

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL**28 October 2020****Report by Chief Executive****COVID-19 RECOVERY ACTIONS - UPDATE****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To provide Elected Members with a further update on recovery work taking place across the Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That the Council note the report

BACKGROUND

3. As Members are aware, the Scottish Government has created a route map for moving through and out of the COVID-19 crisis. The route map sets out a 4 phase approach for recovery with each phase introducing a gradual relaxation of restrictions and increase in permitted activities. The country is currently in Phase 3.

4. Members will recall that at the meeting of the Council on 24 June a report was presented providing an update to the report first considered the Emergencies Committee on 21 May. The report considered by the committee in May provided 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, whilst the June report provided an update on the earlier report as well as information on any subsequent additional actions that had been taken since the earlier report was considered.

REPORT

5. The purpose of this report is to provide a further update to Members on the further response and recovery work being carried out across the Council.

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. This report should be read in the context of the two fuller update reports presented to the [Emergencies Committee in May](#) and the [Council in June](#).

Health and Social Care Partnership

7. The Integration Joint Board has been receiving regular updates on the HSCP's recovery and response. Initial reports setting out the HSCP's [Response to COVID 19](#) and its [COVID-19 Recovery Plan](#) were considered by the Integration Joint Board at its meeting on 24 June. Further recovery updates were subsequently considered by the Board at its meetings on [12 August](#) and [23 September](#). The following paragraphs summarise further response and recovery activity.

Flu vaccination programme

8. East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) has commenced its biggest flu vaccination programme to date, in a bid to protect older and vulnerable residents this winter. Four community vaccination clinics have been set up at Eastwood Health and Care Centre, Barrhead Health and Care Centre, The Avenue shopping centre in Newton Mearns and Glen Community Hall in Neilston. Over 2,500 vaccinations have been delivered since 28th September and the HSCP is planning to administer the vaccination to over 18,000 people at these clinics in the coming weeks.

9. The clinics are run on an appointment only basis with strict social distancing and infection control procedures in place. Letters have started to go out and over the next 8 to 10 weeks those aged 65 and over will be prioritised. Local GPs are vaccinating vulnerable residents under 65. Programmes are in place for children aged 6 months to 2 years with a health condition that puts them at risk of flu, to all pre-school children aged 2 to 5 and to all primary school age children. Primary school children will get their vaccine at school and will be sent home with a letter and permission slip. Other eligible groups will receive their appointment letters toward the end of this initial 8 to 10 week period.

10. The majority of HSCP services have continued to be delivered throughout the period of the pandemic with adapted approaches. Services have modified service delivery to deal with restrictions in face to face contact and group work, typically adopting greater use of digital communication. During the period of the pandemic there has been reduced delivery of preventative activity as well as some restrictions on reviews and assessment work.

Brief overview Adult Health and Social Care Localities

11. **Social work locality teams** are undertaking assessments/reviews as normal. Home visits are being conducted when required, and for the more vulnerable clients.

12. Our **Community Rehabilitation and Rapid Access** service has now resumed a full service of urgent and routine assessments, equipment provision and ongoing rehabilitation interventions being undertaken. The service continues to have additional responsibilities for respiratory rehabilitation and face mask fitting.

13. All aspects of our hospital discharge service (**Hospital to Home**) are ongoing but with limited face-to-face contact with individuals and carers. The team is experiencing high volumes of referrals.

14. Essential **Community Nursing** services have been maintained throughout pandemic in keeping with national and local NHS GGC guidance. Restricted services include diabetes nursing community clinics.

15. **Day services** – All building based support has ceased. There has been some learning disability outreach on limited basis. The service is reviewing service users with view to gradually introducing reshaped day supports on a priority basis.

