

**Report by Chief Executive****Council Meeting: 24 February 2021**

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**Subject: COVID-19 Update****1. Purpose**

- 1.1** To provide Members with an update in relation to COVID-19 in West Dunbartonshire since the previous update report to Special Council in January 2021.
- 1.2** To provide Members with up-to-date information on the additional support and advice that the council is providing to communities and businesses across West Dunbartonshire to help alleviate the impact of COVID-19.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** Members are asked to:
  - (a) Note the information provided on COVID-19 in West Dunbartonshire since the update provided to the January 2021 Council;
  - (b) Note the information provided in relation to the additional support and advice that the council is providing to communities and businesses across West Dunbartonshire to help alleviate the impact of COVID-19;
  - (c) Agree, if in person Committee meetings are possible in April 2021, that the Planning and Tendering Committees fixed for 21 April 2021 take place in Clydebank Town Hall to accommodate the planned change in venue for the opening of postal votes for the May 2021 elections;
  - (d) Agree the extension of contracts for the Covid-19 school cleaners with funding anticipated from the Scottish Government or from allowed flexibilities within existing budgets; and
  - (e) Agree the recommended approach in regard to the further funding from the Loss of Income Scheme to pass to the Leisure Trust the appropriate share of funding as described at 6.6 below.

### **3. Background**

**3.1** The COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the lockdown of society and services represents an unprecedented challenge for delivery of council services. Services have continued to run as far as is appropriate, often in different or reduced ways as the impact of COVID-19 continues to be managed in line with current Scottish Government restrictions and guidance. It is evident that there will be material financial implications for the council.

**3.2** There continues to be regular SG reviews of the tier levels for local government areas based on the basket of indicators previously outlined. Elected Members will continue to be updated on any potential change from the current Level 4, 'Stay at Home' order.

### **4. Main Issues**

#### **4.1 COVID-19 Protection Levels**

A new national lockdown came into force at midnight on 5 January, 2021, requiring citizens across mainland Scotland to stay at home except for essential purposes. These restrictions have remained in place throughout January and February. In the latest review on February 16, the First Minister confirmed the lockdown and requirement to stay at home, will remain in place until at least the beginning of March. A revised strategic framework detailing the route out of lockdown is set to be published on Tuesday, 23 February.

The Strategic Resilience Group (SRG) and the Operational Resilience Group (ORG) continue to meet to discuss the challenges and issues the Tier changes present to our Council and its service delivery. Elected members will continue to be updated through the reports to Council, monthly Elected Member briefing notes and more frequently where required.

#### **4.2 Governance Arrangements**

Normal governance and committee meetings continue. Elected Members continue to receive monthly briefings and there is a monthly Cross Party and Leaders meeting.

#### **4.3 Key Current Live Issues**

##### **4.3.1 Finance and Resourcing**

The restrictions imposed on businesses, including the Council; by the SG arising from the pandemic has resulted in a significant operational and financial impact. The absolute financial impact is not currently clear in totality as recovery processes and approaches develop and how the stages of the SG COVID-19 route map will

actually affect Council services and finances is not clear as yet. This report provides an update on financial implications since the January 2021 report.

#### **4.3.2 Regulatory and Regeneration**

Registrars continue to provide the death registration remotely and during the period Monday 10 January 2021 to Friday 12 February 2021 inclusive there were a total of 39 Covid-19 related deaths registered in this area, of which 25 were residents from West Dunbartonshire.

In preparation for the Scottish Parliamentary Elections in May 2021, the election team has conducted an options appraisal to identify the most appropriate location to operate the opening of the postal votes in West Dunbartonshire. Previously this took place in the Municipal Buildings, Dumbarton but due to the anticipated high number of postal votes and the requirement for postal voting employees and political observers to socially distance, the Civic Space in Church Street will be used to host these sessions. This room has sufficient space to support two large teams of employees working safely and has sufficient wi-fi connectivity to support the electronic process. This will mean that the meetings of the Planning Committee and the Tendering Committee scheduled to take place in the Civic Space, Church Street, Dumbarton, on 21 April 2021 will need to be relocated elsewhere and it is recommended, if in person Committee meetings are possible in April 2021, that the Planning and Tendering Committees fixed for 21 April 2021 take place in Clydebank Town Hall.

The Business Support team continues to administer and pay business support grants. The most recent statistics for current live support schemes is as follows:

The Strategic Framework Business Fund went live on Friday 13th November 2020. To date over 802 applications have been received, there have been 259 applications which we have not processed due to not being eligible, and this is primarily due to businesses legally being restricted to close only being eligible.

