



Report by Chief Executive

Council Meeting: 16 December 2020

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 Council in November 2020.
- 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 November 2020 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; and
 - (c) Agree the planned approach for the use of the funding provided with the purpose of addressing future need to support individuals at financial risk, as advised at 6.8 of the report.

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. Since the September 2020 report Scotland has remained at Phase 3 of the Scottish Government (SG) COVID-19 route map. Services have continued to return, often in different or reduced ways as the impact of COVID-19 continues to be managed in line with the route map and SG guidance. It is evident that there will be material financial implications for the council.

- 3.2** There continues to be regular review of the tier levels for local government based on the basket of indicators previously outlined and Elected Members will continue to be updated on any potential change from the current Level 4.

4. Main Issues

Tier 3 – Friday 11th December 2020 2020

On Tuesday 8th December 2020 the First Minister announced that the fall in infection rates in these areas previously moved to Tier 4 (which included West Dunbartonshire Council) - the most highly populated in the country - have contributed to an improvement in the situation across Scotland as a whole. The view is that all of this puts us in a much better position to cope with the inevitable difficulties of winter.

WDC will move to Level 3 on Friday 11th December 2020 in line with the guidance from Scottish Government. There continues to be a need for a cautious approach and there will be ongoing challenges and risks over the next few months.

The intranet has been updated with the latest news and updates including details of the wellbeing supports available along with all of the workforce updates are being issued and circulated for managers and employees. Managers will continue to brief staff who do not have internet access.

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.

4.1 Changes to 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.

4.2 Key Current Live Issues

4.2.1 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 November 2020 report.

4.2.2 Regulatory Services

Environmental Health continues to support Test and Protect and 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. At the time of writing, confirmation is awaited on what tier West Dunbartonshire will move into. As West Dunbartonshire moves out tier 4, officers from Trading Standards and Licensing will visit re-opening premises to provide advice to owners and operators, and ensure compliance with Regulations. Visits will be prioritised on the basis of risk. Registrars continue to provide the death registration remotely and since 31 July there have been a further 44 Covid-19 related deaths registered in this area, of which 31 of the deceased were residents of West Dunbartonshire and 13 were residents of Glasgow City.

4.2.3 Education

As COVID-19 cases have risen in the community at large, there continues to be cases presented in Education settings, resulting in case assessments with employees and pupils having to self-isolate. From the time of introduction of the streamlined procedure for case assessments, there have been **155** recorded cases in Education settings and approximately **2,443** individuals (pupils and staff) identified as close contacts who have had to self-isolate. Analysis of data for both staff and pupils in November showed a decreasing trend for both positive cases and self-isolation. The online 'campus@wdc' is open to all pupils who are self-isolating, and class teachers also share course work via Google classroom.

Central Officers have recently been in schools to view staff and pupil movement around the buildings in light of level 4 mitigations. They report compliance is high with the wearing of face coverings by staff and senior phase students. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated as required.

Guidance on Ventilation in schools is being progressed and to assess the financial impact of strategies that help balance the need for ventilation with keeping people warm. Further guidance has been issued for PE, Music, Drama and Dance and this will be updated as appropriate.

There will be no National 5, Higher or Advanced Higher exams this year and SQA have published further clarity on the work that learners need to complete in subject areas. We are reviewing our approach to moderation as a local authority and developing how best to work with our neighbours at a regional level. An additional payment will be made to teaching staff involved in this additional work for the SQA, and time devoted on in-service days in our secondary schools to assessment and moderation.

With the decision taken to keep to the scheduled term dates in December and January, planning is underway to put in place a Test and Protect service run by central officers whilst establishments are closed for the festive period.

We continue to work closely with our national partners, Head Teachers and Trade Union colleagues to ensure that all guidance is being followed and that we can continue to deliver the best experience possible for our children and young people.

