

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL**24 June 2020****Report by Chief Executive****COVID-19 ACTIONS - UPDATE****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To provide Elected Members with an update on further actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That the Council note the report

BACKGROUND

3. At its meeting on 21 May 2020 the Emergencies Committee considered a [report](#) providing comprehensive information on the work that had been undertaken by the Council and partners over the preceding 2 months in response to COVID-19 pandemic.

4. This report provides an update on the earlier report and provides information on any subsequent additional actions that have been taken since the earlier report was considered.

REPORT

5. On the 28th of May Scotland moved from Lockdown to Phase 1 of the recovery programme. This is the first of 4 phases which will gradually see life return to normal although the potential for a return to lockdown due to a resurgence of the virus is always a possibility. This means that the work of the council is now a mix of response to the virus and the recovery of services in line with Scottish Government guidance.

6. Departmental specific updates are provided first followed by updates in respect of the cross-cutting CRMT Sub-Groups. Only those departments and sub-groups where there has been a change to the level of service provided as compared to the previous report are included below.

Health and Social Care Partnership

7. The HSCP has been at the front line in the response to the coronavirus outbreak, supporting our most vulnerable residents at home and in residential settings. Over the last few weeks the HSCP has commenced work on Recovery Planning, whilst at the same time providing front line services in response to the changing requirements of the outbreak situation. All of our accommodation is currently being reviewed as this will form the backbone of much of our recovery planning. This work includes our local GP Practices.

Supporting care homes

8. In line with HSCPs across Glasgow, we have introduced a daily safety huddle in which the Chief Officer supported by senior nursing, commissioning, and locality social work and

testing administration review the daily information received about care homes. Each Wednesday the daily group is joined by public health and care inspectorate. The safety huddle analyses information and uses this to offer professional support and guidance to each care home where required. Each care home is categorised red, amber or green based on risk linked to staffing, quality of care, testing, infection control measures, COVID19 cases and deaths.

9. Care home liaison nursing and commissioning staff have undertaken enhanced assurance and support visits to any care establishments classified as amber (in need of support) and are offering visits to other homes classified as green (no issues identified). These visits follow a template developed across all partnerships in the Greater Glasgow area, which offers guidance to support discussions between HSCPs and care homes in enabling delivery of person-led care during this challenging time. This is used to present an indication of how the care home is performing and forms the basis of any support plan required. The feedback from these visits has been positive with homes benefitting from independent assurance that they are implementing guidance correctly and some advice as to how to prepare for safe social distancing visits from relatives and friends. All East Renfrewshire homes are current classified as green.

Testing and Assessment

10. Our care home testing hub has extended its work beyond outbreak testing, to support weekly testing of all care home staff as of week 8 June 2020 and sample surveillance testing in care homes that have not experienced an outbreak. The incidence of COVID-19 in local homes has fallen significantly in recent weeks and we are hopeful that we will shortly reach a COVID-19 free situation. If as a result of self-isolating staff, or other COVID issues, a local care home experiences staffing shortages, HSCP on call staff and managers act as the conduit to the NHSGGC Staff Bank Service who can deploy staff to the home. To date we have not needed to use this facility.

11. The final session of Community Assessment Centre for people concerned about their COVID-19 status was on Friday 5 June 2020. The numbers of people attending the centre had been reducing significantly over the past weeks, and it is final week we had only one attendance each day. Although we have closed our local centre, East Renfrewshire residents continue to have access to COVID-19 assessment. The closest assessment centres are in Linwood and Barr Street in Glasgow and patient transport is available for all those that need it.

12. The closure of the centre releases two wings of our clinical space at Eastwood Health and Care Centre which will support the move to recovery. Planning is underway for a treatment room service and to return our immunisation clinics to our children's wing. The GPs and HSCP nursing staff, who staffed our centre, have returned to clinical duties and volunteer car park wardens to their substantive posts.

PPE for Health and Social Care

13. The HSCP continues to run a local Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) HUB to ensure PPE is provided to frontline services, both within the HSCP and our partner providers. PPE has also been given to personal assistants and unpaid carers who require it. It is anticipated that there will be a requirement for the HSCP to operate this during the next phases of recovery.

Supporting vulnerable children and families

14. The HSCP has continued to support children and their families throughout the crisis. Children's Services moved to a 1 in 3 week work pattern to support social distancing in offices and an emergency duty team system was put in place. All children's services remain agile working for most part and have implemented priority working based on child protection, vulnerability and health needs. Home visiting is continuing to take place across services where this is essential.

