

**Report by Chief Executive****Council Meeting: 9 February 2022**

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 December 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 Council in December 2021; and
 - (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.

3. Background

- 3.1** The COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the lockdown of society and services has provided an unprecedented challenge for delivery of Council services. Since the start of the pandemic services have continued to run as far as is appropriate or allowed, often in different or reduced ways as the impact of COVID-19 continues to be managed in line with any Scottish Government (SG) restrictions and guidance. It is evident that there will be material financial implications for the Council though this is anticipated to be funded from additional Scottish Government funds.
- 3.2** In terms of the Scottish response to the pandemic the SG position remains below Level 0. Infection rates continue to fluctuate and vaccination rates continue to increase which has allowed the SG to retain this position. However, clearly the pandemic has not run its course, with Omicron, a new variant of interest emerging

in recent months, and the pandemic continuing to impact everyday life. The Council and its residents continue to live with the pandemic with residents and employees becoming infected at different times and as a result it can be expected that there will be ongoing issues linked to COVID-19. Such issues might be around: shortages of Council staff due to COVID-19 illness or isolation periods; or interruption to supplies of goods and services through shortages of staff in suppliers and/or delivery regimes.

Since the end of September 2021 infection rates across Scotland and within the Council area have been fairly static although this position changed in December 2021 when as a result of the Omicron variant, cases increased locally and nationally to their highest level to date. Ongoing disruption to service delivery will be inevitable as employees are amongst those infected and/or isolating, and gradual recovery is more likely than simply returning immediately to the previous “normal”.

- 3.3** The majority of restrictions implemented during December were lifted from 24 January, including the maximum three-household limit for social gatherings and non-professional adult indoor sports able to resume.

In addition, changes were announced to testing with people returning a positive lateral flow test no longer required to take a PCR test to confirm and instead to log the lateral flow result online as soon as the test is completed.

During the First Minister’s most recent update to the Scottish Parliament on 25 January, she confirmed a phased return to offices could begin.

It was recommended that, from Monday 31 January, employers should consider implementing hybrid working – following appropriate guidance - with workers spending some time in the office and some time at home.

In response, it is planned our employees will begin a phased return to offices from 7 February with all office buildings reopening by the end of the month.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The Strategic Resilience Group (SRG) and the Operational Resilience Group (ORG) continue to meet to discuss the challenges and issues the ongoing pandemic presents to our Council and its service delivery. Elected Members will continue to be updated through the reports to Council, Elected Member briefing notes and more frequently where required.

4.2 Key Current Issues and Updates

4.2.1 Regulatory and Regeneration

Registrars continue to provide death registrations remotely and during the period Monday 29 December 2021 to Friday 21 January 2022 inclusive, there were 13 COVID-19 related deaths registered in West Dunbartonshire, of which 3 were not residents of West Dunbartonshire.

Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards continue to visit and provide advice and assistance to owners and operators of businesses to ensure they are aware of the health protection guidance that applies to their businesses and they continue to operate in a safe manner during the pandemic. Environmental Health are working in close liaison with Public Health colleagues and providing advice as needed.

Business Support continues to deliver a range of sector specific Scottish Government COVID grants across our business community and engage across a number of services in this effort.

4.2.2 Education

Covid Guidance for schools and centres

All staff have shown a resilient response and worked collectively to ensure a continuation of service during this challenging period. Our schools and early learning centres have responded with agile and flexible plans to offset the impact of any staff or pupil absence. Education Officers are working closely with head teachers and heads of centres to provide support and a clear, consistent approach to the management of the COVID response in all establishments.

Support for Children & Families

The recruitment of additional teaching and support staff continues to enhance educational recovery, facilitating opportunities to build resilience and providing additional support for learners and teachers. It has allowed establishments to take forward their individual recovery plans to improve the outcomes of pupils, raise their attainment, effect empowerment and ensure the health and wellbeing of pupils is supported.

All establishments are now planning for the supported transition of pupils to their next stages in learning. We have established and agreed an enhanced transition programme for our most severe and complex learners, ensuring they will be supported appropriately in a setting most appropriate to their needs. Planning with partners to support these processes continues effectively in spite of the pandemic via virtual meetings and remote engagement with families and young people. It is anticipated that as the term progresses schools will continue to be creative and supportive in engaging parents, children and young people whilst conforming to COVID regulations.

Early Learning & Childcare (ELC)

Our ELC are following the revised Covid guidance issued in January to mitigate the risk of the Omicron variant. We are doing all that we can to protect our families and communities by adhering to this guidance. Our ELC staff, children and their families are impacted by the new strain of the virus however, the impact on numbers of positive cases is not as severe as expected.