4.2.4 Communication, Culture, Communities & 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. The Performance & Strategy team continue to support national work on data reporting and analysis specific to the Covid-19 response and planning for recovery. Corporate Communications has continued to work with a range of partners include NHS GGC and the Scottish Government to engage and inform citizens and employees on the pandemic, restrictions, and available supports. We continue to issue media releases and prepare and share social media content regarding the pandemic and restrictions to partners and groups, including churches to ensure we reach as many people as possible. Across Citizen Services assistance was provided to enable residents to access services and financial support through Crisis Grants and Self-Isolation Support Grants. Libraries have been helping to support positive mental health during the Level 4 restrictions with 5,000 physical issues using Click & Collect and 11,000 digital issues in November alone.

4.2.5 Housing and Employability

Significant focus has been placed on communicating with our service users and communities about appropriate and safe behaviours to limit the spread of COVID-19. Our Housing and Homelessness services have increased signage in common spaces within our properties 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 safe processes. This includes letting of vacant houses and support to vulnerable households.

Homelessness levels in West Dunbartonshire continue to stabilise and November saw the year's first comparative decrease in presentation levels with 2019. We do however continue to have a higher numbers of households in temporary

accommodation which stood at 315 at the end of November. We are actively working with these households to provide long terms housing solutions and 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 new homes for tenants in the St Andrews, Haldane and Creveul Court developments.

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. We know from data provided by NHS there have been approximately 1500 people in West Dunbartonshire traced to date. Of those subsequently contacted, 85 have required additional support. The crisis team has continued to provide support with welfare / benefits advice and / or access to emergency food supplies to an average of seven households each day.

Work is on-going to support our most vulnerable citizens through the Crisis Support and Volunteer Management teams (VMT). Plans are in place to ensure sufficient cover is provided over the festive period and the service continues to address the on-going demands for PPE to carers and care homes across the authority.

4.2.6 Winter Planning and Resilience

The winter gritting programme has commenced with carriageway and footway crews on standby from 1 November. The daily weather forecasts are monitored and actions set by the Duty Forecaster. Measures are in place to provide resilience with a complementary communications plan.

4.2.7 Asset Management

Compliance checks to continue in operational buildings being used including fire alarm systems and legionella checks. All required works being carried out via specialist contractors to ensure building re-openings are safe to do so. Continue to implement Property Recovery plans for offices, assisted Education with Schools reopening and work with HR&OD following workforce styles return to establish which offices are required to open for immediate returners.

Coordinating the Store requirements of HSCP by Asset Management continues to operate well. Proposal for one combined now in operation and processes being reviewed regularly. Request to move the Mobile Testing Unit from the Meadow Centre Carpark to the Church Street office car park has been fully implemented with

compliance arrangements carried out to allow access to the office for welfare facilities. Work with S.G and WDLT to open Napier Hall in Old Kilpatrick as a new walk through COVID testing facility. Christmas holiday cover in place with out of hours arrangements in place. Emergency stock packs will be located at Cochno Street store for users of the integrated store and NSS Hub. Delivery arrangements are in place should these be required.

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 H&S. Risk Assessments approved by unions for staff accessing sites and operational buildings where required.

4.2.8 Housing Capital Investment

In line with restart guidelines the majority of Housing Capital work programmes have recommenced, the team are fully working from home and managing all communications to tenants involved in programmes and maintaining email contact links. All restarted work programmes are being managed under the new circumstances and working with our contractors to ensure all sites and work are carried out safely in line with COVID management processes. The team continue to update all investment and housing databases to assist with ongoing records, programme monitoring and year-end returns. Private Sector Housing Grants applications and processing is also active and managing this in line with COVID management processes.

4.2.9 Building Services

It has been necessary to suspended Housing non-essential internal works from 23/11/20 for 3 weeks following WDC being placed in Tier 4 of the Scottish Government tiered COVID-19 model. Housing non-urgent repairs will recommence on Monday 14/12/20; this following the Scottish Government confirmation that all areas placed in tier 4 will move to tier 3 or lower from Friday 11/12/20. Front line craft workers were reassigned to alternative projects during the tier 4 restrictions period and it has not been necessary to apply for furlough.

