
Report To:	Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee	Date:	28 July 2020
Report By:	Chief Executive	Report No:	LP/079/20
Contact Officer:	Aubrey Fawcett	Contact No:	01475 712701
Subject:	COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Scrutiny Report		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report updates the Sub-Committee on actions taken by officers of the Council in order to address and mitigate the risks arising from the COVID-19 emergency.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 As approved at the Executive Sub- committee's previous meeting, this report ensures there is Elected Member oversight and scrutiny of all actions implemented by officers in the COVID-19 emergency. Officers have taken actions based upon the principles that essential services continue to be delivered to the public, wherever possible, and the core business of the Council is maintained with key regard to the safety of its workforce.
- 2.2 The Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 24 March 2020 authorised the suspension of all Council, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings for the duration of the emergency and delegated full powers in the emergency to this Executive Sub-Committee. This report ensures that Members have clear oversight of all actions taken by relevant officers and with particular regard to service impact.
- 2.3 This report identifies key issues for Member decision and scrutiny. The items identified in **Appendix 1** are updates of any actions taken since the previous meeting in response to the emergency. These items, if any, are identified to Members for their assessment of how the operational aims of maintaining crucial public services whilst safeguarding the workforce were achieved. The log of actions is indicative of the position on Wednesday 22 July 2020 and reflects the changing circumstances and decreased need, at this point, for urgent business decisions.
- 2.4 Reports in this format with relevant updates are being made to each meeting of the Executive Sub-Committee.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Sub-Committee:

- 3.1 notes the actions taken to date to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 emergency in Inverclyde;
- 3.2 notes that further reports will be submitted regularly for Members' scrutiny and review;
- 3.3 grants authority to the Head of Legal and Property Services to accept the most economically advantageous tender for the Family Support worker Tender notwithstanding the terms of paragraph 17.3 9(ii) of the Standing Orders relating to Contracts;
- 3.4 agrees that the costs of preparing to re-tender the Greenock Ocean Terminal building contract will be funded from the City Deal Earmarked Reserve in the first instance;

- 3.5 agrees that the Chief Financial Officer provides Inverclyde Leisure with a letter of comfort regarding the Council's financial support during 2020/21;
- 3.6 agrees to fund the opening of Gourock Pool for the period to the end of October with the costs added to the Covid costs budget;
- 3.7 confirms that its regular schedule of meetings will cease as at 28 July 2020 pending resumption of the ordinary cycle of Committees on 11 August 2020, subject to any emergency re-convening of the Sub Committee, if determined necessary in consultation with the Convener;
- 3.8 notes the Leader of the Council's letter to the Scottish Government relative to the Newly Self Employed Hardship Fund;
- 3.9 notes the response of the First Minister relative to the campaign to support families in poverty in Inverclyde; and
- 3.10 notes the response of the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport on the level of COVID-19 deaths in Inverclyde.

Aubrey Fawcett
Chief Executive

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council and its partners have been working to implement arrangements to deal with the ongoing response to the COVID-19 emergency. These arrangements are based upon an established corporate and incident response structure. Staff are able, by virtue of their roles and responsibilities, to deal with the emergency and it is recognised that the challenges posed by the current circumstances are profound and will require a continuous process of planning and preparation until its conclusion.
- 4.2 Internal and external communications, all decision-making by officers and the response arrangements are already firmly established through existing strategic and tactical meeting structures. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) is responsible for the strategic response and the tactical arrangements are discussed and proposed through the Council's Resilience Management Team (CRMT) (which also incorporates the Inverclyde Health & Social Care Partnership (H&SCP)). Additionally, the HSCP has activated its Local Management Resilience Team (LMRT) in which the Council has a number of representatives and this ensures that the Council and the HSCP are entirely joined up in decision-making. From a multi-agency perspective, the LMRT contributes to a Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board-wide gold command structure which covers acute, primary and social care. The Council is meeting weekly with multi-agency partners through the West Local Resilience Partnership (WLRP). At a strategic level LRP is also now operating at the level of the Health Board and this incorporates the six constituent Councils and appropriate multi-agency partners.