The Council received the grant award letter from the Scottish Government for Retail; Hospitality & Leisure top-up grants. Officers have identified eligible businesses and these grants have been paid along with the four weekly payments through the Strategic Framework Fund. As we receive new applications they will be checked for eligibility for this top-up grant and payments will continue to be made as required. The total paid to date for top up grants is £2,623,000 with 394 payments having been made.

The Discretionary Fund went live on Monday 18 January 2021 and to date we have received over 130 applications. Officers are continuing to assess applications and are finding that applicants are not providing the required evidence and are therefore having to contact them sometimes numerous times to receive the documentation required. This is why there is still a large number pending. If further funding is

confirmed by SG for this fund we may require to look at whether it may be appropriate to increase the grant payable through this grant currently at £2,000.

The Taxi Driver & Private Hire fund went live on Thursday 21 January 2021. To date, we have received 328 applications and approved 248 to date. The Business Support team are working in partnership with Licensing to check eligibility of applicants and continue to pay those eligible.

The Council has received a guidance letter from Scottish Government for the Contingency Fund Plus, for Brewers, Travel Agents and Indoor football centres. The Council has now contacted all the eligible businesses to invite them to apply for the Contingency Fund Plus. Once we receive the completed applications and relevant evidence we will start making payments from 15 February 2021.

Environmental Health continues to lead on COVID-19 cluster investigations in community settings and support Test and Protect. It provides a Public Health Covid-19 case assessment for the Education Service and a daily response to Public Health notifications of cases associated with community settings including business settings. Close working continues within the different teams in Regulatory along with Police Scotland through a joint working protocol.

### **4.3.3 Education**

#### **Remote Learning**

Education has been provided remotely to the majority of pupils since Monday 11 January. A local policy for remote learning has been produced. Children and young people are being provided with an appropriate timetable of remote learning including direct teaching and contact with employees across the week. Any young person finding it challenging to engage could be considered vulnerable and may be supported in school. West Dunbartonshire schools and ELC's were well placed to provide remote learning with employees, children and young people familiar with Google classroom accessed through WDC [Ourcloud.buzz](#) digital learning platform and WDC Virtual School [Campus@WDC](#). [Families requiring digital resources to enable their children to access](#) remote online learning are being provided with computer devices and connectivity resources (MIFI devices). Data for the first week of January shows a high level of engagement in the remote learning offer accessed through Ourcloud.buzz:

- Over 3,500 active Google Classrooms;
- Over 20,000 posts and assignments set;
- Over 2,090 devices have been given out to support home learning;
- Over 11,000 hits on OurCloud homepage;
- Over 5,000 hits on Campus@WDC; and
- Over 7,000 Google meets with this compares to an average of 200 Google Meets per day in March 2020.

As part of a national review of the quality and effectiveness of remote learning Her Majesty's Inspectorate conducted a review of the provision in West Dunbartonshire engaging in meetings with Senior Education Officers and headteachers. Following engagement with local authorities a national overview of practice will be published.

### **Access to Schools for Keyworker / Vulnerable**

Each day we have approximately 1,400 children physically attending our schools and learning centres - 450 in Early Years, 780 in Primary, 130 in Secondary and 40 in ASN. Numbers vary each day to align with the needs of keyworkers in each establishment. There are approximately two keyworker children to every vulnerable child attending.

We have well established pupil support systems in place which have transferred seamlessly to a remote delivery context. These enable us to continue to monitor the supports in place for our children and families and to respond appropriately. One such response could be to offer or to increase the offer of time in the school setting. We monitor attendance in school and engagement with remote learning at individual establishment and central service levels. This ensures we can identify and offer support to those struggling to engage with remote learning by offering an opportunity to learn in school, and provide establishments with support in continuing engagement with hardest to reach families and young people.

### **Free School Meals**

Free School Meals payments were made to all eligible families covering the Christmas holiday period. Following Scottish Government's decision to extend the holiday period and then move to remote learning until the end of January 2021, arrangements were made to extend this payment. For almost all eligible families, payment was made directly into personal bank accounts and for those without a bank account alternative payment means were implemented.

Those paid were families with children attending our Early Years settings, all P.1 - 3's; although parents had to opt in given the universal nature of the offer and all eligible P.4 – S.6 families. Payments were £12.25 for school aged and £11.75 for Early Years children per week.

Numbers to date are noted below:

	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Amount per day</b>
P1 to P3	2,200	£5,390
P4 to S6	2,842	£6,963
Early Years	1,235	£2,902
	<b>6,277</b>	<b>£15,255</b>

We are currently ensuring our children and young people in 'out of authority' placements are supported too and it is anticipated this will incur an additional cost of approximately £160 per day.