To support continued delivery of safe, high-quality childcare for children and families as we move through this stage of the pandemic, the Care Inspectorate has temporarily adjusted their policy position on adult to child ratios and introduced a new notification. This applies to children aged two years and over and for no more than 72 hours at a time. This measure is in place until 18 February 2022. It has been necessary to use this relaxation of the expected ratios at one ELC.

Young children are less likely to be affected by or transmit the virus, and there has been a great deal of work at each ELC setting to make sure that children and their families are safe. The revised ELC risk assessment reflects updates made to the ELC COVID-19 guidance from the Scottish Government which is of continued reassurance to staff and families.

Our settings continue to:

- increase the amount of ventilation
- help children wash their hands regularly
- clean surfaces and toys regularly
- ensure children play together in consistent groups
- limit the number of staff and children in contact with each other, and
- spend more time outdoors.

Carbon-dioxide (CO2) monitoring

All establishments are now engaged in the monitoring process, being asked to submit readings for each learning and teaching space each week. A process is in place to review the submitted readings, and to escalate any requiring further attention, however this escalation process has not yet been required, as readings continue to be within acceptable parameters. A small number of devices have required recalibration to ensure accurate readings. We await further guidance from Scottish Government concerning the new fund to improve ventilation in schools.

SQA Examinations

Work continues on the course coverage for the 2021/22 SQA qualifications. All schools have engaged in interim assessments, providing students with the opportunity to experience examination conditions prior to the summer examinations. At present, the SQA are still planning on examinations this session, however will keep this under review in light of Covid transmission rates. Should learning continue to be disrupted with Covid cases and periods of isolation, then additional support or resources could be provided at Easter time.

4.2.3 Citizen, Culture & Facilities

Housing Repairs Contact Centre

We continue to thank tenants and Councillors for their patience in relation to the Housing Repairs Telephone Contact Centre. We have previously outlined the challenges of managing complex calls linked to the high number of repairs which Building Services is working its way through following the pandemic.

Four new team members joined the repairs contact centre in December with socially distanced training provided by experienced staff members at our location in Cochno Street. This has had a positive impact on our ability to answer calls from our tenants and we have seen call wait times reduce and the percentage of calls being answered improve.

We have experienced challenges as a result of adverse weather and a spike in contact following the festive break. However, as of week ending January 28, 90% of calls were being answered with an average wait time of just over two minutes.

We will continue to monitor performance on a daily basis and keep Council and WDTR0 updated on our progress.

Self-Isolation Support Grant (SISG)

SISG applications peaked during December with 534 received, reflecting the significant increase in Covid 19 cases locally. A further 498 applications were received during January. Currently there are 62 applications outstanding with a processing time of one week. In total £0.759m has been issued to residents through the grants since April 2021.

Citizen Services would like to once again thank colleagues from other Council teams who have assisted in clearing the outstanding volume of applications, and also thank the Council's small Welfare Fund team who have gone the extra mile to resolve this situation for residents.

Covid-19 Cleaners

The Facilities Management (FM) service continues to provide enhanced touch point cleaning during the operational day in a number of Council premises including schools and nurseries. This provision will be extended in the coming weeks with the further opening of Council offices. The FM service has over 600 posts and while we have experienced challenges as a result of supporting staff absence/isolation due to Covid over December and January, there has been very little impact on our service provision. We continue to recognise the efforts of our staff who are working extremely hard to mitigate against any potential disruption.

4.2.4 Building Services

We are working hard to attend to and reduce the number of housing repairs and we appreciate the ongoing patience from tenants across West Dunbartonshire. The overall trend of active repairs is reducing as we address the backlog.

Active Repairs

As at 27 January 2022, there were 3,446 active repairs. These can be broken down further as, 1,045 urgent, target to be completed within 10 days; 1,173 non urgent, target to be completed within 20 days and 1,228 planned/reactive, target to be completed within 40 days. In addition to these active repairs, the team attend to emergency repairs – target to be completed within 4 hours and right to repair – target to be completed 1 day.

While we aim to complete the outstanding repairs first, we are at the same time responding to newly reported repairs and these are scheduled based on the urgency, priority and nature of the repair. This does affect those repairs which are less urgent and in turn the ability to meet our targets.

For all repairs completed in the month of December, 90.8% were completed within their performance target times. However, of the total active repairs (3,446), 64%, (2,208) of these remain outwith target time for completion. The target to complete an emergency repair is 4 hours, however the performance to the end of December shows an average completion time of 5.94 hours.

Repairs Completed

Building Services completed 22,904 reactive repairs during the period April - December 2021. Of these, 4,485 were emergency repairs, the remaining being non-emergency, reactive/ planned repairs. Of the 22,904 repairs completed during the period, 20,724 – 90.5% were completed within their target times.

In December 2,774 reactive repairs were completed and of these 2,153 were non-emergency repairs. Unfortunately, during December, there were 342 occasions where operatives have not been able to gain access to the property to undertake arranged repairs including emergency repairs.