Brief Overview Recovery and Intensive Services

16. Our **Care at Home** services continue to be provided to vulnerable residents, operating from a single base. **Telecare** is fully operational at Thornliebank Depot base. Home visits for complex telecare assessments have been re-established (where assessed as safe to do so). Monthly wellness/courtesy calls with service users/ families have now been embedded into 'business as usual' processes

17. Provision at **Bonnyton House Care Home** continues with an increase in vacancies due to Covid-19. Building refurbishment has been completed and Bonnyton staff and residents returned on Thursday 15 October.

18. Providing support to the **independent care home sector** has been the primary focus of our Commissioning Team during the pandemic. Our daily safety huddle analyses information from care homes across East Renfrewshire and uses this to offer support and guidance to each care home. Assurance and support visits from nursing, social work and infection control staff and are carried out in individual homes as required.

19. Adult mental health services are engaging with people and their families via telephone / virtual, with face to face where specifically required. Adults with Incapacity (AWI) work continues (case conferences, welfare reports etc) using virtual meetings. Some restrictions remain on Court sessions although this is outwith the control of the HSCP.

20. All referrals to the **Community Addictions Team** are being allocated and routine referral assessments (alcohol and drugs) are taking place. Ongoing treatment and care is being delivered. Home visits are taking place for high risk individuals/vulnerable adults.

Brief Overview Public Protection and Children's Services

21. The majority of **Children's Social Work** services have been continuing during the pandemic including: home visiting; assessments; child protection; corporate parenting activity; regulated care services; fostering/adoption/kinship care. The **Children and Families Inclusive Support Team** has been reintroducing community and weekend supports.

22. **Children and Families Nursing** service is delivering required visits in line with national and local NHSGGC guidance. Childhood immunisation programmes are continuing. Psychology of Parenting Project (PoPP), parenting interventions for high risk families and breast feeding support continue through blended approaches.

23. **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** activity continues with young people seen via Attend Anywhere.

24. **Speech and Language Therapy (SLT)** is delivering clinics using Attend Anywhere. Telephone and video consultations undertaken for SLT and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) by clinicians (where clinically possible).

25. For our **Criminal Justice** service, client supervision continues although limited to monitoring. Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) level 1 meetings are taking place with police (teleconference). The service is delivering MAPPA audits, client quarterly

Education Department

26. All schools and nurseries across East Renfrewshire reopened to all pupils and staff in August and have been operating as close to normal as possible, in line with the guidance provided by the Scottish Government. Social distancing, in addition to the use of face coverings in communal areas in secondary schools in particular, is a key priority for all schools in seeking to reduce the risk of any outbreaks. Detailed bespoke building risk assessments were undertaken by Corporate Health and Safety with further risk assessments for staff (where necessary individual to meet particular needs), pupils and education provision undertaken by individual head teachers with support from the department's health and safety team. These all remain under review and continue to be updated to reflect any changes in national guidance.

27. Schools have been prioritising efforts to address the learning loss experienced by children and young people over the months of the closure, with a specific 'recovery curriculum' being put in place with a focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Establishments are using a range of strategies including study during the October break, supported study classes and a Saturday School Programme run in conjunction with East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure. The Council has received an additional £1.736m from the Scottish Government to increase the numbers of teaching and support staff across our schools. Recruitment for these positions is ongoing and will be crucial in supporting the efforts to address learning loss in the months ahead. Support continues to be made available from Educational Psychologists to help pupils and staff returning to work and school after several months.

28. Schools have been making greater use of the digital learning opportunities available in recent months and are well prepared to utilise these further when required. There is a very significant use of GLOW across all of our schools (with some of the highest usage figures in Scotland) and schools are continuing to make good use of other digital tools such as Google Classroom. Feedback from children and young people has been very positive with clear support for the continuation of digital learning opportunities. In addition, through the funding received from the Connecting Scotland fund, a total of 590 additional Chromebooks have so far been deployed to schools with an additional 163 Chromebooks and 20 iPads currently being bid for. This will enhance the existing resources available for pupils to access digital opportunities. The department is also supporting schools with greater opportunities for parental engagement online. For example, parent council meetings have been continuing through online video conferencing with very high rates of participation and some schools are seeking to trial online parent engagement sessions to replace physical appointments.