### **Childcare Support Grant**

To ensure that children and families are safe during the pandemic, the Early Years sector has had to make adaptations to comply with guidance from the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government Guidance for *Childminder Services*, Guidance published on 30 October 2020, provided principles to help the sector make decisions based on the best available evidence to help childminders operate in a changed context. A grant fund was established by the Council for childminders who are in partnership and those childminders who operate a service within West Dunbartonshire Council, to help meet the changed circumstances and demands of reopening during the pandemic. The grant enables childminders to implement recovery strategies for children disproportionately affected by COVID-19 lockdown and/or measures to close the poverty related attainment gap. This fund allowed childminders to apply for a one off grant of up to £500 to purchase resources that would lead to positive outcomes for children and families. Six childminders in partnership with West Dunbartonshire applied and were successful for grant funding.

### **Transitional Support Fund**

The Transitional Support Fund was set up to help childcare providers in the private and third sectors, including out-of-school care providers, meet extra costs incurred to comply with public health guidance in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The grants were expected to help with costs for:

- increased cleaning;
- investment in additional equipment and developing outdoor space to enable more outdoor learning; and
- adaptations to support the physical distancing of adults, such as changes to entrance and exit areas and additional signage.

In West Dunbartonshire, all funded providers and a few third sector providers applied and were paid the Transitional Support Grant. Grant amounts varied according to the number of Care Inspectorate registered places in each setting this varied from £1,500 to £8,000.

### **Partner Provider Payments**

As agreed with COSLA and the Scottish Government, in the first lockdown in March 2020, we continued funded ELC payments to our private providers of early learning and childcare who were closed. For the current period of closure of early learning and childcare, the Scottish Government and COSLA have agreed to support the ELC sector. This means a return to the position whereby funded ELC payments that settings receive for delivery of the funded entitlement will continue during this

restricted period, whether children are attending or not. Except for one Service, our funded providers are open for children of key workers and vulnerable children. Many of the same concerns highlighted in March, in relation to financial sustainability for the sector still apply, that is in order for that the sector to continue to operate. These arrangements for continued payments, will it is hoped, support the sector to continue to operate.

#### **4.3.4 Citizen, Culture & Facilities**

The Facilities Management (FM) Team continues to provide enhanced cleaning of frequently touched surfaces within schools, nurseries, depots, offices and other operational premises across the Council as part of the actions taken to minimise spread of the virus. Given that the pandemic is showing no signs of ending, FM is extending the contracts of the 55 additional Covid-19 cleaners in schools until the end of the summer term on 24 June 2021. The cost of this extension to the Council is £147,000 in the 2021/22 budget, and this was agreed in principle at the Finance Review Panel chaired by the Chief Executive, and updated to the Cross Party Working Group in January. It is assumed that there will be further Scottish Government funding available or allowed flexibilities available for 2021/22 to deal with Covid financial implications. The recommendation is that this is the mechanism used to fund this unbudgeted expenditure – as has been the case to date.

#### **4.3.5 West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust (WDLT)**

With the current Level Four – Stay at Home restrictions still in place all Leisure and Community facilities along with associated services remain closed with restrictions in place until the end of February at the earliest. Where previously WDLT were able to offer outdoor activities on Synthetic Pitches this is no longer possible. However online group fitness and exercise sessions still continue to be offered via social media and the WDLT App.

#### **Vaccination Support**

The Trust is supporting the largest vaccination programme in the country's history, and has provided significant support to the establishment of three Covid-19 vaccination centres in Alexandria (Alexandria Community Centre), Dumbarton (Concord/Denny Civic Theatre) and Clydebank (The Hub) to enable NHSGGC employees to deliver vaccines to our residents. The Trust provides the facilities management role for the building operations and initially has also provided employees for the centre support assistant roles.

#### **Furlough**

The majority of the workforce continues to be either furloughed or flexibly furloughed and will continue to be so until the current restrictions are lifted and services can resume. Contracted employees are using an appropriate proportion of annual leave at this time, with this approach is very similar to what was previously agreed and has been shared with the workforce and trade unions.

## **Finances**

The ongoing pandemic will continue to impact the WDLT finances and the position continues to be monitored and updated as the impact of the pandemic changes over time.

### **4.3.6 Building Services**

As before, it has been necessary to suspended Housing non-essential internal works from 26/12/20 for 3 weeks following the move to Level 4 for many authority areas. Front line craft workers have been reassigned to alternative projects and those repairs deemed essential for this period and, given the previously agreed 3-day suspension of most routine services (29-31/12/20), it has not been necessary to apply for furlough.

Building Services continue to provide all services with the exception of non-urgent Kitchen, Bathroom and Shower installs. Arrangements have now been put in place and these will commence in January 2021. Cochno Street Depot will remain open where the Council's out of hours emergency service is delivered from. The emergency service will have additional resilience over the festive period with back up stand by team members available if demand is high and contact details of team members who will be available if a large scale emergency situation arises.