Difficulties recruiting additional craft workers

Shortages and increased demand for craft workers continues across the industry. This demand and skill shortage has undoubtedly driven up the craft worker salary, which, in comparison to the private sector, make it very difficult to attract and retain permanent and temporary workers. The skill shortage currently experienced within the team is mainly electricians, plumbers and joiners and similarly, contractors are reporting workforce challenges. Work is underway in conjunction with Trades Union partners, to consider the overall workforce planning elements of the Building Services improvement plan including issues such as the jobs, salaries, working hours and increasing modern apprentice numbers.

Absence

Since the start of this calendar year, we have been managing high levels of absence. In December, 1.67 FTE days were lost per employee. Of the days lost, 31 FTE days were absences between 1 – 3 days; a total of 37 FTE days were due to short term absence of less than 6 days; a total of 133.6 FTE days were absences of between 6 days and 4 weeks) and 387.3 FTE days were long term absences of over 4 weeks.

Action Plan

The team continue to undertake the following to address outstanding repairs and improve performance:

- Management team weekly workforce planning meetings to review progress and agree further actions
- Additional planners / job schedulers recruited and team now at full capacity
- Dedicated teams set up to focus solely on repairs which have missed target
- Reassigning team members from other projects where possible
- Recruitment advert via myjobscotland and social media which remains live until end March 2022
- Temporary engagement of agency workers where possible
- Increased use of sub-contractors where possible
- Targeted overtime where possible
- Seeking volunteers to participate in standby / call out and respond to emergency repairs
- Continued communication with tenants through appropriate forums including tenant groups, Housing News, social media, text messaging
- Monitoring, management and mitigation of material pinch points

4.2.5 Health and Social Care Partnership

Mental Health Services

Community Adult/Older Adult

Mental Health Services continue to remain open providing support face to face, by telephone or virtually. We have small levels of absence due to Covid-19, however these are spread out across services. We have been recruiting to vacancies across our Community Services, which are now concluding however this has had an impact on waiting times. In order to mitigate this we are making use of staff bank and overtime shifts to ensure cover across our services and reduce waiting times. We are actively involved in work across NHS GG&C to maximise access to services and prioritise the most at risk patients in the community.

Addiction Services

Addiction Services continue to provide services offering a hybrid model of options to provide treatment and support. These are a mix of face to face, by telephone or virtually and are assessed using RAG risk assessment based on individual need. Staffing is continually monitored and processes are in place to ensure that caseloads continue to be managed in a safe and effective manner. Most staff are fully vaccinated including booster vaccines and continue to use lateral flow testing in line with guidance.

Learning Disability Services

The Learning Disability team in West Dunbartonshire provides a wide range of services and continues to offer a mix of face to face, telephone or online appointments and the integrated team uses a RAG risk assessment to prioritise those most at risk. The day service continues to provide building based support for critical cases, through a triage system, and there is ongoing review based on current guidance. In addition, regular wellbeing checks are being carried out where appropriate. Recruitment and retention of staff remains an ongoing pressure across health and social care and learning disability is no exception; staffing remains challenging. The West Dunbartonshire Learning Disability team also works closely with NHS GG&C Board wide Learning Disability services to: provide cover in extenuating circumstances to inpatient services, maximise access to inpatient services, prioritise the most at risk patients in the community and support the Collaborative Practice group, which has been established to support complex placements Board wide, to strengthen community based solutions going forward.

Care at Home

The Care at Home Service faced challenges across the festive period as a number of staff rostered to work were affected by Covid and subsequently their allocated schedules had to be reallocated at short notice over the Festive weekends and Public Holidays. Staff worked tirelessly to cover these shifts to ensure that care packages were delivered and we are grateful for all their hard work. Daily monitoring is demonstrating a steady decline in Covid related absences.

Day Services

Numbers attending day services remain lower due to the remaining Covid restrictions and so two staff have volunteered to support Care at Home on a temporary basis.

Care Homes

A number of our care homes have recently experienced Covid 19 cases affecting both staff and residents. This reflected the increased prevalence of Covid 19 in the local community. Encouragingly most residents experienced only mild common cold type symptoms indicating the success of the vaccination programme in preventing the more severe complications of Covid -19 in this vulnerable group.

The self-isolation periods for care home residents who are contacts of Covid-19 positive case or are themselves Covid positive has now changed from 14 days to 10 days. Precautionary 14 days self-isolation of residents following discharge from hospital to a care homes has now been removed for residents on the non-respiratory pathway and has reduced from 14 to 10 days for residents on the respiratory pathway (the respiratory pathway is determined by the [Respiratory Screening Tool as per the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual: Winter \(21/22\), Respiratory Infections in Health and Care Settings Infection Prevention and Control \(IPC\) Addendum](#)).

