint being made.

Mitigating factors are ones that may lessen the severity or culpability of the breach. However, the Panel found very few applied, as:

- There was no admission of breach at any stage,
- In respect of the first complaint of LA/R/2257 the conduct was not of limited duration of contravention and, instead, had continued over several months.
- The impact of contravention in LA/R/2257 was not limited, affecting councillors, senior and more junior officers.
- These were not inadvertent or technical breaches, but were knowing and deliberate.
- There was no action taken to rectify and/or apologise at any stage.
- There was no evidence of demonstrating understanding, reflection, insight and/or acceptance of actions.
- Co-operation with investigation and the adjudication process was limited.
- The Respondent had not acted on incorrect advice.
- There was repetition since the first occasion of contravention occurred.

The Panel noted that the Standards Commission had previously suspended the Respondent for breaches of the respect provisions in the Code at Hearings on 17 October 2016 and 23 October 2017, with the latter suspension being for a period of seven months. While the Panel was aware that the previous Hearings had taken place, and the suspensions imposed had expired, before the events in respect of the complaints that were the subject of this Hearing had occurred, it nevertheless considered that it was apparent the Respondent had not learnt from the previous suspensions. In particular, there was no evidence that the Respondent had made any attempt to moderate his behaviour or consider how it could impact others. Rather the Respondent had previously expressed his disdain and disregard for the statutory framework in place to promote and uphold the Councillors' Code of Conduct, despite having signed a Declaration of Office on 5 May 2017 confirming he would abide by the Code.

The Panel determined that the Respondent's behaviour was persistent, deliberate and serious in nature. The Panel considered that the manner in which the Respondent had raised his concerns was completely unacceptable and that amounted to personal attacks on officers and fellow councillors. The Panel considered that, as such, it was likely that the Respondent's behaviour could seriously undermine public confidence in local government and the role of a councillor and could also have a significantly detrimental impact on working relationships within the Council. Given the repeated breaches of the Code's respect provisions conveyed by email to councillors, council officers and the press, the Panel was of the view that simply suspending the Respondent from future Council meetings was insufficient and would not prevent the conduct from recurring. It determined, therefore, that disqualification was necessary and appropriate in the circumstances.

RIGHT OF APPEAL

The Respondent's attention is drawn to his right, under Section 22 of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000, to appeal the decision.

Date: 28 September 2020



**Professor Kevin Dunion
Chair of the Hearing Panel**



To: COUNCIL

On: 17 December 2020

Report by: Lead Officer – Michael Moran

Heading: Audit, Risk & Scrutiny Board Review on Conversion of Grassed Areas to Parking

1. Summary

- 1.1 Over a period of months and as part of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board's 2018/19 annual programme, reports have been presented to the Board by the Lead Reviewer on the subject of conversion of grassed areas to open spaces.
 - 1.2 Research information in relation to the topic was reviewed with council officers providing information on the relevant services they are responsible for delivering. This was then presented to the Board.
 - 1.3 This report describes the purpose and scope of the review, it includes summaries of the information reported to each Board meeting and concludes with the key findings, conclusions and proposed recommendations.
 - 1.4 The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board agreed the final report at its meeting of 23 November 2020.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Council is asked to:
note the findings and recommendations.

3. Background

- 3.1 There are many small areas of grassed and / or planted areas within our residential estates. The majority of which are maintained, on behalf of the Council, by Environment and Infrastructure (Operations and Infrastructure).
- 3.2 There are also suggestions of increasing pressures around available parking spaces within our residential estates.
- 3.3 This review will consider whether there is a need to, and whether it would be possible to, convert some of these maintained small areas to create additional parking space and thereby relieve some of the parking pressures.

4. Purpose of the Review

- 4.1 Report 01 was presented to the 4 November 2019 meeting of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board, which agreed the key purpose and scope of the review was to:
 - (1) Set out the Council's current arrangements for maintaining and / or repurposing open spaces across Renfrewshire;
 - (2) Review available evidence to measure and identify the scale of the parking problem, linked to open spaces, within specific areas and across Renfrewshire;
 - (3) Identify benefits or challenges regards the repurposing of open spaces within residential areas; and
 - (4) Provide recommendations for consideration of the Board.

5. Key Findings

- 5.1 Progress reports were presented to the Board and paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 provide a resume of the main points presented on each occasion.
- 5.2 Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board – Report 02 – 16/03/20
 - 5.2.1 The council currently has significant areas of open space across Renfrewshire with ownership, split between Environment and Infrastructure (E&I) and Communities, Housing and Planning Services (CHP).

Each open space tends to be identified as being under the ownership of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) or of the General Services Account.
 - 5.2.2 There are opportunities currently available for an individual(s) to request to repurpose an area of open space. This will involve an application being made to the Council's Asset Management Team to purchase the open space.

There are, on average, no more than 10 applications each year to repurpose an area of open space, with very few requesting conversion to create parking facilities.

- 5.2.3 A small number of requests to repurpose open spaces have previously been made by Community Groups. However, these have tended to be to propose aesthetic changes to the open area e.g. planting of flower beds, rather than conversion of the space to create parking spaces.

Such requests tend to be dealt with through a leasing arrangement, rather than a purchase request.

- 5.2.4 Elected members can also make requests for repurposing of open spaces, as this would be viewed as a local ward issue. Such requests are considered by the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board.