During this period tenants were requested not to report any non-urgent repairs and this facility will recommence again on Monday 14/12/20. All Corporate Asset Management (CAM) projects and works continued uninterrupted during the period when WDC was placed within tier 4.

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. The service will recommence efforts to complete outstanding repairs as a result of lockdown and placement in tier 4.

Whilst all services and all team members are back at work, the necessary COVID-19 compliance measures and restrictions have and will continue to have an affect on the productivity and activity of the workforce.

Some pinch points on material supplies is evident currently and this area is being closely monitored to ensure any necessary action required is taken to minimise disruption to projects, tenants and financial outturns.

Building Services will be closed over the festive period from 25/12/20 until 05/01/21 with depots and offices closed. 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 also contact details of team members who will be available if a large scale emergency situation arises.

4.2.10 Economic Development

The Business Support team successfully administered the Coronavirus Business Support Fund on behalf of the Scottish Government. This Fund consisted of a Small Business Grant, Retail, Hospitality & Leisure grant, Newly Self-Employed Hardship grant and a B&B Hardship grant which all provided financial support to local businesses experiencing hardship as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown. The fund closed on 10 July 2020, the team had approved 1,400 applications from local businesses and provided funding which totalled £14,780,750.

The team also delivered the SG COVID-19 Business Closure Fund and Business Hardship Fund. These funds provided one-off grants to hospitality and other businesses required to close or that were very directly impacted by the restrictions implemented on 9 October 2020. The business support team approved 93 grants for this fund, equating to £242,965. We have contacted the 52 businesses that previously applied for the closure fund and confirmed that they were furloughing staff to invite them to apply for a one off grant payment of £1,650. To date we have received 43 applications and awarded 34 grants equating to £56,100. A further grant for soft-play and nightclub establishments who have been impacted by closures was also delivered. There are discussions with Scottish Government regarding other grant interventions including a Discretionary Fund and Newly Self Employed Hardship Fund Phase 2 that we understand will both likely be in place in early January 2021.

The Scottish Government Strategic Framework Business Fund went live on Friday 13 November 2020. To date we have received 368 applications and approved 239 applications with 72 payments having been made equating to £123,825. Further detail will be received from the SG regarding the breakdown of the next payment in due course and this will reflect the tier level as from 11 December 2020.

A Business Recovery programme has been developed and promoted to local businesses to assist them to recover after the lockdown period. The Business Recovery programme includes a range of free webinars, 1-2-1 expert help and grant support to assist businesses to adapt their properties, purchase capital equipment and to encourage them to review their business strategies and improve their on-line presence.

The focus for the Business Support service continues to progress with the Business Gateway programme and engage and support the business community in the recovery phase from the Pandemic. Together with the Chamber of Commerce the service is supporting a Scottish wide 'Love Local' campaign with local retailers to stimulate our Town Centres as they commence the recovery process.

In terms of regeneration works the District Heating Network at Queens Quay is operating successfully and delivering heat to Clydebank Leisure Centre, Titan Enterprise, and Aurora House with a number of other facilities coming on stream, including the care home, Wheatley social housing development, new NHS Health centre and discussions are progressing with West College Scotland, Clydebank campus building. Discussions are also progressing in terms of wider site connections with housing developers and importantly the expansion opportunities of connecting to the Golden Jubilee Hospital and progressing opportunity of securing LCITP funding from Scottish Government. The Regeneration infrastructure works at Queen Quay with Council £15.62m contribution is completed successfully. The Council City Deal project at the ExxonMobil site is progressing with the key milestone of conclusion of missives for the site completed in September 2020 with the view of transfer site ownership on completion of ExxonMobil remediation works in two year's time.