Guidance on limiting the number of households who can visit a care home resident at any one time to two has been removed. Named Visitors should be supported to visit during outbreaks unless there are exceptional circumstances, and named visitors who visit a resident who is Covid-19 positive can visit the resident again during their isolation period.

Care home staff were similarly impacted by the increased prevalence of Covid 19 in the community. Care home business continuity plans proved effective over the festive period and beyond and care homes continued to maintain safe staffing levels. Two local care homes received mutual aid in the form of additional staff provided by the NHSGGC Care Home Hub Team. The Care Home Hub has also offered additional support on infection prevention control (IPC) measures to care homes experiencing recent outbreaks in order to provide assurance and to ensure that IPC practice remained optimal.

Updated guidance was issued by the Scottish Government on 06.01.22 outlining the Policy Framework on Return to Work for Health and Social Care Staff identified as cases, or following close contact with a positive Covid 19 case. This revised policy document set out the condition to enable Health and Social Care staff who were isolating as a COVID-19 index case or contact of a positive COVID-19 case to leave isolation in seven days in line with the general population providing the necessary mitigations are in place.

In summary staff can now return to work where the following conditions are met:

- They have been double-vaccinated and have received a COVID-19 booster vaccination at least 14 days prior to the last exposure to the case;
- They have had a negative PCR test where the test is taken as soon as possible after exposure;
- They have negative LFD tests on a daily basis;
- They are not currently self-isolating as a COVID-19 case or under international travel regulations;

- They do not have COVID-19 symptoms (Coronavirus (COVID-19): General advice | NHS inform);

The reduction in the period of mandated self-isolation following infection or exposure to Covid-19 has helped mitigate this risk to safe staffing within care homes.

HSCP day to day relationships continue with individual care homes, the HSCP multi professional Care Home Oversight group continues to meet twice per week and the HSCP continues to work closely with care homes to mitigate risks, strengthen resilience and ensure that the care residents receive continues to be of a high quality during this challenging period. We continue to support care homes to implement all Public Health Scotland Care Home guidance and to respond to updates in guidance. Care Homes continue to implement Open with Care and are working with families to ensure all measures are in place to support residents to safely meet with their families.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Hubs

PPE supplies remain plentiful and supply chains continue to be robust. The local HSCP PPE hub continues to operate. The memorandum of understanding remains extant until the end of March and is likely to be extended until September 2022.

The Scottish Government have initiated a consultation on their proposals for the future supply of pandemic Personal Protective Equipment in Scotland. In June 2021 Audit Scotland published a report which examined the Scottish Government's approach to PPE supply during the Covid-19 pandemic. The report stated that a new, long-term approach to PPE supply was required, for both business as usual PPE needs as well as preparing for future pandemics.

The Scottish Government, led by the PPE Strategy & Governance Board is working with partners such as the NHS to ensure that Scotland is fully prepared for any future pandemic situation. A PPE Futures Programme has been put in place to plan for new approaches to pandemic PPE to ensure we learn from experience, promote innovation, and have strong, sustainable foundations for any future pandemic. The objectives for the Programme are to secure:

1. A resilient PPE supply chain,
2. High quality PPE at an appropriate price, and
3. Best value in PPE buying

Further information on the PPE Futures Programme can be found at the following link: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Futures programme - overview - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-futures-programme-overview/pages/2/index.aspx)

Covid 19 Testing

Early identification of cases is even more important with the Omicron variant and all health staff continue to be strongly encouraged to take a LFD test daily and all social care staff to undertake a LFD test each working day and weekly PCR tests where required.

Covid Immunisation

Covid immunisation continues to be the most complicated, largest vaccination programme ever undertaken by NHS Scotland. The primary objective of the COVID-19 immunisation programme is to maintain protection against severe COVID-19 disease, specifically hospitalisation and deaths, particularly over winter 2021/22 in order to maintain protection in those most vulnerable, and to protect the NHS. With the support of Council & HSCP Colleagues, the NHSGGC programme is progressing well within West Dunbartonshire.

Programme Acceleration

Acceleration of the booster programme was introduced to mitigate any potential loss in the level of vaccine-induced protection. Evidence on waning immunity following the primary course means it is essential that individuals are offered a further vaccine dose to boost immunity at the earliest point, recently updated with JCVI advice. It is critical that staff and members of the public receive their vaccines where eligible due to our current understanding of the characteristics of the Omicron variant:

- It has increased transmissibility compared to previous variants that have emerged.
- Having your 1st and 2nd dose of the vaccine offers limited protection against symptomatic disease from this variant.
- Receiving a booster dose of the vaccine is known to increase protection from Omicron substantially.

Additional Clinics were stood up in West Dunbartonshire in December and going forward in January we have agreed an additional two operating days to March 2022 to support acceleration of the vaccination programme.