5.0 CURRENT ISSUES

- 5.1 Any decisions noted in **Appendix 1** have been taken by the CMT on the basis of tactical updates provided by the CRMT and, also, assessment by the relative Corporate Directors and their teams. Notwithstanding the developing situation, a clear audit trail of all decisions has been maintained with relevant but brief, focused backing papers being circulated for consideration and decision at the CMT daily meetings. The log of actions is indicative of the position on Wednesday 22 July 2020 and reflects the changing circumstances and decreased need, at this point, for urgent business decisions.
- 5.2 In addition to the daily briefings which have been immediately implemented by the CMT to ensure that all Members of the Council had advance notice of any service impact decisions, there continues to be constant dialogue and contact with relevant Conveners and, where appropriate, Minority Group spokespersons/contacts on key issues.
- 5.3 It has to be noted that there continues to be many operational demands on the Council by reason of the emergency, but as the situation to an extent stabilises in part in relation to workforce issues, it is the intention to continue to report in this format to the Executive Sub-Committee for purposes of scrutiny and review of all decisions.
- 5.4 Although a significant number of decisions have been taken across the range of Council services, the following key issues are identified and summarised as ongoing items for Members' information and for future business-planning:

HSCP

- 5.5 **Older People and Adult Care Home Support:-** The Scottish Government issued new guidance around support and governance of care homes in May 2020. The letter emphasised the need to monitor and support care homes around 3 key areas:

- Ensure support around workforce to maintain safe staffing levels
- Infection control
- Supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

NHS Boards and Councils have direct oversight of care home standards of care with scheduled meetings to be led by the Nursing Director, Chief Social Work Officer and Chief

Officer. IHSCP has in place:

- Daily Care Home Safety Huddle
 - Representative from Care Homes on the LRMT
 - Weekly meeting with Care Home Managers
 - Series of governance meetings in place with Care Home Companies
 - Weekly Multi-Disciplinary Public Health Meeting
- 5.6 Inverclyde HSCP has completed all assurance visits and has in place action plans for any Care Home not ascribed as Green in terms of risk. There is full involvement in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Care Home Assurance & Governance Group (Chaired by Chief Officer for IHSCP).
- 5.7 Inverclyde HSCP has developed a Care Home resource pack for all care homes across NHSGGC and a programme of webinars to share good practice.
- 5.8 IHSCP has agreed to a funding package to help sustain Care Homes through the current pandemic.
- 5.9 **Staff Testing**:- Due to declining numbers of symptomatic staff requesting tests, NHSGG&C has taken the decision to discontinue staff testing across all sites from Tuesday 14 July. Health and social care staff should now use NHS inform to request a test and will be directed via the UKGOV testing process to attend Glasgow Airport, Port Glasgow Health Centre or if not able to travel, to request a home test kit. Numbers for staff testing in Inverclyde have declined with around 16 of an available 550 appointments used in the past fortnight. We will retain the ability to restart this service if required in future.
- 5.10 As staff testing is currently carried out within the Greenock HC Assessment Centre, this now means that the site will be completely closed each morning allowing the corridor to be re-opened for access to the podiatry area. Increased Podiatry appointments will be available until 12pm each day from w/c 20 July.
- 5.11 **Assessment Centre**:- A second review on the future of the assessment centres across NHSGG&C is underway to determine current and future capacity and demand. Over the past fortnight 34 out of 100 appointments have been used with 27 of these being made directly by GPs and 7 being made by the hub at NHS24. Last week only 11 patients were seen (22% of the CAC capacity) with no positive covid tests carried out for some time. This is a positive indication of the low levels of covid circulating within the community at the present time. Given low usage consideration of different options/models are being developed.

Education and Communities

- 5.12 **School Transport**:- On 16 July the COVID-19 advisory sub-group issued guidance on school transport. The key messages of the advice are listed below.
- As far as it is safe to do so, children and their parents/carers should be encouraged to travel to school on foot, bike or scooter.
 - Dedicated school transport should be regarded as an extension of the school estate and physical distancing measures between pupils are not necessary (subject to continued low levels of infection within Scotland). We recognise that school transport will involve mixed age groups of pupils, but still consider the risk of transmission to be acceptably low when mitigations are in place.
 - Important mitigations include: hygiene, ventilation, improved cleaning regimes including regular and thorough cleaning of surfaces, and regular handwashing. Hand sanitising should be required for everyone on every entry to dedicated school transport.
 - Where public transport (including buses, taxi, trams, subway, trains, ferries and air) is required for school-aged children to attend school, the general advice and guidance

from the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland should be followed. This currently includes the mandatory use of face coverings and physical distancing where possible.

