



Briefing note for Elected Members

From: Steve Grimmond, Chief Executive

To: All Fife MPs and MSPs

Cc:

Subject: Coronavirus (Covid-19)

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This briefing note is to update members on action being taken by Fife Council in response to the coronavirus (Covid-19).

Please note: this provides an update for members from the last briefing note and is accurate at time of writing. However, the situation changes quickly and sometimes different decisions are made before things are confirmed publicly so please don't share details from this note with the media or members of the public. Please only share public notices and social media posts and point people to www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus or www.fife.gov.uk/coronavirus wherever possible.

Key points

- See the end of this document for a reference list of links to national guidance
- Services are running business-critical operations. We'll regularly issue these updates to keep you informed and would be grateful if you could avoid sending enquiries about service disruption or individual cases to officers, wherever possible. If you have an urgent enquiry, please contact the relevant Executive Director who will raise it through their IMT.
- Please direct enquiries from constituents or staff about health issues or working arrangements to www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus or their line manager

Workforce

- As at 2 April, across the council **and** Trusts We have 4,229 recorded instances of public health absence and 2,764 of these are recorded as working from home. In addition to these 22 people are off sick with presumed coronavirus.
- As at end 2 April, requests for staff to register their availability to cover critical roles have led to 731 volunteers. 390 of those have PVG and 30% are currently limited to working from home. This includes volunteers from Education & Children's Services who will be able to help with wider council effort beyond the children's activity centres.
- We have successfully established a team of volunteers to carry out the difficult and sensitive work that could be required in an emergency mortuary facility
- There's still a significant requirement to support residential childcare, home care and personal care – which are difficult roles to fulfil. Work continues to match staff to these roles and this will be ongoing, including carrying out necessary checks etc over the weekend.
- The Trusts are also now involved in the redeployment pool and many of these staff are already PVG checked.

- We're exploring potential from different sources of support, such as the business sector and a national recruitment drive by the SSSC.
- The MOD has alerted us that may be calling up Reservists, however this only affects 18 staff across the council
- COSLA and trade unions discussions about annual leave are ongoing. We've issued some updated advice to staff and indicated that more may come from national position
- We'll be issuing further advice to managers soon about how to manage casual, supply and temporary workforce.

Council buildings and IT systems

- There's additional demand for our remote desktop and council VPN laptops, particularly from Housing and Social Work whose teams use legacy IT systems that aren't available in the cloud. We've re-configured systems to improve performance as far as possible and are waiting for a report from Microsoft to determine if we can/should buy extra capacity or whether we need to split usage of systems differently between council services.

Caring for people (including Health & Social Care Partnership)

- The Partnership continues to maintain critical services – this has been bolstered by the deployment of partnership staff, Fife Council employees and volunteers supporting. The support we have received from our partners, voluntary and independent sectors and the people of Fife has been inspirational – integrated working at its best. We continue to look for appropriate staff to provide support for personal care.
- Personal protective equipment is a challenge nationally and locally. We received revised guidance on how and when to use PPE on 2 April and we will continue to follow the national guidance in this area. Staff safety is our top priority and we are working with National Services Scotland to streamline processes to ensure we have enough of the correct equipment in Fife.
- Staff testing will begin from Monday. Our frontline social care staff will be included in the staff testing as it rolls out across both health and social care teams, in partnership with NHS Fife.
- 564 children registered to potentially access children's activity centres. 148 pupils in the centres on 1 April. We're still working to improve links with most vulnerable young people in communities so they can benefit from the resources in centres. Staffing is in place for the school holiday period.
- Over 60% of Children's Services staff are still able to work directly with families and we're providing all essential support.
- Residential and foster care provision remains under review due to restrictions and anxiety of introducing children and young people into another family/residential home. This is further challenged by pressures on the residential care workforce. In addition to redeployment from within the services, we have asked the wider council workforce for volunteers to help with emergency placements – full advice and training will be provided to any suitable candidates
- Criminal justice are awaiting access to information about prisoners subject to early release to help us plan appropriate support services
- Work on preparing scatter flats and voids to combat any rise in homelessness continues. Food supply in some hostels has become challenging, which we'll support through food resilience arrangements.

Community support

- We have secured an 0800 freephone number which will be publicised from next week for anyone who can't get online and is struggling because of Covid-19 with food, shopping, prescriptions, finances or personal care etc. This will be the Covid community helpline.
- The food resilience hub and spoke centres are now live. Bankhead Central is acting as hub for food deliveries and onward distribution to venues across the seven areas. These venues are locations for emergency supplies of food. They will be prioritising those individuals identified as shielding and requiring urgent food. Suitable storage and food parcel packing arrangements are in place to cater for demand from those individuals on the shielding list.