29. A key element of the safe reopening of schools and nurseries has been the implementation of enhanced cleaning regimes and the availability of additional cleaning materials for use by staff and pupils themselves. Additional day cleaning provision has been put in place across all schools and nurseries with a particular focus on 'touch points' to reduce transmission risks. Pupils and staff have also been provided with wipes and cleaning products to enable them to wipe down desks and workstations when using them to further reduce any risks of catching COVID from shared spaces and offer additional reassurance. The Scottish Government have provided £426,000 of funding thus far with additional resources to be made available, to be allocated on evidenced spend.

30. The department's business support services, similar to other council services, are continuing to operate albeit remotely, with staff working from home in most cases. Over recent months, the department has introduced a number of digital solutions to improve customer engagement and continues to provide a high quality level of service, despite the challenging circumstances. For example, applications for key services are now completed online and the department is continuing to prioritise the further roll out of digital solutions, such as issuing pupil reports through the recently launched SEEMIS ParentPortal.

Future Planning

31. All schools and nurseries across the authority have detailed contingency plans which have been developed from the original planning for blended learning undertaken at the end of the last school session. These plans remain under constant review and closely adhere to the national guidance from both the Scottish Government and Education Scotland. Given the uncertainty of the months ahead, there is a recognition of the need for a flexible approach in our planning to ensure that we are able to respond quickly to meet the needs of our learners.

32. Given the increasing number of positive cases across our schools and the number of staff and pupils having to self-isolate, schools have already been providing home learning to children and young people, ensuring continuing access to education in spite of the current

circumstances. We have been working on the development of a 'Video Vault' with recordings of lessons for pupils to access and collaborating with the West Partnership contributing to the West Online School. These approaches will provide schools and learners with access to a wider range of digital materials designed to enhance learning in and out of school. We are also working alongside our schools to explore the opportunities for live lessons using digital technology. This will become increasingly important should the number of cases continue to rise across our schools in the weeks and months ahead.

Culture and Leisure Trust

Recovery to date

General

33. ERCL's recovery has been balanced between taking every advantage of available funding and programmes to minimise losses as agreed with ERC (for example by continuing to furlough staff where possible) and a staged reopening in line with the Scottish Government's Route Map. There has been a significant amount of work undertaken on booking systems and processes during this time and the new ERCL App has been launched and is available in iTunes and Google Playstore.

34. In addition, extensive 2 week staff training exercises together with reorganisation of spaces, equipment, schedules, and cleaning has resulted in exceptionally positive customer feedback.¹ Whilst demand has been good for services, social distancing, enforced reductions on both the occupancy levels and frequency of sessions means recovered services, whilst generally oversubscribed, are operating at around 30% pre-lockdown levels.

35. At present services are pre-booked only in line with government guidance, and limited to members due to restricted capacity. This is constantly being reviewed.

Library & Information Services

36. The Summer Reading Challenge took place during lockdown, despite the vast majority of staff being furloughed. Given many other authorities did not furlough library staff, the results have been extremely positive with our service achieving the 4th best in Scotland in terms of number of registered participants and 5th best in Scotland in terms of number of completers. This is an exceptional result and credit to hard work of just a few team members, working in partnership with Education. Library Services recommenced with the introduction of a Click-and-Collect Service on the 15th July at Giffnock and 22nd July at Mearns. From 21 September Barrhead Foundry Library, Busby, Eaglesham, Neilston and Thornliebank opened to the public with reduced capacity. Giffnock and Mearns will join them by moving from Click-and-Collect to a fuller service in early October.