- Drivers and staff on public transport, and to a lesser extent on school transport, are at relatively higher risk of exposure and particular attention should be paid to ensuring that they are protected from airborne and surface transmission.
- Local authorities should continue to work with public transport providers to increase capacity as far as is reasonably possible and consider the introduction of staggered start/finish times.
- The advice that follows is contingent on there being low levels of infection in the Scottish population and on systems being in place for close monitoring, rapid testing and tracing of suspected cases.
- Measures put in place as precautions may become more relaxed as the prevalence and incidence of Covid-19 in Scotland reduce. Conversely, measures may need to be strengthened or reintroduced if there is evidence of a resurgence, or in the light of localised outbreaks. Where other relevant new evidence has implications for this advice, it will also need to be taken into account.
- This advice is based on a balance of evidence, bringing evidence specifically about Covid-19 together with evidence relating to the wider wellbeing of children and benefits of education.

5.13 Inverclyde Education Services are working with SPT to ensure that transport is in place for those who are entitled. The planned provision of bus passes for pupils living in the Kingston Dock area to use public transport to the Community Campus instead of a school bus has been delayed and a school bus will be provided. The subsidised bus to St. Columba's High School will still go ahead as planned. The guidance only applies to school transport and not to public transport and this may be an issue for some families, especially if buses and trains are full. No pupils who are entitled to transport to school in Inverclyde currently use public transport.

5.14 **Physical distancing in schools**:- On 16 July the COVID-19 advisory sub-group issued guidance on physical distancing in schools. The key messages of the advice are listed below.

5.14.1 Key messages

- Subject to continued suppression of the virus, and to surveillance and mitigations being in place, the balance of the evidence suggests that no distancing should be required between children in primary schools. The evidence is less clear for older pupils but at present we support the same approach being taken in secondary schools on the basis of the balance of known risks, the effectiveness of mitigations and the benefits to young people of being able to attend school.
- Two metre distancing should remain in place wherever possible between adults, and between adults and children who are not from the same household.
- Face coverings are not required for most children (those clinically advised to wear a covering would be an exception). Adults in schools do not need to wear face coverings as long as they can retain two metre distancing. Where adults cannot keep two metre distance, are interacting face-to-face and for about 15 minutes or more, face coverings should be worn.
- No additional general protections are proposed for particular categories of children or staff, such as those with underlying health conditions. Instead, requirements should be put in place to reflect individual circumstances in line with any specific clinical advice.
- The concerns within BAME communities must be recognised and individual requests for additional protections should be supported where possible. Care should be taken to ensure that BAME staff, pupils and families are involved in decisions about additional protections.