HSCP Services

4.2.11 Residential Care Homes

The weekly multi-disciplinary oversight group including Public Health and the Care Inspectorate continues to meet and as at 9th December, all West Dunbartonshire Care Homes, both independent and directly provided, had an overall RAG rating green.

Testing of all care home staff continues on a weekly basis. Where a member of staff or a resident develops symptoms or tests positive, then mass testing of all residents (with consent) and staff is carried out. To date, 14,303 staff tests have been carried out, and 2,244 tests of care home residents.

Where any resident or staff members tests as positive, the care home is required to close to new admissions for 14 days.

The testing process for staff working in West Dunbartonshire care homes has been successfully transferred from the UK Social Care Portal, using the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab, to NHS GGC Laboratories. This has improved accuracy and timeliness of results.

4.2.12 Testing Staff and Residents

Testing Expansion plan will significantly expand testing to designated visitors to care homes and professionals from health and other professions that regularly visit care homes. This additional testing will enhance the existing layers of protection in place for our social care sector, for the people it serves, and for our communities. This expansion is possible because of increases in our testing capacity and new testing options particularly lateral flow devices which return a rapid result. Testing for designated visitors, using lateral flow devices, will be made available to all care homes from w/c 11 January

It may not be possible to complete a robust roll out of lateral flow testing for designated visitors before Christmas. To ensure that all care homes have access to designated visitor testing to provide an additional layer of protection over the festive period, we have secured PCR testing for care homes. This can be offered in the weeks commencing 21 and 28 December and 4 January.

4.2.13 Testing

West Dunbartonshire Testing								
	30/11/2020	01/12/2020	02/12/2020	03/12/2020	04/12/2020	05/12/2020	06/12/2020	Average
Capacity	468	468	468	468	468	468	468	468
Testing Completed	176	82	149	55	119	51	67	100

4.2.14 Care Home Visiting

No indoor visits other than in special circumstances, such as end of life, are permitted while West Dunbartonshire is in Tier 4. However, with moving to Tier 3, new guidance on care home visiting has been received which permits indoor visiting, where safety precautions are in place and where risk assessments have been signed off by Public Health. We have been working in partnership with local care homes and supporting them to undertake the requisite risk assessments to enable them to plan and be prepared for when it is possible to reinstate indoor visiting. We continue to be guided by our Public Health Colleagues and are firmly sighted on the importance of care home residents having contact with family members to maintain their wellbeing.

4.2.15 New Queen's Quay Care Home

Moving residents from one care home to another takes detailed planning at any time, but in a pandemic, has required very meticulous planning, involving the

residents and their families, the residential staff team, Care Inspectorate, Health and Safety and Public Health.

A detailed migration plan has been developed, and on 14th December, subject to no changes to current circumstances, residents will begin to move into Queens Quay House. The 2 existing care homes of Mount Pleasant House and Frank Downie House will transfer into the new home, but will remain in the group or 'bubble' of their current home for 14 days after the move.

The new home offers a wonderful array of spaces, including a cinema, bistro, art studio, activity rooms, courtyards and terraces. The residents will be able to enjoy these spaces, in managed smaller groups, during this 14-day period.

4.2.16 PPE

The PPE Social Care hubs have received their winter planning contingency stock from NSS. The Hubs are prepared for the public holiday period and have plans in place should emergency supplies of PPE be required by providers or carers during holiday period.

4.2.17 Children & Families and Justice Services

Since the last update, additional space to provide contact between children and their families in Clydebank and Dumbarton has been implemented and is working well. Managers are also scoping alternative venues to maximise opportunities for face-to-face contact, alongside established digital opportunities.

Recent additional capacity within Specialist Children's Services has also enabled more children to be booked in for appointments with the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Demand remains high; however the team are working with colleagues across the Greater Glasgow & Clyde area as part of the Board-wide waiting list initiative.