Sports, Venues and Physical Activity

37. Eastwood High School began limited outdoor on 20th July, and on the 22nd outdoor fitness classes commenced at Eastwood Leisure Centre and Barrhead. On 7th September indoor Gyms & Fitness Classes recommenced at Barrhead Foundry and Eastwood Park Leisure (for pre-booked sessions only). On 22nd Sept a pilot programme was begun at Maidenhill campus to test outdoor community sports classes in schools with a view to planning the return of the use of the school estate out-of-hours by clubs and groups later in Autumn.

¹ "From assistance with the booking system, the clear guidelines on how the pool operates, the pleasant welcome from the staff at the door, clear rules excellently explained, clean changing facilities, excellent lifeguards all made the experience very pleasurable and having worked for the past 6 months and not been in lockdown I actually feel safer in Eastwood pool than anywhere else I have been in the covid times which is all due to your excellent staff."

38. On 14th September swimming pools at Barrhead Foundry and Eastwood Park Leisure re-opened. This will remain under review and continue to reflect the national guidance.

Communities and Arts

39. Community Halls require detailed work with each hiring group under the guidelines, and this is being worked through on a hall-by-hall basis, with 4 halls currently operating.

40. Eastwood Park Theatre remains closed and is unlikely to reopen this financial year, though ERCL has secured £90,000 under the Performing Arts Venues Relief Fund to bring staff back to work and develop programmes prior to reopening.

Future Stages

41. October will see the October school holiday week (Multi-Activity Holiday Camp Williamwood High School); the re-opening of Neilston Leisure Centre (gym & swimming); the restart of the Swimming Lesson Programme; Saturday Schools in partnership with ERC Education in response to lockdown learning and development impact; and subject to the learning from the pilot programme and the security of the schools, Bookings of outdoor spaces in schools to allow sports club activity to recommence. Arts Classes will recommence in October. Clarkston Library has been successfully refurbished during lockdown and will reopen in November.

Contingency Planning

42. Currently investigating outdoor spaces for location of temporary shelters to continue outdoor activities over winter / should restrictions on indoor activities be reintroduced, and an outdoor events programme during winter and closure of theatre is being developed.

Corporate and Community Services Department

ICT

43. ICT staff focused on supporting key projects across the Council are now largely recovered and supporting the organisation as required. The Service Desk and related functions remain focused on supporting both the response and recovery activities of the Council. This continues to require a balance of priorities and rapid reaction.

44. Work to further enhance stability and performance of the technology infrastructure in preparation for the return of schools in August was completed in advance of the return and has reduced the impact of maintaining a full in-school estate and largely remote working corporate estate.

45. Deployment of Windows 10 laptops has been completed across the majority of the deployed laptops estate, providing staff with the latest technology to support their continued remote working.

Community Safety

46. Community wardens continued supporting the food hub until 30 September, making deliveries to vulnerable residents. Wardens continue delivering essential support items to vulnerable residents whenever required but are now back to regular patrol duties, including parking. Control room operations, including 24/7 Telecare alarm call-handling and CCTV monitoring have continued throughout, operating as normal, whilst the Greater Results in Partnership (GRIP) weekly meeting with Police/Fire/Housing/Social Work etc has continued throughout, and is taking place online.

HR

47. Whilst overall services have been working hard to recover this is against a backdrop of ongoing additional demands to support the covid response and adapting to new ways of working. Some front line services experiencing increased demand as they work to support national initiatives such as flu immunisation and isolation support and managers are workforce planning behind the scenes to support this.

48. The health and wellbeing of our employees is very important and we continue to keep up-to-date with government and Public Health Scotland updates to ensure that the manager and employee guidance reflects the national position and that we communicate these changes to our employees. Regular meetings are held with the Trade Unions to ensure that any concerns raised are discussed and reviewed in a timely manner. Job specific risk assessments are in place for all roles and these continue to be reviewed on a regular basis. The council continues to encourage staff to work from home where possible, with the appropriate equipment and health and safety guidance provided to support employees in doing so. For those staff coming into buildings the numbers are tightly controlled to ensure all social distancing measures are maintained.