### **4.3.7 Corporate Asset Management**

Compliance checks continue in operational buildings being used including fire alarm systems and legionella checks. All required works are being carried out via specialist contractors to ensure building re-openings are safe to do so. The team continue to coordinate and employees PPE store requirements as well as working with Scottish Government and Military in setting up Community Testing sites and Vaccination centres.

Housing and General Services projects continue on site with COVID site management plans requiring to be approved prior to re-starting non-essential construction works. Plans being approved via Corporate Health and Safety.

### **4.3.8 Health and Social Care Partnership**

#### **Care Homes and Care at Home**

For the week commencing 1 February 2021 we are able to report an improving position in terms of Covid outbreaks within our care homes.

We have two care homes with confirmed outbreaks relating to employees members (n=2) and one care home awaiting confirmation of outbreak status. Currently we have no Covid positive residents within our care homes. Two of these care homes are closed to admission and the other remains open with control measures in place.



One care home has a voluntary moratorium on admissions and a robust improvement plan in place in response to requirements identified by the Care Inspectorate. The care home is Covid free and is making good progress with implementation of the improvement plan.

All other care homes remain Covid free and report no difficulties maintaining care quality for their residents.

Weekly testing has been introduced in Care at Home services in line with guidance using the PCR processes.

### **PPE**

PPE supplies are plentiful and we have confidence in procurement pathways and future supply at this point. Our PPE Hub is supporting distribution of Lateral Flow Testing Devices to all eligible individuals and groups.

### **Vaccinations**

The objective of the COVID-19 vaccination programme is to protect those who are at highest risk from serious illness or death. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is coordinating a programme for vaccinations linking both with WDC and the other five local authorities within their area.

A multi-disciplinary strategic oversight group, which includes representation from West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC), Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), Police Scotland and Third Sector, has been established to provide professional and tactical leadership to develop and monitor the delivery of the West Dunbartonshire's Mass Vaccination programme. This is supported by a resilience led delivery group which is providing the operational and logistical implementation aspects of the programme.

The purpose and aims of the mass vaccination programme is to create a safe flow of patients to achieve the high throughput to vaccinate large numbers of citizens. In the context of social distancing, use of personal protective equipment and logistics for immunisers to prepare for each patient are in place.

A mass vaccination plan has been produced to assist in understanding the practicalities and challenges of delivering a mass vaccination programme in West Dunbartonshire.

In line with guidance received from the Chief Medical Officer on 24 December, as vaccine supply increases, the national aim is to work through the priority list outlined below with the aim of completing this by the end of Spring 2021:

1. Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers;
2. All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers;

3. All those 75 years of age and over;
4. All those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals;
5. All those 65 years of age and over;
6. All individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality;
7. All those 60 years of age and over;
8. All those 55 years of age and over; and
9. All those 50 years of age and over

Cohorts 1 and 2 above are described as Wave 1.

This work was delegated for delivery by NHS Boards and primary care. Wave 1 in West Dunbartonshire has been completed. Those aged over 75, and the clinically extremely vulnerable (the shielding population) was also delegated to primary care, and these groups will have been completed by 17<sup>th</sup> February, with the exception of a very small group of people who were unavailable during this period.

To date, significant numbers of district nurses, care at home and care home employees, employees working in community assessment centres, vaccination centres, community teams and mental health inpatient employees have been vaccinated at clinics in Louisa Jordan Hospital, the Vale of Leven Hospital and a number of other hospitals within Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Weekly vaccination clinics continue to be offered for any employees in the priority groups who, due to illness or other exceptional circumstances, have not yet been able to attend a vaccination appointment.

On Friday 18 December, we began the first round of vaccination for care home residents and this was completed by 30<sup>th</sup> December 2020. These residents, and care home employees, will begin to be offered their second dose on week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> February.

On Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February, West Dunbartonshire's COVID 19 mass vaccination centres were successfully launched. As previously advised, the 3 sites are:

- The Alexandria Community Centre;
- The Concorde / Denny Civic (Dumbarton); and
- The Hub (Clydebank).

The West Dunbartonshire mass clinics are now delivering the remainder of Wave 2 (groups 4 and 5 above). It is anticipated that these groups will be completed by end of February.

During the first week, the centres have been running with 6 vaccination stations at each centre, resourced by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC), supported

by employees from WDC and the Leisure Trust. Across all 3 centres, approximately 700 people per day have been vaccinated. Currently the centres are operating from 8.30am - 4.30pm (Mon – Sat) In addition to this, we also have GP clinics running in these venues, maximising the space and capacity to vaccinate a larger number of citizens, with some centres vaccinating up to 1400 people per day.