Funds of £62,500 have been distributed to each local area to support initial planning and preparation of a whole systems approach to community based mental health supports for children and young people aged 5 to 24 (and up to 26 for care experienced young people). Locally, the Robert Owen Centre at Glasgow University has been commissioned to undertake a review and analysis of current services for children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing. This will be followed by using a co-production approach with young people to inform plans for new services or the development of existing services.

Within Justice Services, unpaid work continues to be provided, albeit on a restricted basis to reflect safe working practices. Currently 20 squads, each comprising three individuals, are in operation each week, with additional supports being provided to the local food bank during Tier 4 restrictions. Demand for social work assessments to assist sentencing has increased by 18% on the previous year and social work

staff have been able to return to Dumbarton Sheriff Court, prioritising the work of remand and custody courts.

4.2.18 Finance

As previously reported all actual and projected Covid-19 related costs being incurred by the WDHSCP are reported on a monthly basis to the Scottish Government as part of the NHSGGC consolidated Local Mobilisation Plan financial return. The submission on the 24 November projects a cost across health and social care services of £7,986,766 an increase of approximately £1.056m on the October projection. The increase being mainly attributable to additional social care costs related to the estimated costs of the extension to provider's sustainability payments.

The fourth tranche of Scottish Government funding released to the 6 Glasgow HSCPs in early October has now been finalised and the £1.747m share to WDHSCP can be split into £0.684m for health care and £1.063m for social care. This brings total social care funding to date for Covid-19 related costs to £3.710m. There will be a further allocation in January based on the November return and a final "mop-up" allocation in March with the verbal assurance from Scottish Government officials that funding will match actual costs incurred less any offset savings recorded through the local submissions."

4.2.19 Testing Expansion Plan for Care at Home

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport has announced the expansion of routine testing in a number of areas, and outlined the plans for testing expansion for social care staff. The final pathway is still under development and work is required with local partners, providers and workforce bodies, such as the unions to ensure effective delivery.

Social Care – Care at Home from 11 January 2021 - for sheltered housing and residential settings, in line with the substantive care home program roll out from 18 January 2021 - for care at home service. Roll out is expected to conclude by end March 2021.

4.2.20 Care Homes

The weekly multi-disciplinary oversight group including public health and the care inspectorate meeting on 08.12.20 had an overall RAG rating of green for all 12 care homes. This means that there were currently no outbreaks or suspected outbreak of Covid 19 within any care homes in West Dunbartonshire at that time of reporting.

4.2.21 Testing

Testing Facilities

Local testing facilities remain available in West Dunbartonshire through two routes. The first is the Mobile Testing Unit operating on alternative days from Church Street. The second is the Local Testing Unit operating out of Napier Hall, Old

Kilpatrick, from 8am till 8pm 7 days per week. Both facilities continue to be well used.

4.2.22 Covid-19 Vaccination Planning

On the evening of Friday 4th December, we received a letter from the Chief Medical Officer informing Health and Social care on the commencement of Covid Vaccination.

Vaccination of key frontline staff across NHSGGC began on Tuesday 8th December.

The situation remains very fluid and is changing rapidly, due to factors relating to the special characteristics of the first available vaccine, the availability of vaccine, and rapidly changing guidance.

The Vaccine

The currently available vaccine is manufactured by Pfizer and has been named Courageous. The specific characteristic of this vaccine is that it needs to be stored at -70 degrees, requiring very high tech freezers. Across GGC, these freezers are currently only available at the Louisa Jordan Hospital. The vaccine requires to be administered in 2 doses, a minimum of 21 days apart, with immunity levels established 7 days following.

The next vaccine, not yet approved, but expected to be approved prior to Christmas, is the Oxford vaccine, named Talent. This is much more like the flu vaccine, in that it can be more easily stored and transported.

Both vaccines are licensed for use in over 18s, excluding pregnant or breast-feeding women, or those who have previously had severe allergic reactions.

Three other vaccines are currently going through approval processes and are expected to be approved early next year.