49. The number of employees absent as a result of COVID-19 including all those employees reporting sick, those isolating, and unable to work from home has improved and as at 12 October is 55 employees.

50. There has been an increased workload in the recording and monitoring of the COVID statistics, with the HR Case management team supporting. As the number of confirmed coronavirus cases increased in the community the council started to see an increase in the numbers in the workforce and particularly an increase in the numbers of those self-isolating. The Environmental Health team identified that as an employer we were aware of cases and potential contacts ahead of Test and Protect and as a result a process was introduced for schools and employees where managers undertake initial contact tracing until the formal process kicks in. This reduces the risk for our employees and managers are supporting this work.

51. As we move into the winter months the risk of absences increases and teams are working to ensure contingency plans are in place to cope with this alongside potential covid restrictions.

Customer First

52. Registration services are all available via an appointment system and the team have worked to clear the backlog of birth registrations. The level of death registrations continues to be monitored so that we can respond to any increases.

53. Customer contact volume remains high with the team supporting a number of changed processes as services adapt to support customers during this time.

54. As well as supporting the Isolation Support calls MART are supporting clients providing financial advice. During this time there has been increased demand from groups the team don't normally see e.g. self-employed residents, skilled unemployed.

Communications

55. The Communications team have ensured a regular presence on social media to ensure that key messages are communicated to our residents and managed and responded to feedback received. They also provide regular briefings to Elected Members during this time.

Democratic Services

56. Democratic Services staff continue to provide virtual meeting arrangements to enable committee business to be dealt with. Supporting meetings of these nature places additional demands on the service. It is also taking longer to plan and adapt for any events taking place within current circumstances.

Environment DepartmentPrevention Services (Environmental Health and Trading Standards)

Present Situation

57. Environmental Health Officers and Trading Standard Officers have been heavily involved with the pandemic response since early February and continue to spend the vast majority of their time on significant new additional COVID related issues such as advising local businesses on compliance with the Coronavirus Regulations and the regular updates to them. They are also assisting with the national Test and Protect system, mentoring the NHS contact tracers and assisting locally with any clusters or outbreaks. Food safety inspections have been curtailed by Food Safety Scotland for the time being otherwise there would be considerable strain on these services to continue working on COVID related issues. However, there are increasing public health demands on the officers again through public expectation that staff are able to undertake “normal” activities and should be providing services such as pest infestation, fly tipping, waste, drainage and sewerage issues. Given the urgent situation regarding COVID those issues have not taken priority and will be addressed when resources become available.

Forward Planning

58. Constantly changing Scottish Government advice means that priorities in relation to COVID continue to change and/or escalate on an almost weekly basis creating difficulty in any even short term planning.

Neighbourhood Services (Cleansing, Parks, Street Cleaning, Transport and Cemeteries)

Present

59. All major services have now been substantially restored with the exception of Special Uplifts. In addition, Household Waste Recycling Centres continue to work on a restricted basis due mainly to social distancing requirements.

60. It is important to note that these services have been struggling and will continue to struggle with the conditions imposed around social distancing within buildings and vehicles, absence rates through self-isolation and the impact of test and protect, accumulated annual holiday entitlement and increasing customer expectation/demand of “back to normal” service. Income has been substantially affected by loss of special uplifts and football lets.

Forward Planning

61. In view of the significant challenges outlined above and in order to try to protect essential/critical service delivery (mainly bins and winter gritting) a four week shut down of brown bins will be introduced in November / January to allow other collections to be undertaken over the public holiday period, protect crew “bubbles” during that period, and assist with winter maintenance requirements where necessary. Business continuity plans are in

place to protect those priority services and it may be necessary at short notice to suspend less essential services in order to support priority services such as bins and winter maintenance.