- Teachers should be provided with support and back-up in how to assess and meet the needs of children who have experienced neglect during the period of school closures.
- 5.14.2 A package of measures must be put in place to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus:
- There should be an increased emphasis on hand hygiene and surface cleaning. Hand washing/sanitising should be required for everyone on every entry to the school.
 - As close as possible to zero tolerance of symptoms should be in place, and strict compliance with the Test and Protect system.
 - In both primary and secondary settings, the preference should be to avoid large gatherings and crowded spaces and, as much as possible, to keep pupils within the same groups for the duration of the school day.
 - Sharing of equipment/utensils/toys/books should be minimised; and smaller groups and more outdoor activities put in place.
 - Movement between schools - of children, and of temporary/ supply/peripatetic staff etc. - should be kept to an absolute minimum.
- 5.14.3 Co-ordination with wider easing is vital, and the approach needs to feel coherent to children and adults. The sub-group emphasises that connectivity with transport issues will be critical.
- 5.15 Inverclyde education services are working with health and safety to ensure that risk assessments are revised in line with the new guidance and that schools are supported when they return. Hand sanitiser stations are in schools and a system has been set up for the ordering of PPE. Extra cleaning has been put into all schools.
- 5.16 **Reopening of schools**:- Final guidance for reopening of schools will be issued at the end of July. It is fully expected that the guidance will be supported by a continuity direction from the Scottish Government giving a legal basis for the implementation of the guidance.
- 5.17 Whilst the guidance is not yet available it may be that if schools do open to all of their pupils in August then it could be appropriate to have a phased start during the first week from 12 August – 14 August with all pupils returning on 17 August. There are advantages and disadvantages to a phased start which need to be taken into consideration.
- 5.18 The advantages of a phased start are that it allows schools to welcome pupils in smaller groups to establish routines taking into account extra hygiene measures etc. It would also allow new starts to the school and anybody who required additional support a chance to get to know their new environment in a less stressful situation. The first day of school is a milestone moment and we want this to be a positive experience for our young people. This will be the first time that many of our young people will have been in school for 4 months and parents and the young people themselves are naturally apprehensive about this prospect. A phased start with smaller groups allows fears to be allayed and allows schools to test the systems they have in place with smaller groupings.
- 5.19 The disadvantages of a phased start are that parents may need childcare for those days and also it makes the start of the school year more complex for attendance and transport arrangements.
- 5.20 If the guidance allows for a phased start then Education Services would propose to allow schools in Inverclyde to phase the start of term for pupils over the first week. The guidance education services will give to schools is to open up for P1 and S1 pupils on Wednesday 12 August and any child who requires additional support. On Thursday 13th and Friday 14 schools may choose to open the schools for half of the school (using the initial groupings from the 50% opening). The arrangements will depend on the size and complexity of the school and local solutions can be put in place if the school can accept more pupils. All pupils should have attended school at least once during the first week. Individual arrangements will be put in place for Craigmarloch School and those attending support bases.
- 5.21 Schools will be advised that if any parent requires childcare between 12 and 14 August then this should be made available. These arrangements will hopefully allow everyone to feel safe, allow schools to explain new regimes to pupils and minimise disruption to parents.

When the national guidance is issued schools will communicate directly with parents.

- 5.22 **Arrangements for 1140 hours Early Learning and Childcare:-** The guidance for opening Early Years and Childcare settings was issued on 15 June. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-guidance-on-reopening-early-learning-and-childcare-services/>. Bespoke guidance for childminders and completely outdoor setting is also available.
- 5.23 Although the Scottish Government relieved the statutory requirement to do this, Inverclyde is able to offer 1140 hours for early years for academic year 2020/21 providing schools and early years establishments are safe to open. Parents have been informed of their allocated place. As previously reported to committee it has not been possible to allocate every family their preferred place with their preferred pattern, although for the majority of places we have been able to meet parental requests. There is still some ongoing discussion about the funding for cross boundary placements. Because not all authorities were in a position to deliver 1140 hours, the agreement in the west partnership was to fund the statutory requirement of 600 hours for cross boundary placements. This will be considered and reviewed at the beginning of August and will be reported to the Education and Communities Committee along with any financial implications.
- 5.24 The process for the commissioning of funded providers concluded at the end of June. After careful scrutiny in relation to operational, quality and financial processes 4 nursery settings and 19 childminders were awarded funded provider status as of August 2020. This is a significant increase in the number of funded providers in Inverclyde.
- 5.25 **Additional funding for the opening of schools:-** £100 million has been made available to support the reopening of schools. Up to half of this will be allocated to education authorities to employ additional staff to support the recovery curriculum. Whilst this funding was initially announced as being ring-fenced for newly qualified teachers, it is anticipated that this will not remain the case when the guidance is issued. The distribution of the funding is still to be decided. Inverclyde Education Services are working with teaching unions and head teachers to start the recruitment process for additional staff that will be required.
- 5.26 **Digital inclusion funding:-** On 9 July 2020 the Council applied for funding to provide 1200 digitally excluded students with laptops and 350 with Wi-Fi. This programme will equip every student with an entitlement to free school meals in secondary education with access to a device with appropriate connectivity as required. Further details of the arrangements in place to administer the distribution of the laptops will be taken to the September Education and Communities Committee.
- 5.27 **Delegated Approval to Award - Family Support Worker Tender:-** In line with the Council's Contract Standing Orders 17.3 (ii) delegated approval to award the tender for the Provision of a Family Support Worker Service is required. The total value of this tender exercise is £900,000. The contract period is 1 October 2020 until 30 September 2021 with an option to extend for a further 6 months until 31 March 2022.
- 5.28 In order to ensure quality the tender comprises of a 2 stage process, this includes a pass/fail section as part of the selection criteria. This section requires bidders to confirm they have the relevant experience and qualifications to deliver the Family Support Worker Service. If the bidder demonstrates they have the relevant experience and qualifications to deliver the Family Support Worker Service they are then taken forward to the evaluation and award criteria section of the process. This section of tender is weighted at 60% Price and 40% Quality.
- 5.29 In order to progress, delegated approval to award is required from committee. Following any approval a request will be sent to Legal Services to prepare and issue the standstill letters and subject to no challenges being made within the standstill period the contract will be formally awarded in time for the contract start date of 1 October 2020.
- 5.30 **Inverclyde Leisure:-** Officers are in regular discussion with Inverclyde Leisure (IL) regarding their financial position following the loss of almost all income since March. Based on latest