Officers from Environment and Infrastructure would undertake a formal consultation process and traffic monitoring surveys within the affected area, so as to support Board members to take informed decisions.

- 5.2.5 If a community group felt they could improve underused or neglected green space within their area and had a project which could potentially strengthen the character, identity and heritage of their community they can make a funding request to do so, to the Council's Green Spaces, Parks, Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund.

This fund provides investment where the community can demonstrate a sustainable plan to improve and maintain the condition and use of a green space or community asset.

Whilst additional parking spaces could potentially be an element of such a request, it is unlikely that it would be its' core purpose.

- 5.3 Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board – Report 03 – 24/08/20

- 5.3.1 The lead officer was unable to identify a centralised, formal method of systematically recording specific enquiries / complaints regards parking issues and linked requests to convert open spaces to create additional parking areas.

- 5.3.2 CHP and E&I colleagues confirmed that there have been a low number of enquiries / complaints over the past few years. Such enquiries / complaints tend to come from individuals rather than groups.

Further, CHP colleagues noted that for many of the enquiries they had received the open space in question was maintained through the Housing

Revenues Account (HRA). However, many of the residential properties adjacent to the open space identified were now owner occupied.

Therefore, any conversion would not seem to directly benefit those tenants who were contributing to the HRA.

- 5.3.2. The main benefits derived from the conversion of open space to parking would be the creation of additional and potentially safer off-street parking spaces for those local residents who have a vehicle.

There would also be a reduction in ongoing open space annual maintenance costs. However, as the size of each open space varies it is difficult to quantify such savings in a meaningful way, without firstly identifying a specific area(s).

- 5.3.3 The two main challenges to consider for conversion of open spaces to parking would be around Climate and Cost.

- 5.3.4 On 27 June 2019, full Council approved two motions relating to the declaration of a climate emergency in Renfrewshire.

Council, through the cross-party Climate Emergency Working Group, has agreed to work to ensure Renfrewshire was carbon neutral by 2030. Being carbon neutral means that organisations or places reduce the carbon that they emit to the lowest possible level, whilst offsetting or mitigating against the impact of these emissions.

- 5.3.5 A report which noted a request to convert an open space to create a parking area was considered by the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board on 22 January 2020.

Within the report it was noted that there can be a challenge in properly estimating the total costs required.

The report noted that general repurposing costs could be estimated.

However, there was a need to relocate utilities with costs ranging between £10,000 and £100,000 to do so. It was noted the exact cost could only be known following excavation works.

The need to relocate utilities is often required for such works given the close proximity of residential and/or business premises to the open space.

The Board, on this occasion, decided against the request to repurpose noting the uncertainty over cost and the inconsistency with Council position regards climate change.

6. **Conclusions**

- 6.1 The following conclusions can be drawn from this review:

(1) There are various processes in place which allow for individuals / organisations to request to convert or repurpose an open space, including for the purposes of creating additional parking spaces, if required.

(2) There was no evidence to suggest that these processes are ineffective or fail to meet the needs of applicants.

(3) The small number of enquiries / complaints received requesting to convert open spaces to parking would indicate that the scale of the problem is not significant.

(4) However, the lead officer was unable to identify a centralised, formal method of systematically recording specific enquiries / complaints regards parking issues and linked requests to convert open spaces to create additional parking areas.

Therefore, there is the potential that some enquiries / complaints could be inappropriately recorded and therefore the scale of the issue may be greater than is originally evident.

(5) Benefits could be realised in converting open spaces to create more parking spaces, in particular the opportunity to potentially create safer off-street parking in some areas.

(6) Clear financial challenges were identified. In particular, the often hidden costs to relocate utilities, which can be substantial, and cannot be properly costed until excavation works are completed.

(7) The most significant challenge would be the potential that any increase in conversion of open spaces to parking may undermine the Council's declaration of a climate emergency on 27 June 2019.

7. Key Recommendations

(1) The current processes which allow for individuals / organisations to request conversion of an open space, including for the purposes of creating additional parking spaces, remain in place;

(2) A specific category related to enquiries / complaints linked to conversion of open spaces to parking be created on the Council's Mail Tracking System.

This would create a more robust centralised, formal method of systematically recording such enquiries / complaints.

It would also allow more detailed reporting information on the scale of the issue to be collected and, if shared across the services involved, would improve information sharing on an ongoing basis.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** –

A decision to convert grassed areas would lead to additional expenditure for the Council, in particular for the Housing Revenue Account.

2. **HR & Organisational Development** – Not applicable

3. **Community/Council Planning** – None

4. **Legal** - None

5. **Property/Assets** - None

6. **Information Technology** – None

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. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** – None

9. **Procurement** – None

10. **Risk** – None

11. **Privacy Impact** – None

12. **Cosla Implications** – None

13. **Climate Implications** –

Council decision of 29 June 2019 declaring a climate emergency would have to be considered for this Review.

List of Background Papers

- a) Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board Annual Programme Approval 27/08/18
- b) Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board Conversion of Grassed Areas to Parking Report 01 04/11/19
- c) Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board Conversion of Grassed Areas to Parking Report 02 16/03/20
- d) Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board Conversion of Grassed Areas to Parking Report 03 24/08/20

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Finance and Resources for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Michael Moran, Assistant Economic Development Manager, 0141 618 7269

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