Economic Development

Present Situation

62. A comprehensive report was submitted to the Cabinet in August 2020. Until July 2020 the priority for the service was to process the Scottish Government funded business support grant scheme. Following the closure of the scheme the service has been working closely with the business community to support them and also with residents with the provision of bespoke labour market programmes including upscaling and reskilling the workforce and safeguarding apprentices.

63. However, recently the Scottish Government has announced a new business grants scheme commencing around 19 October 2020 which will be delivered by local authorities. As with the previous scheme this will present major staffing challenges to deal efficiently with the expected volume of enquiries and applications (which will take priority over other issues).

Forward Planning

64. A major challenge for the service will be in ensuring that sufficient staff resources are available to deal with the new business support grants. Volunteers will be required. However, there are other competing demands across the Council where volunteering will be a critical issue in supporting service delivery.

Roads & Transportation

Present Situation

65. There has been a reduction in output by the Roads Contracting Unit due to challenging new ways of working to comply with COVID Risk Assessments (staggered breaks, cleansing of vehicles/plant/equipment, social distancing, etc.). It is currently operating at around 90% capacity.

66. The need to carry out single person driven safety inspections has increased the time taken for inspectors to complete inspections. There is a backlog of walked inspections to be completed due to COVID related issues. In addition there has been a delayed start to capital and revenue roads works which has resulted in some capital funded road resurfacing schemes having to be postponed until next financial year (already reported to the Cabinet).

67. A major roads service redesign which identified substantial financial savings has been delayed.

Forward Planning

68. With regard to the Winter Maintenance Service this is considered a priority service by the Department. There are presently sufficient HGV Driver volunteers from the Roads Contracting Unit and Neighbourhood Services to cover out of hours winter maintenance treatments of the priority Primary and Secondary treatment routes. However, should there be COVID related issues (such as an outbreak among staff) there is a risk that there will be insufficient drivers available to cover all of the 11 Priority routes and other road maintenance work activities (pothole repairs, gully emptying etc) may have to be curtailed at short notice to help prioritise and support the Winter Maintenance Service. In a worst case scenario it may be necessary to revert to treating the 4 Primary routes only.

Planning and Building Standards

Present Situation

69. Building Standards Service provision has been maintained by staff working digitally from home. Site inspections which were previously restricted have recommenced in accordance with risk assessments and the Service is accepting alternative forms evidence e.g. photographs/video calls in accordance with Scottish Government guidance. However, a backlog of site visits and applications has resulted which will need to be prioritised and worked through in time. Despite the challenges emergency call out provision has been maintained.

70. Development Plans and Development Management service provision has largely been maintained by working digitally from home. Again, visits to application sites and for monitoring and enforcement purposes have been restricted due to Coronavirus restrictions. A backlog of site visits and applications has resulted which will need to be worked through in time.

71. Virtual Planning Application Committee meetings have been held on a monthly basis since 15/6/20 and Local Review Body meetings since 5/8/20.

72. There has been an additional workload on the Development Management team relating to the Scottish Governments agreement to allow pavement seating for cafes and restaurants. This has resulted in on site visits to ensure the guidance is being followed to ensure wheelchairs and large prams have sufficient space without having to go onto the road the road and responding to complaints from members of the public regarding this issue.

Forward Planning

73. Service provision can be maintained from home. However, a reinstatement of some of the Covid 19 restrictions could result in a stop to site visits which would create further backlogs of planning application and building warrants being processed..

City Deal

Present Situation

74. Service provision has been maintained by working digitally from home. However, the projects have been impacted adversely due to the lockdown and restrictions imposed because of the coronavirus.

75. The lockdown resulted in the Balgraystone Roads construction site being locked down on 23/3/20 until July. When the site was re-opened the contractors had to follow the new Scottish Government guidelines and develop new ways of working. These new ways of working involve social distancing and reduced numbers of personnel on site which leads to less productivity and increased costs.