- The food resilience team are also supporting local community food projects. Local projects will be able to access food supplies from the hubs and spokes. Area teams are in contact with their local community food projects.
- Food resilience are also supporting housing with homelessness and emergency food. The Area Teams will also arrange support through referrals from the Covid community helpline. We have now established the role of volunteer coordinator in each of the seven areas. Their job will be to match volunteers who have contacted the Helping Hand helpline with local community groups and voluntary organisations who are already providing assistance in their local communities. Volunteers will be provided with support and guidance, and appropriate safeguarding arrangements have been put in place.
- Over 1000 offers of help (some of which are couples or groups) have come in via the Helping Hand line, against some 600 requests for support. Any volunteers we can't use at a community level will be signpost to national volunteering programmes.

Bereavement services

- Preparatory work continues to deal with all arrangements linked to a potential rise in deaths based on national modelling figures supplied by the Scottish Government.

Environmental health & trading standards

- We're liaising with Police Scotland and working on protocols for enforcement officers in the community and we'll ensure any action taken is proportionate. Community managers will be a source of local information to support the environmental health team but initial work shows businesses are largely complying with new regulations.

Business & tourism

- We're continuing work with businesses in response to whether they are considered essential and can continue to trade, and how they can implement appropriate social distancing. Ultimately it is for businesses to determine their status and comply with rules.
- Business Improvement Districts ballots have been granted an extension of up to another year, and a national resilience fund for BIDs has been launched. We'll feedback further guidance for Cupar Now and BID St Andrews as we work through this new information.
- Please continue to forward any enquiries received from businesses to Gordon Mole, Head of Business & Employability

Finance & procurement

- We've issued guidance to managers about supplier relief measures
- We're also issuing advice to management teams about complying with financial regulations and controls despite the emergency situation

Service disruptions

- Service disruption information for the public is available from www.fife.gov.uk/coronavirus
- Waste management crews are reducing to two people in a cab plus a support vehicle alongside to adhere to social distancing requirements.
- There will be changes to green bin collections and residents are asked to check the bin calendar online. Information will also be sent to local media.
- Following advice from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency all council owned piers and harbours are now closed, as well as harbours and piers leased to other organisations. This is with the exception of Pittenweem Harbour which is home to the commercial fishing fleet and critical workers.
- New legislation allows a longer period of time to respond to FOI requests and more information will be circulated to Services in due course.

Communications

- From wc 6 April, Fife Council will start to publicise the Covid community helpline via social media (both on our own channels as well as shareable content for community groups), radio advertising and press coverage.

- The Scottish Government will write to all households on 13 April. The letter will include the council's new helpline number, email address and website.
- As at 2 April the COVID-19 section of our website (www.fife.gov.uk/coronavirus) has had around 112,000 page views since it was set up in early March.
- As expected, social media following, reach and engagement is up considerably. The reach of the council's main Twitter account increased by 80% in March compared to the month before and [Facebook](#)'s reach for March was up 221%, with a total reach of 1.8 million.
- See www.fife.gov.uk/coronavirus for the latest council updates and links national advice and support. Note – these website pages also include a feed from our main Facebook and Twitter accounts if you don't use these channels but are interested in seeing the updates
- We're still keeping in touch with staff via the employee app, the intranet and email
- We'll keep sharing national guidance with partners
- We continue to share NHS content and council notices on public social media channels

Reference information

- [Health Protection Scotland Guidance](#) includes:
 - [Guidance for non-healthcare settings](#)
 - [Guidance for social or community care and residential settings](#)
 - [Guidance on social distancing for protecting older people and vulnerable adults](#)
- [Ready Scotland Information](#)
- [NHS Inform](#) website for general health advice and public guidance
NHS Inform has created a toolkit of accessible versions and translated Coronavirus information.
 - [Download the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) communication toolkit \(ZIP, 20 MB\)](#)
 - [Download translated versions of our COVID-19 posters \(ZIP, 22MB\)](#)
- **Free helpline for those who do not have symptoms**
A free helpline has been set up for those who do not have symptoms but are looking for general health advice Tel: 0800 028 2816.
- **Helpline for small businesses**
A helpline providing businesses across Scotland with advice and guidance on COVID-19 is open Monday to Friday, between 8.30am to 5.30pm. Tel: 0300 303 0660.
- **Lending a helping hand in Fife** - To register urgent need, for you or someone you know, you can complete a registration form on the Fife Voluntary Action website at www.fva.org/pandemic. If you'd like to find out more about the service, send them an email at helpinghand@fva.org or call 0800 389 6046.