Updated Advice on Covid Vaccination for Young People Under 18 Years

Primary vaccination Covid 19 – Age 5 – 11years

On 22/12/22 The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised children aged 5 to 11 years in a clinical risk group (as defined in the [Green Book](#)), or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed (as defined in the [Green Book](#)), should be offered two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (Comirnaty®) with an interval of 8 weeks between the first and second

doses. Further advice regarding COVID-19 vaccination for other 5 to 11 year olds will be issued in due course following consideration of additional data.

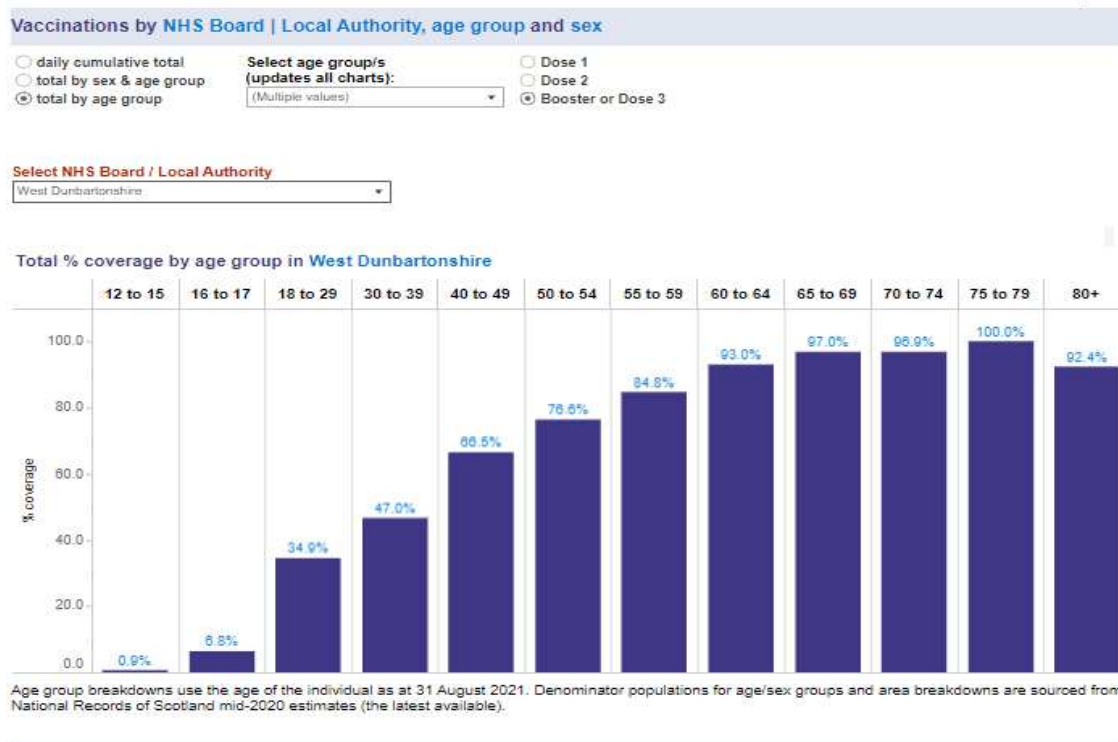
The following cohorts of children and young people should be offered a booster dose of Covid – 19 vaccine no sooner than 3 months after completion of their primary course:

- children and young people aged 16 to 17 years
- children and young people aged 12 to 15 who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed
- children and young people aged 12 to 15 years who are severely immunosuppressed and who have had a third primary dose

Prioritisation of booster vaccination within eligible cohorts will generally be in the order of descending age groups, or clinical risk, whichever is more expedient.

In West Dunbartonshire clinics are scheduled for 5-11 year olds who are severely immunosuppressed at the Concorde, on Saturday 29 January / Sunday, 6 February.

Uptake of Vaccination % of Population who have received booster or dose 3 (Data point 21.01.22)



4.2.6 People & Technology

Vaccination Support

Support of the COVID-19 booster programme continues and there was a fantastic response from the volunteer and casual/supply register to resource additional clinics. The flexibility and responsiveness of the vaccination workforce has been recognised and commended. The teams responded quickly to the frequently changing schedule over the winter months to deliver an ambitious programme of clinics and meet the needs of the local area. As before, clinics are anticipated to run until the end of the financial year and resources have been secured for this.

Impact on Employees

As at 17 January 2022, there were a total of 247 employees absent/isolating as a result of COVID-19. In December, 16.4% of sickness absences were attributed to confirmed COVID-19 cases, an increase of 7.2% compared to November, making it the 2nd top reason for absence. Whilst there has been an overall increase of approximately 256 working days lost in December compared to November, the number of working days lost attributed to minor illnesses, acute medical conditions and personal stress, has decreased by a total of 527 working days Council-wide. The increase in sickness absence can be largely attributed to the increase in

COVID-19 cases, approximately 755 working days more than in November. The reduction in the sickness absences attributed to minor illness, acute medical conditions and personal stress is particularly encouraging as they are typically the top 3 reasons for sickness absence Council wide.