15. The children's social work service was maintained throughout the COVID-19 lockdown period with an emergency vulnerability list which included 94 children and young people comprising 79 families. These are the families for whom, in addition to those requiring children protection measures, there are additional vulnerability concerns as a result of the current crisis which necessitates a heightened level of contact.

16. Social workers are maintaining keeping in touch contact with all of their other families, albeit engaging in different ways such as telephone, Zoom and now WhatsApp. Where there is high risk activity the emergency team responds to critical situations. Over the last four weeks there have been over 2000 contacts made with children and their families.

17. Following concerns about the low uptake of places in the Education Hubs, there was a renewed and concerted effort to encourage families to use the places. As a result, there has been a significant improvement of children and young people classed as vulnerable attending the Education Hubs. This has risen from an average of 31 children/young people week beginning 20 April 2020 to an average of 53 for the same days during the week beginning 27 April 2020. For the week 27 April to 1 May 2020 a total of 109 children who would be classed as vulnerable attended the Education Hubs.

18. The pressure on care placements for children and young people remains significant. Action has been taken to maximise what capacity there is remaining within our fostering service and to continue to find creative solutions in relationship to kinship placements. Virtual fostering and kinship panels are taking place on a regular basis to support arrangements. However, as additional demand has placed the service at capacity, the Chief Social Work Officer linked with the Care Inspectorate with regards to the need for emergency provision. An abridged process is being taken forward with a view to the recruitment of existing East Renfrewshire registered employees (e.g. children's social workers, teachers, nurses) to provide care if internal and external placements cease to be available.

Supporting families with children with complex needs

19. Within the community, families with children with complex needs/life limiting conditions have experienced an overall reduction in support as a result of services reducing or ceasing. Social work and education services continue to co-ordinate and deploy support, however families are reluctant to have children attend Education Hubs due to health fears.

20. Inclusive Support programmes have not been able to run as normal for children with additional needs. Instead, the team have been supporting the Education Hubs for children and young people with complex support needs. Sensory and activity bags have also been provided for young people and their families to support those isolating at home with children requiring high levels of structure and routine. In addition the team has supported adult supported living arrangements.

21. Children's community health services moved to priority provision in the face of agile working and reduced resource. Our school nursing resource and a significant proportion of our health visiting resource was redeployed to support the East Renfrewshire COVID-19 Assessment Centre.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Services for Children and Young People

22. During the first three weeks of the COVID-19 lockdown, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health service experienced an 80% increase in duty calls and higher levels of emergency face to face appointments due to high anxiety levels, in particular from families with young people with eating disorders. There has been an increase of tension within vulnerable family households with teenagers who find it difficult to be confined together with parents/family. As a result of changes in routines and structure, there have been heightened concerns in relation to children and young people diagnosed with Obsessional Compulsive Disorder and Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

23. The Tier 2 Family Wellbeing Service is continuing to receive referrals during this period from GPs, although at a lower rate than previously. GPs are describing those families coming to them for help now as experiencing increased anxiety and exacerbated feelings of distress due to lockdown. The team have flagged recent themes of young people's distress being expressed as thoughts of self-harm. It is possible that children, young people and families are having to internalise their feelings of distress as they do not have the usual external outlets due to lockdown.

24. To date the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on children's services staffing has been managed, although we are now seeing an exponential rise and risk for children as we move out of lockdown.

Education Department

25. Senior leaders and facilities management staff began to return to individual schools and early years settings from Monday 1 June to begin preparations for the wider return of some staff and pupils, as set out in the department's Local Delivery Phasing Plan. On Friday 5 June, the 6 geographical hub schools closed, with the attending pupils returning to their own local schools from Monday 8 June. In addition, small numbers of staff returned to schools, both to support the small numbers of attending pupils and to begin planning for a wider return of pupils from August. A key focus of the reopening of local schools has been in ensuring an increased number of vulnerable pupils are re-engaged in learning. In the initial period since reopening, schools have seen a significant increase in the number of vulnerable young people beginning to return to school.

26. In addition, from Monday 15 June, additional pupils will begin to return to school for transition activities, as outlined in the Local Delivery Phasing Plan and the wider Scottish Government guidance. Opportunities for pre-school children and current P7 pupils will be made available to support their transition in to P1 and S1 respectively. Schools will be working within their clusters to plan and deliver these transition activities. Head Teachers will also have opportunities to offer further support to pupils who may benefit from enhanced transition back in to school. For example, teaching staff may wish to invite children with additional support needs (ASN) or other small groups back to school for short sessions in June.