76. The proposed Barrhead South Train Station Aurs Road projects have been significantly delayed because they require extensive engagement with Transport Scotland and Scottish Water who understandably have similar difficulties to the Council due to coronavirus and having to prioritise emergency work.

Forward Planning

77. Staff will continue to work from home. However, the risks to the Council with regard to City Deal Projects lies in relation to essential consultation with and consents from statutory agencies such as Transport Scotland and Scottish Water if they have to provide a restricted service due to COVID-19. This could result in a serious risk to the programme and lead to increased costs and delays.

Dams to Darnley Country Park and Whitelee Windfarm Access project

Present Situation

78. All staff have been able to work from home. All planned events at Dams to Darnley Country Park and Whitelee Wind Farm have been cancelled for the rest of the year but staff are working hard on creating new programmes of events for the future and working to catch up on repair and maintenance in both areas.

79. Both areas have seen a significant increase in footfall. At Whitelee visitor numbers have increased by a staggering 75% even though the visitor centre is closed (which demonstrates the importance of greenspace for our residents).

Forward Planning

80. No issues at present.

Housing

Present Situation

81. Housing operational services are substantially recovered but in a less productive manner. Due to the existence of a number of paper based systems at a time that office occupation is minimised effectiveness is reduced. This is compounded by reduced office visits by residents and reduced housing visits by staff. Many tenants prefer face to face contact and the new ways of working are proving difficult for them. This can have a particular impact with regard to anti-social behaviour investigations, homeless interviews and rental payments. The fact that a number of months were lost in the summer due to the limitations on house visits has meant that a number of capital improvements will be deferred until 2021/22

82. Voids (empty properties awaiting repair/letting) are creating a particular problem. The fact that staff are partially working from home is impacting on void performance. The situation is under review.

Forward Planning

83. Business continuity plans are in place should the situation regarding COVID deteriorate. Priorities would be housing allocations, homelessness and emergency and urgent repairs. Staff would be deployed from other areas to support delivery in these essential services.

Property and Technical Services/Corporate Health and Safety Unit

Present Situation

84. The situation for Property and Technical Services has been and will continue to be extremely challenging.

85. Several contractors have been badly affected by the coronavirus issue including having staff in furlough, having staff isolating, and/or reduced capacity due to social distancing requirements on site. In addition, in some cases material supply chains have been disrupted.

86. Some capital projects have been deferred including some in schools. With regard to the schools projects this is largely due to not being able to gain access due to coronavirus issues (normally these works are undertaken in the summer holidays).

87. With regard to Corporate Health and Safety the unit has since around March 2020 almost exclusively been engaged with coronavirus related issues including PPE, risk assessments and ensuring safe systems of work across all Council departments.

Forward Planning

88. As and when Council buildings seek to reopen including partially, the work of the Corporate Health & Safety Unit and Property & Technical Services will continue to be key in ensuring that buildings are safely operational. This has and will continue to include conducting comprehensive risk assessments and identifying safe ways of working, as well as ensuring that properties meet the required legislative standards.

89. The Council continues to follow Scottish Government guidance in respect of a return to work in office accommodation. Accordingly home working continues to be the default position and access to office premises continues to be restricted to staff who are unable to work from home or home working staff who need to visit premises for task specific reasons.

CRMT Sub-Groups

Humanitarian Support & Assistance

Shielding

90. Shielding was officially 'paused' on 31 July 2020. The Scottish Government continues to maintain the list of shielders so that they can communicate relevant advice and updates and there are currently over 2,800 people in East Renfrewshire in this category. There is no current intention to re-invoke shielding restrictions in their previous form. The Council has been asked by the Scottish Government to help coordinate Vitamin D distribution to those on the shielding list.