Return to Offices

The reopening of offices on 18 October began with the return of teams to the first floor of Church St. Plans for phase 2 (December 2021), involving the ground floor in Church St, Municipal Building and Clydebank Town Centre Office were paused in line with Scottish Government advice which resulted in many offices closing again as employers were urged to facilitate widespread working from home again. Plans to reopen, combined with the return of employees in phases 1 & 2 are underway for late January/early February. Phase 3 will follow a few weeks later with this final phase resulting in all Council buildings being fully open.

Trades Unions colleagues continue to be updated on a weekly basis throughout the preparations alongside support to all teams due to return. Use of desk allocation, appropriateness of workstyle and service needs will continue to be monitored to ensure any impact is understood.

ICT

Work continues with the Council's Netscaler supplier to improve the design using existing equipment which should reduce the 'connection interrupted' issue.

ICT support for office returns resumed at end of January 2022 including use of floor walkers to best assist with device updates. Further process changes will be implemented alongside the new tools purchased, to support users in a hybrid working environment.

The 365 project implementation continues with the current focus on mailbox housekeeping and migration required before employees can further utilise 365 services. Whilst this migration phase is only one of a number of 365 workstreams underway, it will facilitate increased user mobility, full MS Teams integration and develop future real time collaboration within Sharepoint and one-drive services. In addition, ICT are implementing the InTune product to assist with end user device management, further enhancing the security infrastructure.

Transactional HR

The ongoing support for advertising and recruitment to specific COVID recovery posts continues with more than 80 positions being supported across the WDC establishment and over 50 positions within our Vaccination Support Teams to date (in addition to the usual business and workload). Additional Scottish Government monies to support HSCPs will result in HR Connect, the Council's HR service centre, recruiting around 50 additional positions across a range of teams. HR Connect is also the first point of people-centred enquiry and support such as annual

leave, terms and conditions, contractual changes and issue of contracts, COVID isolation rules and employee wellbeing amongst other topics.

4.2.7 Housing and Employability

The Communities Team continue to deliver a full service while largely working remotely. Through partnership working we have established a number of community based facilities for shared use by the team when they do need to be in the community. While many community groups prefer to meet remotely, the level of demand for capacity building work continues.

The CCTV monitoring team has now successfully transferred over the organisation and sit within the Communities Team. Work is underway to ensure the team settle well and continue to offer this importance service.

In terms of our Housing Development and Homelessness service area, there has been a notable increase in homelessness levels of around 15% in the first 3 quarters of 2021/22 compared to the same period in 2020/21. This is being monitored closely to see if this increase continues. There has also been an increase in repeat homelessness, 20 households re-presented within a 12 month period a key contributing factor was linked to domestic abuse. The higher levels of households in temporary accommodation, which has been a consistent impact as a result of the pandemic remains and stood at 274 at the end of December though only 11 households contained children. All these households are supported by our teams who have continued to provide much needed assistance throughout the pandemic.

We have increased our focus on homelessness prevention activities over the last quarter and have worked closely with a number of landlords to avoid evictions into homelessness; this activity has been further strengthened through the introduction of a Tenant Support Fund in late September, which is funded by the SG through the Tenant Support Grant of £0.277m. Awards through this fund are now being made with support provided to private and social rented tenants.

The Homelessness Services was fully operational over the recent festive period and ensured no episodes of rooflessness or destitution within the local authority area. Our new build programme has been progressing well under safe working practices. Over the course of the pandemic we have delivered 316 new homes, including the completion of the St Andrews, Creveul Court, Alexandria and Dumbarton Harbour, Dumbarton. The More Homes Delivery Team have provided a wide range of practical assistance to ensure all new tenants maximise the living experience of their new homes.

Our Caretaking, ASB and Neighbourhood teams continue to be operational within our communities providing much needed resource for our tenants.

The Housing Operations team continue to use Mitchell Way, Titan Building and St Andrew's assisted living facility as a local drop in base to use when out and about within our communities, with the ASB team continuing to use Popular Road.

Our focus continues to be on estate management, house letting, rent arrears and tenancy related activity and improving our performance and services across all of Housing Operations.

In respect of letting and tenancy related activity, we continue to carry out sign up's for new tenancies, along with other essential visits whereby the housing activity cannot be conducted over the phone or online. We have carried out a further review of our Covid risk assessments to ensure the safe working practices for our staff and tenants.