27. As reflected in the Local Delivery Phasing Plan, schools and early years settings are currently developing their own bespoke recovery plans. From August, pupils will return to school on a part time basis with a blended model of in school and out of school learning. Through subsequent phases of the recovery plan, schools will look to incrementally increase the time pupils spend in school as enabled by national guidance. Schools will be working closely with staff, pupils and parents to consult on these plans in the weeks ahead, with all schools issuing their plans in the week beginning 22 June.

28. In light of the Scottish Government's decision to postpone the statutory duty to provide 1140 hours of early learning and childcare to all eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds, senior officers considered all viable options for families. The Director of Education, after consultation with the Emergencies Committee, took the decision to progress with the offer of 1140 hours for all eligible families. All families received an allocation of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare from August. This offer, although based on 1140 hours, recognised that whilst social distancing remains children and families will not be able to access this full amount given the impact of COVID-19 on nursery attendance patterns.

29. An [Education Committee](#) was held on 11 June 2020 when the department's Local Delivery Phasing Plan was discussed along with other matters relating to recovery such as arrangements this year for SQA certificated courses; the allocation of ELC places, as outlined above; and, refunding parents for school trips which will now not take place.

Culture and Leisure Trust

30. In response to the global Covid-19 pandemic, and government advice regarding attendance at public leisure and culture facilities, ERCL closed all of its buildings to the public and suspended its programmes on 18th March. Customer payments were suspended and/or refunded from that point, and the only culture and leisure services that continued were those delivered online, free of charge. ERCL staff stepped forward as volunteers to support critical services elsewhere in the authority, especially those delivered by Health and Social Care; as part of the Council's Crisis Response, including the Humanitarian Aid programme; or in support of continuing education services for the children of key workers throughout the lockdown. This included a free-of-charge holiday programme over the Spring holidays.

31. From the 19th March staff began to be placed on furlough under the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, with ERCL continuing to pay 100% of their full pay and benefits. This included casual and temporary staff, so as to retain staffing complements for the recovery phase. (To date 90% of roles have been furloughed including half of the Trust management team.)

32. Planning for recovery and relaunch of culture and leisure services, and for the delivery of a holiday programme to support vulnerable children and the children of key workers throughout the summer break is well underway. Governance activities, including Board and Sub-Committees, have continued throughout this period via virtual meetings.

Environment Department

Neighbourhood Services

33. In a continuation of the restoration process outlined in the previous paper, on 18 June there will be a reinstatement of residual collections of blue bins (Paper and Card). This has been communicated to the public and has been well received.

34. On 1 June, our Barrhead Household Waste & Recycling Centre (HWRC) was reopened in line with COSLA announcements, ensuring a consistent position across Scottish Local Authorities. The Greenhags HWRC reopened on 6 June. Barrhead is open weekdays, with Greenhags open at weekends. Both sites have been adapted to ensure social distancing, for the protection of our staff and the public. Ground maintenance is ongoing with slightly reduced frequencies.

35. In anticipation of the Scottish Government's progression to Phase 2 of the Recovery Route Map and the associated public expectations Neighbourhood Services are carrying out preparatory work. This includes preparing parks, with the likely reopening of play park facilities.

Environmental Health

36. Environmental Health Officers are supporting Test and Protect working, providing their expertise on outbreak control and associated contact tracing work. Staff underwent a period of NHS training and have accessed to shared information portals. A dedicated contact avenue has been established within the Council for this work with our staff playing a key role in minimising the spread of the virus.

37. Foods Standards Scotland's Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Group has invited East Renfrewshire Council to Chair a short life Local Authority Recovery Plan Working Group. The overall aim of this group is to ensure that there is a consistent approach across Scotland to taking forward the Intervention Code of Practice; Food Law Rating Scheme (FLRS).

Environmental Health and Trading Standards

38. Trading Standards and Environmental Health Officers have continued to proactively carry out the duties required of them under the Coronavirus Act 2020 regulations in relation to the operation of businesses and liaise with Police Scotland on any issues arising.

Bikeability Team

39. The Bikeability team has been delivering Bikeability Level 1 sessions at the hub primary schools and the feedback is that this has been a huge success. With the closure of the hub schools other primary schools wish to take part and the sessions will continue in any school that wishes to participate.