All require 2 doses at roughly 28 days apart. It is not yet known, how long immunity will last.

It is also important to note that the vaccine prevents serious illness, but it is uncertain that it does not prevent onward transmission of the Covid virus to other people by the vaccinated person, so other safeguards will require to remain in place for some time.

Priority Groups

The Joint Committee of Vaccines and immunisations (JCVI) have agreed that priority groups for vaccination should include those who:

- are at risk of becoming seriously ill and dying

- are at particular risk of becoming infected because of their occupation

At the time of writing, the Priority list has not been finalised, but at present, is as follows:

- Residents and staff working in care homes for older adults
- Those aged 80 years and Over
- Front line health care workers in contact with patients and social care workers providing direct care to clients
- Those aged 75 to 79 years
- Those aged 70 to 74 years + those current shielding groups of any age 18 years and over
- Those aged 65 to 69 years
- Those aged 18 to under 65 and in an at risk groups
- Those aged 50 years and above

Current planning is focusing on staff and care home residents. Across GGC, this totals almost 83,000 people.

The Distribution

The Scottish Government has stated that distribution will occur over 3 phases/ waves. Wave 1 being staff, care home residents and over 80s during December and January.

Moving forward, once assured that the vaccine can travel, mobile teams may be deployed to key venues, but assurance that no doses are wasted will be a key consideration. Mass vaccination clinics will be set up across GGC, and we may be asked to provide venues similarly, to what we did for flu. This has not been confirmed.

In addition, in recognition of the imminent move of residents and staff to Queens Quay House in Clydebank, staff from the effected homes have been prioritised to be vaccinated on 10th and 11th December. Plans have been developed to schedule appointments at the Louisa Jordan Hospital for as many of the 110 staff as possible, with socially distant measures in place.

5. People & Technology

- 5.1** Teams across People & Technology (ICT, H&S, HR, OD, Change & Digital and Transactional HR and Pay) have been and continue to be redirected as and when needed to best support the organisation.

- 5.2** Scottish Government announced a £500 “bonus payment” to be paid to Local Government employees (amongst others) involved in the provision of social care. Work is underway to determine who may be in scope and how this payment might be administered.
- 5.3** The continuing restrictions require alternative means of distributing payslips for those still receiving a paper version. Approximately 50% of those have now been converted to e-payslip. This reduces risk and ensures delivery before the relevant pay date.
- 5.4** Technology provision for those remaining working from home (circa 1500) are stable and roll out plans for Office 365 are well underway.
- 5.5** The teams are developing a ‘Winter Support Package’ to bolster our workforce wellness. A weekly round up will be issued in the weeks preceding the festive period.
- 5.9** At the end of November, 51 employees had been referred for testing via the employer portal.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

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 won’t be clear until they happen.

- 6.2** 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 Scottish Government has implemented an approach to implementing local restrictions and has provided further funding linked to this.
- 6.3** The COVID-19 Update report to August 2020 Council reported that £5.582m of funding had been allocated to WDC to provide financial support, including funding for provision of support to the community for food provision, additional Social Welfare Fund payments, additional Discretionary Housing Payments and additional Council Tax Reduction payments (the latter has not yet been allocated). The

September Council reported a further £0.862m linked to the further Barnett consequential of £49m, giving a total of £6.444m. Further funding for loss of income will be distributed to all Councils, the value of the WDC share is not yet known.