There were some small logistical issues during initial first days of launch, in general the centres have been working very successfully, excellent partnership working is taking place and feedback has been positive.

There requires to be a balance between vaccination supply and delivery of vaccination clinics. Availability of clinics is being adapted on an ongoing basis in line with vaccine supply.

### **Vaccination Centre Resourcing Model**

A cross-team approach has been agreed to support the operation of the three mass vaccination centres within West Dunbartonshire. The current resourcing model is:

#### Phase 1

Week beginning 1 February - Leisure Trust employees supported full operations, with those employees having previously supported the flu clinics and GP over 80s clinics.

#### Phase 2

Week beginning 8 February – Leisure Trust employees will provide the facilities management role for the building operations and the centre support assistant roles will be volunteers from across West Dunbartonshire. A total of 95 employees have been re-directed into these roles to provide 4 employees per shift at each centre from 8am – 5pm (Mon – Sat).

#### Extended Vaccination Sessions (4.30 – 7.30pm)

With the need to scale up to provide sessions into the evening from 8 February, the Leisure Trust has agreed to fill these sessions in the short term, to allow for more considered planning. This will provide cover until 20<sup>th</sup> February.

At the time of writing we had been identifying other employees who can be released to support these additional evening and weekend shifts beyond 20 February. On Thursday 11 February, Scottish Government informed the SVOG that the vaccination delivery programme needs to be updated, due to supply chain issues, from Monday 15 February. The new clinic arrangements are each location will scale back vaccination stations in each location - Alexandria Community Centre 7, Concord 7 and The Hub 4. The schedule for the next 3 week period is:

- Alexandria Community centre and Concord Centre will be open 1 day per week ( Mon 15 – Sun 7 Mar);

- The Hub will be open 2 days per week (Mon 15 – Sun 21) then extend to 3 days per week (Mon 22 – Sun 28) and then open 4 days (Mon 1 – Sun 7 Mar).

This schedule will be updated regularly and the SVOG will be notified and will communicate any further changes.

### Phase 3

Week beginning 5 April – Leisure Trust will provide the facilities management role for the building operations and the centre support assistant roles will be resourced from the Kickstart programme.

Additional support for the centres during phase 3 will include volunteers from wider workgroups across WDC and local community volunteer groups.

### Training and support

Vaccination centre guidance, i-learning module and briefing sessions have been developed to support these groups of employees and volunteers. They have also been offered vaccination.

### **Transport**

Local Authorities have been asked to provide a process and contact details to support individuals who may require assistance with getting to the vaccination centres.

To support this, a 3 step approach has been established:

1. Contact National Travel Helpline;
2. Diverted to NHSGGC Call Centre; and
3. Diverted to WDC CAS team who will call clients back, explore needs, and book taxi if required.

Bookings will be shared out across a number of taxi firms, and a standard fare is being negotiated. The driver will wait at the centre and then convey the citizen home.

### **Communications**

Communication in relation to vaccine is being led by the Scottish Government and NHSGGC. In addition we have released key public communications including: Elected Members briefing, responded to a number of MSP and EM enquiries, social media updates, updates on our website and produced a short animation to guide citizens through the vaccination centre experience in West Dunbartonshire.

A financial tracker is being updated recording all costs and the first submission of this was returned to Scottish Government for the deadline of 31 January. This will be an ongoing process throughout the vaccination programme.

#### **4.3.9 Children & Families and Justice Services**

In response to the additional restrictions from 26 December 2020, use of office space has been scaled back to focus primarily on the initial duty service and provision of contact between children and their families. Additional provision is being scoped in terms of adhering to Public Health Scotland guidance to scale up this aspect of the service.

Within Specialist Children's Services, work continues to address the waiting list for children and young people awaiting appointments with the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The longest wait for an appointment has, since the start of December, reduced by two months and this activity continues as part of the NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde Waiting List Initiative.

Employees are in the process of being supported to receive the Covid 19 vaccination, however particular resourcing pressures in children & families' social work and Health Visiting mean that managers are prioritising work on a daily basis, focussed on risk and vulnerability.

Since the last update, a number of bids for community based mental health supports for children and young people aged 5 to 24 (and up to 26 for care experienced young people) have been received and notifications are being sent to bidders during January. The proposals were diverse and creative and will make a positive difference to children and young people in the local area. Meanwhile, as part of the Scottish Government winter support package, a range of practical supports are being developed for families most in need, as well as children in care placements and to support our children's houses.

Within Justice Services, the additional restrictions have impact on unpaid work placements which are being moved online wherever possible, alongside supporting the local foodbank. Courts are reducing their services at present which may also reduce the number of new orders being imposed.