Our specialist teams remain in place across Housing Operations whilst we progress through the recovery of all our service areas from Covid. Our dedicated teams therefore remain split into two geographical areas of Dumbarton/Alexandria and Clydebank covering specific functions of allocation/void management, rent arrears and estate /tenancy management. Although we have a significant backlog to work through, which will take time to show the impact of these changes in our performance, we are starting to see progress into addressing these significant areas and are confident that this temporary change will allow our teams to focus on improvement to key service areas and address the backlog created due to COVID-19. We continue to closely monitor the progress of these specialist teams.

We now have our duty telephone contact system in operation within the Dumbarton/Alexandria area, whereby a duty Housing Officer will receive calls from tenants, as opposed to these calls going to individual mobile numbers. We have also undertaken several meetings with ICT in respect of developing this duty line further, with the view to covering all Housing Operations areas, including Clydebank. Work is underway to scope out this project in terms of ICT requirements, further information will follow on this.

Working 4U had fully established remote services for all staff and continued to deliver employability, welfare and learning services. The teams have established remote community hubs and deliver one-to-one and group support services from these virtual hubs.

Progress has been made on developing the local employability partnership and we have established a competitive grant for service providers delivering employability support in Phase 2 of No One Left Behind.

We are continuing to deliver major programmes such as the Young Person's Guarantee; Parental Employability Support and we are preparing for the delivery of an apprenticeship pathway. These projects are making a strong, positive contribution to our preparations for recovery.

We have also completed the West Dunbartonshire Local Child Poverty Report, and the Community Learning and Development Three Year Plan. These documents contain further information about plans for recovery.

While complying with health controls the teams had explored ways to re-establish face to face support focussing on those who cannot readily connect through digital platforms. This included the delivery of community learning and 'Improving the Cancer Journey' service from libraries. This development was held in abeyance because of the Omicron variant. However, eased health controls have allowed us to re-establish these services while planning for return to offices in Phase 2 of the Councils return to office plan.

We are continuing our work for service delivery in partner offices where their services have resumed. This includes ongoing discussions about delivering employability services from local jobcentres and service delivery partners as well as embedding welfare support in four GP Practices.

Demand for the Crisis Support team increased over the festive period. However, this team were able to cope with that demand and continue to be available to anyone in need of support. The team is currently preparing the process for distributing Household Support Funds; assisting those most in need with access to a grant to address fuel, debt, rent area costs that have grown as a result of their circumstances. The fund will focus on household of 'previously 'shielded' people facing hardship; families likely to be affected by poverty/disadvantage and single-person and older households facing hardship.

5. Financial and Procurement Implications

Financial Implications

- 5.1** The pandemic has had, and continues to have, implications in terms of service delivery and creating pressure on the Council's agreed 2021/22 budget and estimated budget in 2022/23. Total net cost implications of COVID-19 on the General Fund in 2020/21 were reported in the draft annual accounts for 2020/21 which showed that of the £20.430m of Scottish Government (SG) COVID-19 funding received £13.692m was used and £6.738m was carried forward. Of the

carried forward sum £4.765m was for SG funded interventions and £1.973m was from SG general COVID-19 funds.

- 5.2** Whilst the full financial impact in 2021/22 will not be absolutely clear until the financial year end officers have updated their estimates and are currently projecting a 2021/22 COVID-19 financial impact of £3.182m on the revenue budget. This will be funded from the general COVID funding made available by the SG. This will continue to be monitored and it should be noted it excludes spend on areas where SG has provided specific COVID-19 funding.
- 5.3** The Appendix to this report summarises the 2021/22 SG revenue funding made available to the Council, currently totalling £10.550m. Based on current infection rates and plans to ease lockdown restrictions it is likely that any further SG COVID-19 related funding will be limited (clearly this is dependent on the future of COVID-19 and any future impacts, restrictions and whether there is any further UK or Scottish Government funding required).
- 5.4** Of the £10.550m of SG funding currently provided for 2021/22, £4.488m is in the form of a general grant allocation, the remainder being for specific SG defined support. This is in addition to the sums noted at 5.1 as being brought-forward from 2020/21.

2022/23 Estimated COVID Cost Pressures

- 5.5** Officers in Finance are in the process of preparing the budget estimates to inform the setting of the Council's 2022/23 revenue budget on 9 March 2022. As part of that process a high level desktop review has identified an estimated £1.1m of COVID-19 specific revenue pressure in 2022/23 which will be funded from the Council's carried forward general COVID-19 funds. Note however this figure is likely to change based on a more detailed review by Officers prior to agreeing the 2022/23 budget and also throughout the course of 2022/23.

Supporting Communities

- 5.6** During December Council officers have continued to support local communities by processing £510,240 of COVID hardship payments (£160 per child), £80,700 of free school meal holiday payments (£25 per child), and 136 Self-Isolation Support Grants totalling £73,000 thus providing a total of £663,940 of financial support to families across West Dunbartonshire over the Christmas period.