- 6.4** The November report detailed a number of funding streams have 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:

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

Revenue Grants:

Funding	Scotland	WDC
Administration of £500 payments to individuals financially impacted by local covid restrictions	£0.906m	£0.024m
Council Tax Reduction – additional funding due to covid-19	£25.000m	TBC
Young Person’s Guarantee – support to 16-24 year olds in employability and skills support	£30.000m	TBC
Discretionary Housing Payment – additional allocation linked to covid-19 financial impact	£3.000m	TBC
Environmental Health Officer Support Funding (2020/21 and 2021/22)	£2.900m	£0.019m 2020/21 £0.027m 2021/22
Free school meals over winter holiday periods	£6.950m	£0.186m

- 6.5** In addition, since the November report further SG revenue funding has been announced, as follows:

Funding	Scotland	WDC
Discretionary Funding for Businesses	£30.000m	£0.439m
Newly Self-Employed Hardship Fund	£15.000m	TBC
Local Authority Administration Grant – to support ongoing implementation of Business Support schemes	£5.000m	TBC
Flexible funding Welfare/Social Support for Level 4	£15.000m	TBC

6.6 Total net cost implications of COVID-19 on the General Fund will not be clear for some time with financial implications as the Council moves through the phases of easing of lockdown often won't be clear until they happen. 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 the next report being finalized for the Council meeting on 25 November 2020. 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.

6.7 It is highly 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.

6.8 £20m SG Funding: Addressing Future Need to Support Individuals at Financial Risk – flexible funding

As was reported in the November COVID-19 Update report the Council has been allocated £0.481m from this fund for the following purposes:

- Supplementing local budgets for the Scottish Welfare Fund to ensure demand is met in full;
- Provision of cash-based support to tackle food insecurity, or alternate provision where this is more appropriate or is the preference of individuals themselves, including for households whose children are registered for Free School Meals;
- Providing support to meet fuel costs, for example through existing schemes such as fuel cards or a locally targeted fuel grant;
- Further boosting local funding for Discretionary Housing Payments as needed.
- Other activities and services, as necessary, to support individuals to overcome financial crisis and support wellbeing.

Officers have reviewed the above and identified the following planned allocation of this funding for use between now and the end of the current financial year. Residents will be directed for fuel support, etc. through the Working4U partnership to the Council's Scottish Welfare Fund Team, whilst support for foodbanks, homelessness, etc. will be managed through the Communities Team.

Foodbank Support	£0.120m
Homelessness welfare support and people with no recourse to public funds	£0.025m
Scottish Welfare Fund top-up (to include funding for fuel costs and general wellbeing)	£0.200m
Discretionary Housing Payments top-up	£0.136m

6.9 Winter Welfare Fund

In addition to the funding identified in the tables at 6.4 and 6.5 above, a recent SG announcement on a Winter Welfare Fund identified allocations for the following purposes:

- Support for low income families £22.000m
- Support for vulnerable children £23.500m;
- Communities and Third Sector Recovery £15.000m;
- Digital Inclusion – Older People £5.900m;
- Support for fuel bills £7.000m;
- Funding to reduce the risk of Homelessness £5.000m;
- Flexible funding for COVID level 4 Councils £15.000m;
- Strategic National Food Fund £2.000m;
- Benefits campaign £0.250m; and
- Held in reserve £4.200m.

Within the £22m to support low income families is an element to provide £100 per pupil eligible for Free School Meals as part of an estimated £16m funding stream. The SG intention is that these payments will be provided by before Christmas. Within WDC plans are in place to make these payments in the week commencing 18 December 2020. Not all of the above funds will come to Councils, however at this stage full details are not available.

6.10 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.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1 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.

- 7.2** 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.
- 7.3** There remain risks around how the UK exits the European Union. The current budget assumptions are based on the UK budget announced in the autumn of 2018 which stated that in the event of a “no deal”, or a deal less favourable than hoped for, it was likely that the UK Government would require to reset the country’s finances. Such a move or any other impact of Brexit could have a significant impact on the Council and its financial position for 2020/21 and subsequent years, which has the capacity to compound any ongoing COVID-19 financial impacts.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

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

9. Consultation

- 9.1** 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.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** All actions and plans around COVID-19 have been done in order to continue to achieve the Council’s strategic objectives.
- 10.2** 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.

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Joyce White
Chief Executive

Date: 10 December 2020

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- 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;
 - and
 7. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 25 November 2020.

Wards Affected: All