#### **4.3.10 People & Technology**

Three vaccination centres are now operational in West Dunbartonshire, currently resourced by WDC and WDLT employees. The Council has applied for funding to secure 80 Vaccination Centre Support Assistants using the Government's 'Kickstart Scheme' and the recruitment process is underway with a decision imminent. Until then, we will deploy existing employees who are unable to work due to the current restrictions, are unable to deliver their full role from home and are willing to volunteer. The frequency and notice of change in vaccination clinics is challenging to adapt available resource to suit.

Progress is now being made with health colleagues to support these volunteers to receive their vaccinations and promotion of the 'roll up your sleeves' national

campaign to maximise uptake. This work includes efforts to engage with hard to reach groups, e.g. travelling communities; refugees; homeless and those with mental health conditions.

As at 16 February, 139 employees had been referred for testing via the employer portal, and there are currently 124 employees absent/isolating as a result of Covid. OH referral numbers for counselling remain high from frontline services.

The furlough scheme has been accessed again for a small group of employees from Building Services who cannot attend work whilst the current restrictions are in place due to their health or caring responsibilities. This will remain under review.

Transactional HR teams (HR Connect and Payroll) continue to support the organisation in developing Covid-19 specific workforce management functionality to facilitate better information management and reporting. This is particularly relevant as we begin to seek volunteers from the wider workforce.

The SG £500 “thank you payment” final guidance is awaited in order that payment can be made. Those in scope requires further clarity and locally, Chief Officers have been asked to consider roles where support to HSCP is more than 75% of time commitment. The draft guidance includes an option to have the payment in three instalments to minimise any impact on Universal Credit awards. Flexibility in respect of payment dates will be required to avoid workload clashes with year end processes and statutory returns for HMRC and pension fund administrators.

The technologies for home working (thin client and netscaler) have been available since 2014 and continue to support the significantly increased volume of 2750 users from both Council issued and personal devices providing secure access all systems and shared folders via citrix storefront. We implemented additional license monitoring processes and redirected and repurposed licenses where possible to avoid unnecessary spend.

We have a risk-based approach to assess data and system security impact of technical changes prior to implementation. Changes such as end user device patching – these patches were installed when devices were brought on site to a Council location and are technical changes have been implemented to delivery security patches remotely.

Providing technical support to users who are home working is more challenging and with the majority of the ICT team also home based we:

- Published support videos and sent to users via text to assist with remote access set up;
- Published a range of other useful guidance ;

- Issue broadband best practice guidance to users;
- Increased the availability and opening times of the ICT Service Desk telephone service;
- Trained and assigned additional members of the team to support call handling and dealing with periods of high volume of request; and
- Changed the support model for delivering device support with introduction of pre arranged appointment system when remote support could not resolve issue. Also use this appointment system for issue of over 400 laptops and mobile phones during the pandemic.

#### **4.3.11 Housing and Employability**

Significant focus has been placed on communicating with our service users and communities about appropriate and safe behaviours, and adherence to guidance to limit the spread of COVID-19. Our Housing and Homelessness services have increased signage in common spaces within our properties including our new build homes and sharing practical information with tenants, tenant groups and other landlord's / support providers through regular tenant/resident liaison meetings and Housing News articles. The Communities Team continues to share new Council public information through its network of community organisations. Working4U is cascading information through all its networks including the Youth Alliance.

All services are operating effectively, primarily based on remote working arrangements, with limited essential client services being delivered in the community under reviewed safe processes. This includes letting of vacant houses and support to homeless and vulnerable households.

Homelessness levels in West Dunbartonshire have continued to stabilise and the levels of homelessness in the last quarter of 2020 were almost identical to the previous year, although there has been increase in homeless households with children over this period. We do however continue to have a higher numbers of households in temporary accommodation, which stood at 302 at the end of December. We are actively working with these households providing high levels of support focused on long terms housing solutions so that every household has safe and secure temporary accommodation.

Our new build programme has been progressing well under Covid-19 compliant working practices. Within the last month we have taken delivery of 48 new homes for tenants in the St Andrews, Haldane and Aitkenbar, in addition we have completed the Creveul Court development. We have reviewed our working practices and have enabled a smoother moving in process with of the provision of carpets, window coverings and white goods to allow new tenants to move into their new homes in a safe and practical manner.

Our Housing Officers have continued to provide assistance to tenants struggling with food and utilities, in addition to prioritising allocations for homeless households and those with medical needs. Estate Caretakers and the Neighbourhood Team continue to ensure cleanliness is maintained within our high-density housing and our Anti-Social Behaviour team has dealt with an increased volume of cases owing to the greater proportion of time tenants and residents have been at home.