Housing

40. The process of letting properties has been re-started, having been suspended during the initial period of lockdown. Arrangements are in place to advertise available properties from week beginning 15 June and facilitate the sign up and move of applicants who have been waiting to do so. The Mixed Tenure Squad are once again picking up bulk refuse and cutting grass. Housing Officers will return to walking their estates / patches from week beginning 15 June.

Roads & Transport

41. Consultation with Elected Members and local businesses is underway for Phase 1 of the Covid 19 Transport response (following £100K successful bid to Sustrans being used to extend pavements in Town centres for social distancing and queuing and widening pavements in other areas to help walking and cycling and support local businesses).

42. From the week commencing 15 June the Roads Contracting Unit will have additional operatives and will be carrying out pothole and major patching repairs to catch up with outstanding non-emergency Cat 1 repairs as well as emergency repairs. Also, there will be a move towards restoration of gully cleaning and ironwork repairs and setting up of COVID traffic management for Spaces for People works (see above).

43. Risk assessments and Safe Systems of Work have been reviewed and amended to take account of COVID measures and measures have also been put in place at our part of the depot to facilitate return to work – this will include staggered lunch breaks, social distancing markers, limited use of mess facilities etc.

Planning and Building Standards

44. As a result of updated Scottish Government guidance, external site inspections for both planning applications and building warrants have commenced. Protocols are being developed to enable internal site inspections, required for completion certificates, to take place by the way of video documentation or a live video inspection.

City Deal

45. City Deal projects on-site (Balgraystone road) will begin to start construction again on a phased and controlled basis, pending further Scottish Government guidance in relation to Phase 2 of their Route Map to recovery.

Economic Development

46. Within Economic Development staff are all working remotely and have been re-engaging with clients and local businesses to support them through this crisis. Additionally, the team have started to develop an East Renfrewshire Economic Recovery Plan. This will seek to identify ways to support the local economy and minimise as much as possible the damage caused by Coronavirus to businesses.

47. Economic Development and Procurement have been working with a view to promoting the Supplier Development Programme for local businesses.

Corporate Health & Safety Unit and Property & Technical Services

48. As Council buildings seek to reopen, the work of the Corporate Health & Safety Unit and Property & Technical Services is key in ensuring that buildings are safely operational. This will include conducting comprehensive risk assessments and identifying safe ways of working, as well as ensuring that properties meet the required legislative standards. An example of this to date, is evidenced in the significant working with Education in reopening schools on 8 June.

Corporate and Community Services Department

Workforce

49. As the council starts to move through the recovery phases there is ongoing consultation with the Trade Unions and guidance notes continue to be developed for employee and manager use. Employees should continue to work from home where they can. This message is being reinforced as we undertake appropriate discussions and workforce planning measures to prepare for the return to the workplace for some employees at the appropriate time. The wellbeing of our employees and the different ways they are having to work during this time also continues to be supported.

50. The absence rate as a result of COVID-19 including all those employees reporting sick, those isolating, and those employees in the shielding/higher risk groups who are unable to work from home has improved and as at 8 June was sitting at 4.6%. This is an improvement from the previously reported figure of 9.5%. A further 8% of employees who are working from home are either experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or in the shielding and higher risk categories. These figures do not account for any employee who has been sent home due to building closures, any employee with caring responsibilities due to COVID-19 or any other employee with the inability to be able to work from home. These figures also do not include absence for any other reason other than COVID-19.

Chief Executive's Department

Legal Services

51. All solicitors are working from home with significant workload, both in terms of maintaining consistent support to the general business of client services but also handling increased requests for advice on the legal aspects of covid and on regularly changing guidance and legislation. Communication with client departments and external agencies is being maintained through technical solutions including on line meetings and hearings and representation of the Council in legal actions has been undertaken in accordance with the new processes set up by the courts to comply with government guidance. Changes to legislation and guidance have been collated by legal staff for corporate use to ensure that advice on practice and legislation is relevant and current. Licensing matters are being addressed via existing delegations.

Procurement, Accountancy and Internal Audit

52. Procurement and Accountancy teams are continuing to work well from home. Internal audit has been more challenging as the team need access to files and buildings. The Audit plan will be prioritised and amended plan submitted to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee

CRMT Sub-Groups

Additional Deaths

53. The Additional Deaths Sub-Group was instigated to support planning and preparation on the Councils response should the numbers of deaths from COVID-19 exceed capacity within the Greater Glasgow & Clyde (GG&C) Health Board area. Working in partnership with all of the Councils that sit within the GG&C area we were a key contributor to the establishment of a storage facility in Hillington. Additionally, we took steps to identify suitable local properties that could have been used as a storage facility should the need arise. As it became clear that this need was no longer likely the facility was stood-down. The additional deaths sub-group was ceased in April.