Humanitarian Food Hub

91. The Council's Humanitarian Food Hub at Dunterlie Community Centre ceased deliveries at the end of September, having delivered over 4,000 food parcels to families experiencing financial hardship or access issues as a result of COVID-19. Prior to the Hub closing, the Money Advice and Rights Team engaged individually with each household to ensure that they had appropriate financial advice and access routes to onward support, if required, from local foodbanks and food share schemes. The Humanitarian Support team has also worked closely with Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire and local providers to ensure that there is appropriate provision to meet local needs and to support local groups that we will rely on throughout the winter.

Support for Isolation

92. Local authorities are responsible for meeting new Scottish Government requirements around support for isolation. These requirements may be in place for a considerable period, linking to NHS contact tracing.

93. From 12 October councils are responsible for making proactive outbound phonecalls, 7 days a week to all people asked to isolate by NHS contact tracers. The Council will receive contact details from NHS contact tracers. Councils are required to do an initial c.30 minute screening call to assess impact on household income and wider support needs if the household has no local friends or family support (e.g. shopping, prescription deliveries etc). If the household has

income impact or support needs then there are to be two further follow-up calls during the period of isolation, each lasting 5-10 minutes. This is to check on support needs and encourage people to comply with their period of self-isolation.

94. There is a commitment from Scottish Government to cover the Council's additional costs as a result of this task. Given current workloads and rising caseload for teams like Money Advice and Rights, it will not be possible for the Council to carry out this requirement without recruiting new staff. Discussions are also ongoing with the Culture and Leisure Trust about use of staff.

95. To support people experiencing an impact on their income, who cannot work effectively from home, isolators will be able to apply to Council for £500 grant, funded by the Scottish Government. This scheme went live on 12 October and the grants were backdated to isolation cases from 28 September. The screening process for these grants takes place as part of the isolation support calls described above. Grants are then processed through the Council's Scottish Welfare Fund Team and paid direct to bank accounts via our Creditors team. We may also need to augment resource for these teams depending on the level of increase in caseload and the impact on day to day business (i.e. Scottish Welfare Fund and invoice payments).

96. Additional support needs (e.g. shopping and prescription deliveries) will be met in partnership with the Third Sector, with close monitoring of demand.

Connecting Scotland

97. The Council continues to work closely with SCVO, Council services and other Third Sector organisations to grant iPads and Chromebooks, with a year's worth of free connectivity (prepaid Mobile WiFi) and offer of support to use. Eligibility criteria was set by the Scottish Government with the target group being low income adults on the shielding list/clinically high risk group who didn't have personal access to a digital device and/or connectivity. In the first Tranche, the Council allocated 145 devices to local residents – 34 to shielded residents; 43 to those in the clinically high risk group and a further 68 to those with other health vulnerability that was impacting on level of isolation experienced.

98. In addition to the resource via the community Connecting Scotland programme, a separate phase of Connecting Scotland aimed at children in Education has also been underway. The Education Department has been loaning out devices and Mobile WiFi to families with limited or no access to the online based learning.

99. A further phase of Connecting Scotland has just commenced and the Council expects to access in excess of 300 more devices aimed at young care leavers up to age 26 years and low income families with children. Relevant training will be available and more of a focus on online safety and relevant content for families. There will also be an extension of the free WiFi connectivity up to 24 months, with Phase 1 recipients also benefitting from this extension.

100. There is a confirmed phase 3 of the programme due to take place in 2021 with target groups and local allocations still to be set by the Scottish Government.

Staff Volunteering

101. Over the last few months as services recovered staff have returned to their substantive posts from the volunteering roles they had covered. However in the last few weeks there are an increasing number of volunteer requests being made internally e.g. Isolation Support, Business support grants and from external organisations e.g. Trace and Protect. It is difficult to support all these requests due to the service demands and COVID response and the HR team are working with ERCLT as one avenue to identify volunteers.

CONCLUSIONS

102. The report provides details of the ongoing and new activities that have been undertaken since the previous report. As reported previously how long the Council will need to continue to deliver these services and functions is not clear and will have ongoing financial implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

103. That the Council note the report.

Report author

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