Where required, we can provide access to crisis support for people who are identified through the Test and Protect process. 2,088 have been assisted the Crisis Support Team. 1,273 were from the shielded group and 141 required additional support as a result of the test trace, isolate process. The crisis team has continued to provide support with welfare / benefits advice and / or access to emergency food supplies to an average of ten households each day. To date we have assisted 1,099 households with emergency food supplies and we have referred 846 people to further practical support provided by the Communities volunteer management team. The Volunteer Management Team has seen an increase in demand for on-going support which will continue to be monitored. The introduction of the NHS Medicine Delivery Service is welcomed and the team will signpost those eligible to this.

#### 4.3.12 Economic Development

The Business Support team continues to administer and pay COVID business support grants. The most recent statistics for current live support schemes is as follows:

<b>Fund</b>	<b>Applicants</b>	<b>Rejected</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Pending</b>	<b>Value Paid</b>
Strategic Framework Business Fund	802	259	454	89	£1,796,000
Discretionary Business Fund	132	24	32	29	£64,000
Taxi Driver & Private Hire Fund	328	6	248	74	£372,000
Contingency Fund Plus	9	0	0	9	Nil

The Business Support team have also provided Retail, Hospitality & Retail top-up payments on behalf of Scottish Government to eligible businesses. These top up grants have been paid along with the four weekly payments through the Strategic Framework Fund. A summary of top-up grants paid to date is listed below.



<b>Retail, Hospitality &amp; Leisure Top-up Grants</b>	<b>No. of Payments</b>	<b>Total Paid</b>
Hospitality	119	£961,000
Leisure	42	£258,000
Retail	233	£1,404,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>£2,623,000</b>

The Scottish Government have recently announced a new fund for large self-catering, exclusive use properties and bed & breakfast establishments paying Council Tax which will also be administered by the Business Support team. It is expected that officers will contact the eligible businesses and invite them to apply for this fund week commencing 22 February.

## **5. Financial and Procurement Implications**

### Financial Implications

- 5.1** The lockdown has had, and continues to have, implications in terms of service delivery and in relation to the Council's agreed budget for 2020/21 as a result of additional spend requirements, lost income offset by some cost savings due to services reducing/stopping. The SG has provided additional funding to support Councils. Total net cost implications of COVID-19 on the General Fund will not be clear for some time as the Council moves through the phases of easing of lockdown often will not be clear until they happen.
- 5.2** Since the imposition of lockdown the SG has implemented a number of approaches to mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on citizens of Scotland, businesses, charities and Councils. The majority of the funding that the SG has distributed for various purposes has been derived from Barnett consequential from UK Government funding provisions, though some will have come from re-prioritised SG funds. As the second wave of the virus has increased incidences of infection and hospital admissions the SG has implemented an approach to implementing local restrictions and has provided further funding linked to this. Attached for information as the Appendix to the report is a list of SG funding streams announced and attributed to COVID-19.
- 5.3** As can be seen from the Appendix the Council has been notified of a total of £20.550m in revenue funding from the SG, and it is likely that further funding will be announced between now and the financial year-end. Much of this funding is provided for specific purposes, with £6.377m general funding. In addition £0.701m of SG funding to support capital spend has been allocated, all for specific purposes.
- 5.4** The January 2021 report detailed a number of funding streams that had been notified either via letters from the SG, or via reports to COSLA Leaders, but where

the allocations to WDC had not yet been advised, these have been updated as follows (or no updates have been provided where “TBC” remains in place:

**Capital Grants:**

<b>Funding</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>WDC</b>
Regeneration Capital Grant Fund – additional funding	£12.000m	TBC
Bus Priority Rapid Development Fund	£10.000m	TBC

**Revenue Grants:**

<b>Funding</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>WDC</b>
Council Tax Reduction – additional funding – now realigned to other COVID-19 funding after a review of demand levels (was £25m)	Nil	Nil
Education Recovery – second part of original funding held by SG until costs evidenced	£30.000m	TBC
Discretionary Housing Payment – additional allocation linked to covid-19 financial impact	£3.000m	£0.042m
Newly Self-Employed Hardship Fund – now advised not being administered via local government	£15.000m	TBC

In addition, since the January 2021 report the SG has announced further revenue funding to WDC as follows:

<b>Funding</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>WDC</b>
Free School Meals for period to 29 January 2021	£7.057m	£0.198m
Free School Meals for period to 26 February 2021	£5.841m	£0.164m
Free School Meals – Easter Holidays 2021	£4.290m	£0.120m
Early Years - Childcare providers Temporary Restrictions Fund, including admin funding	£3.810m	£0.048m funding + £0.002m admin
Education – Additional resourcing – intended for 2021/22	£25.000m	£0.493m
Education – Education Recovery further funding to take into 2021/22	£45.000m	£0.897m
Loss of Income Scheme – advised via settlement announcement of increase from £90m to £200m for Scotland in 2020/21 – additional £110m	£110.000m	£0.968m
COVID-19 General funding allocation to Councils for 2021/22 – advised in settlement announcement	£259.000m	TBC
COVID-19 pressures in 2021/22 – announced 16 February 2021	£275.000m	TBC
Financial Insecurity Funding additional funding – announced 16 February 2021	£20.000m	TBC

COVID Spring Hardship Payments – children in receipt of FSM – announced 16 February 2021	£17.200m	TBC
Education Recovery – further funding for 2020/21 – announced 16 February 2021	£40.000m	TBC
Support needs of children and young people for 2021/22 – announced 16 February 2021	£60.000m	TBC
Funding to tackle poverty and inequality for 2021/22 – announced 16 February 2021	£25.000m	TBC
Financial assistance to help low income households in 2021/22 – announced 16 February 2021 (not clear whether via Councils) – announced 16 February 2021	£100.000m	TBC
Mental Health Recovery & Renewal Fund in 2021/22 (not clear whether via Councils or NHS) – announced 16 February 2021	£120.000m	TBC

- 5.5** As can be seen from the table above the SG has provided further significant funding for 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- 5.6** As was agreed by Council on 7 January 2021, it is recommended that a proportion of the additional Loss of Income Scheme funding should be passed to the WDLT, on the basis that the funding allocated to WDC includes an element aligned to lost income for ALEOs. Based on the same proportion provided to WDLT from the WDC share of the original £90m then the sum to be passed to WDLT would be £0.238m, leaving £0.730m to assist meet the financial impact of COVID-19 in 2020/21.
- 5.7** Total net cost implications of COVID-19 on the General Fund in 2020/21 will be finalised over the next few months. It is anticipated there will be ongoing impacts into 2021/22 as the country and Council moves through the phases of easing of lockdown and these costs are not possible to predict. Budgetary Control reports to Council and Committees will provide up-to-date financial projections of the Council's financial performance, including the net projected impact of COVID-19 with a report provided to this Council meeting. There is no further update in relation to the three financial flexibilities announced by the SG and officers await guidance on implementation of these from the SG.
- 5.8** It is likely that there will be a net financial impact to the Council from COVID-19 in both 2020/21 and 2021/22 with potential for additional bad debt provision and clearly it will be important that further funding is secured from Government and/or appropriate financial flexibilities are provided to Councils to mitigate the impact in these years. There is also significant risk that the financial and economic impact will be longer-term – depending on the speed and depth of economic recovery. The financial flexibilities provided by the SG will be considered with the longer-term impact in mind.

## **5.9 Procurement Implications**

There are no direct procurement implications arising from this report, however we continue to remain vigilant to any potential future supply chain issues which may develop due to changes in COVID restrictions / council levels.

## **6. Risk Analysis**

**6.1** In accordance with the Council's Risk Management Framework, a Strategic Risk has been developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This, along with the organisation-wide, operational risks sitting beneath, will be reported in the bi-annual risk updates to Corporate Services and Audit Committees. The first draft of the risk is appended to this report.

**6.2** The most significant risk remains the financial impact of COVID-19 on the Council and the potential shortfall in funding support from the SG. COSLA has continued to engage with the SG to evidencing the financial impacts on Councils and the need for further financial support or financial flexibilities. The outcome of this will be important in terms of the future financial position of the Council.

## **7. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

**7.1** No equalities impact assessment was required in relation to this report.

## **8. Consultation**

**8.1** Discussions on the issues herein have been had with the Trades Unions on an ongoing and regular basis and a copy of this report provided in advance of the publication.

## **9. Strategic Assessment**

**9.1** All actions and plans around COVID-19 have been done in order to continue to achieve the Council's strategic objectives.

**9.2** Sound financial control and good governance remains a key approach in minimising the risk to the Council and the ongoing capacity of the Council to continue to deliver its strategic objectives in the longer term.

**Joyce White**  
**Chief Executive**

**Date: 17 February 2021**

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**Appendix:** List of SG Funding provided to WDC in relation to COVID-19

**Background Papers:**

1. Member Briefings and FAQs on COVID-19 issues;
2. Budget Report – Council, 4 March 2020;
3. Minute of Council meeting – 4 March 2020;
4. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 24 June 2020;
5. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 26 August 2020;
6. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 30 September 2020;
7. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 25 November 2020;
8. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 16 December 2020;  
and
9. Special Council COVID-19 Update Report – Council 7  
January 2021

**Wards Affected:** All