Critical Services

54. The Critical Services sub-group continues to be the method of escalation and prioritisation for those services critical to the COVID-19 response. Critical services are those that are classed as life and limb or statutory services or services which support the delivery of those services. Having a single focal point for requests for a range of requirements including PPE, ICT equipment and drivers and vehicles has enabled the critical services to get priority access to those things that have allowed them to respond rapidly and effectively through the crisis. This sub-group remains active for those services still in response mode, and ready to step up activity should a further outbreak or additional incident occur.

PPE

55. Sourcing of PPE continues to be challenging with global shortages of certain items but as we transition into phase 1 of recovery we have delivered essential PPE such as masks, gloves, aprons, signs, marking tapes, anti-bacterial wipes and sanitiser stations to support the reopening of schools, childcare establishments and other essential public services. We have projected monthly demand and are working with health and safety alongside key suppliers to ensure supply for the Council is secured and best value evidenced.

Staff Volunteering

56. The Staff Volunteering Scheme has continued to ensure that critical services are delivered on time and that they provide the level of service required during this time. Employees have successfully supported opportunities for driving roles, telecare workers, call handlers, homecare and meet and greet. This support has been invaluable for services impacted by staff shortages through absence or who required additional staff to support increased workload.

Humanitarian Assistance and Shielding

Shielding

57. The Scottish Government announced on 8 June that shielding, and the associated support, will be extended until at least 31 July 2020. The restriction on outdoor exercise for shielders is being lifted from 18 June, as long as the shielder does not live in a residential care or nursing home and if the COVID-19 infection rates are low enough. Shielders will however

be advised not to return to work and not to visit inside spaces such as shops and chemists at this point. The Scottish Government has committed to sending letters before the end of July outlining the next steps for shielding. In the meantime, the numbers of shielding residents continue to grow each week and we make proactive contact with each individual. The Community Warden team have also been assisting with home visits to those we have been unable to reach via telephone or by letter. At point of writing, there are 2703 shielders in East Renfrewshire.

Humanitarian Hub

58. Our Humanitarian Food Hub has now moved from Barrhead High School to Dunterlie Community Centre. The hub is targeting support to those who have financial and access challenges (i.e. cannot leave the house to attend local food banks) and no family or friends who can provide support. The Money Advice and Rights Team are currently conducting a review of those receiving support from the hub to ensure that financial assessments have been conducted wherever required and to ascertain ongoing needs for food provision. The Scottish Government announced on 16 June that £15M of funding will be made available for ongoing food support to those experiencing financial or access challenges as a result of COVID-19 or through isolation as part of Test & Protect. This will allow the Council to continue provision from the Humanitarian Hub for the next few months, whilst also working in partnership with the third sector to build community capacity in this area to enable longer-term future needs to be met. The Community Safety team will be commencing food hub deliveries to households once the Housing Repairs drivers have returned to day-to-day business later in June.

Connecting Scotland

59. The Council is working closely with SCVO to deploy ipads and Chromebooks, with a year's worth of connectivity, to those on low incomes who are at greater risk of isolation due to the pandemic. Tranche 1 covers shielding individuals and those in 'Group 2' with the high risk conditions – the council has access to 140 devices in the first tranche of this nationally funded scheme and these are now being deployed to eligible residents. A further phase is also commencing, co-ordinated by the Education Department, to target devices and connectivity towards vulnerable pupils for August.

Recovery Group

60. The Recovery Sub Group is now established in its meeting cycle, providing a shared understanding of local links to national and regional work; as well as seeking to ensure a consistent approach. Utilising business continuity processes, Departments are establishing their priorities for service restoration, highlighting areas where support and interventions are required in this process. Priorities and restoration will be linked to Phases within the Scottish Government Route Map as best possible.

CONCLUSIONS

61. The report provides details of the additional activities that have been undertaken since the previous report. While some of these relate to further action in respect of ongoing service provision it is important to note that some relate to new duties and responsibilities that the Council has taken on. How long the Council will need to continue to deliver these services and functions is not clear and will have ongoing financial implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS/...

RECOMMENDATIONS

62. That the Council note the report.

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