HSCP Financial Implications

- 5.7** The continuing impact of COVID and the Omicron variant on health and social care services brings with it significant additional costs. These costs continue to be closely monitored and reported to the HSCP Board and the Scottish Government through the Local Mobilisation Plan (LMP) Financial Tracker. The Quarter 3 return

is currently being prepared and it is anticipated that the full year projected costs reported within the Quarter 2 return of £6.616m will reduce as the HSCP are required to align an element of the Winter monies received to support systems pressures.

The HSCP is holding £4.970m within its current COVID reserve and the Scottish Government continue to provide reassurance that all pandemic costs will be covered after all reasonable adjustments are made to offset projected expenditure with any related reduction in service costs.

The HSCP's share of the £300m funding package for 2021/22 amounted to £2.632m to support the following:

- Expanding Care at Home Capacity - £1.043m
- Interim Care - £0.673m
- Living Wage Increase to £10.02/hr - £0.580m
- Interim Care - £0.673m

The Scottish Government has committed to providing this funding on a recurring basis (with the exception of Interim Care) and this will be reflected in the 2022/23 HSCP budget plans.

5.8 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-19 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.
- 6.2** The most significant risk relates to the financial impact of COVID-19 on the Council and any potential shortfall in funding support from the SG. This risk has been significantly mitigated as COSLA has continued to engage with the SG to evidence the financial impacts on Councils and the need for further financial support or financial flexibilities. This has resulted in significant financial support being provided for 2020/21 and 2021/22 which it is expected will be sufficient to cover the identified costs of COVID-19 to 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 continue 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 undertaken in order to continue to achieve the Council's strategic objectives.

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

Joyce White
Chief Executive

Date: 3 February 2022

Person to Contact: Laurence Slavin, Chief Officer - Resources, Church Street Offices,
Dumbarton
Telephone (01389) 737191
e-mail: laurence.slavin@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Peter Hessett, Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration,
Church Street Offices, Dumbarton
Telephone (01389) 737800
e-mail: peter.hessett@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Victoria Rogers, Chief Officer – People and Technology,
Church Street Offices, Dumbarton
Telephone 07795 266028
e-mail: victoria.rogers@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Beth Culshaw, Chief Officer for Health & Social Care
Partnership, Church Street Offices, Dumbarton
Telephone 07946 612554
Email: beth.culshaw@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

Appendix: SG COVID-19 Funding provided to WDC in 2021/22

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;
9. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 7 January 2021;
10. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 24 February 2021;
11. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 26 May 2021;
12. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 23 June 2021;
13. Delivery of Services during Public Health Emergency – Council 23 June 2021;
14. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 24 August 2021;
15. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 29 September 2021;

and

16. COVID-19 Update Report – Council 27 October 2021.
17. COVID -19 Update Report – Council 22 December 2021

Wards Affected: All

Appendix

Local Government COVID-19 funding 2021/22	Scotland £m	WDC £m
<u>Funding directly to support Local Government (not ring-fenced)</u>	£262.000	£4.522
Non-recurring Covid-19 funding for 2021/22	£259.000	£4.488
Business Support Grants - Administration 2021/22	£3.000	£0.034

<u>Funding to support individuals/families/communities</u>	£152.844	£3.567
Family Pandemic Payments, incl. Admin	£23.860	£0.554
Low Income Pandemic Payments, incl. Admin	£68.154	£1.561
Scottish Child Payments - Bridging Payments	£25.830	£0.600
Tenant Grant Fund	£10.000	£0.277
Flexible Funding to tackle Financial Insecurity	£25.000	£0.575

<u>Funding for Education Recovery</u>	£165.000	£2.091
Additional Teaching and Support Staff	£50.000	£0.331
Additional Teachers (2 nd tranche)	£30.000	£0.198
Carbon Dioxide Monitoring	£10.000	£0.175
Support needs of children and young people for 2021/22	£60.000	£1.111
Summer Activities for Children and Young people	£15.000	£0.276

<u>Test and Protect Funding/Public Health/Supporting People</u>	£9.923	£0.202
Test & Protect - Outbound calling – to 30 June 2021	£2.275	£0.046
Test & Protect - Outbound calling – to 30 September 2021	£2.275	£0.046
Test & Protect - Outbound calling – to 31 December 2021	£2.275	£0.046
Test & Protect - Outbound calling – to 31 March 2022	£2.275	£0.046
Self-Isolation Support Grant - Additional Administration	£0.823	£0.020

<u>Health & Social Care funding and passed to LG for Local Mobilisation Plans:</u>	£0.000	£0.027
COVID Emergency Fund - Women's Safety & Support	Not Known	£0.027

<u>Other</u>	£7.900	£0.141
Environmental Health Officers (20/21 and 21/22)	£2.900	£0.027
Parental Employee Support Fund Boost	£5.000	£0.114

TOTAL FUNDING	£597.667	£10.550
----------------------	-----------------	----------------