figures reported to the IL Board then if the Council were to request immediate repayment of unreimbursed payroll costs then there could be implications for IL's ongoing business as an independent organisation.

It is therefore recommended that the Sub-Committee agree that the Chief Financial officer write a letter of comfort to IL advising that the Council will continue to fund IL and will make a decision on increased funding in coming months. This will provide the IL Auditors and OSCR with reassurance.

- 5.31 It is anticipated that an announcement will be made soon by the Scottish Government regarding the opening of leisure facilities. A specific issue related to this is the potential extended opening of the Gourrock Pool. Based on opening the pool by the end of August, keeping the pool open until the end of October will cost approximately £36,000.

Environment, Regeneration and Resources

- 5.32 **Council Tax**:- After having been suspended since mid-March Council Tax follow up processes have been restarted. An initial letter has been issued to individuals currently in arrears encouraging people to get in touch with the Council for support or to make arrangements to catch up with payments. Officers intend to commence the more formal recovery processes in September but this will be refined to try and ensure that those in a more financially vulnerable situation are excluded at this time.

- 5.33 **Business Grants**:- The Business Grants scheme is now closed to new applications and officers are working their way through outstanding cases with the aim of completing the bulk of this by the end of July. As at 22 July 978 grants totalling £10.80million have been paid. As the Council has now utilised the initial £10.56million grant payment, the Scottish Government have paid a further £440,000 to the Council giving a total budget of £11.0million.

- 5.34 **Greenock Ocean Terminal**:- An update was provided to the Sub-Committee on 16 June 2020 which set out the contractual position for the Council following Central Building Contractors (Glasgow) Limited, the main contractor for the Greenock Ocean Terminal Building, entering administration. It was agreed prudent to carry out a high level options appraisal prior to committing to retender.

- 5.35 The options appraisal has been carried out however in order to fully understand the implications on the viability of the project there will be additional costs associated with the re-tender, and COVID-19 restrictions. It is estimated to prepare for a retender, costs will be £54k and this will initially met from the earmarked reserve pending inclusion in a revised City Deal Grant claim. Further discussion requires to be held with the interested parties for the project which may result in a change in the business model and recognition has to be given that these re-tender costs are being carried out at risk.

- 5.36 **Cruise Ships**:- Stuart McMillan MSP has forwarded a copy of the reply he received from the Scottish Government in respect of his letter to them of 11 May concerning the berthing of cruise ships in the Clyde. A copy is attached as **Appendix 2**.

- 5.37 **Committee cycle**:- it was the decision of the Executive Sub Committee at its 2 June 2020 meeting to approve the resumption of the meetings of the Council's committees as from 11 August 2020 on a remote online- only basis for that whole cycle. This report formalises the arrangements for the cessation of the Executive Sub Committee's powers at this point in the emergency.

6.0 COVID-19 TESTING

- 6.1 **Covid 19 Testing**:- At the Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee meeting on the 19 May it was requested that an update on key issues relating to testing be submitted to each future meeting of the Executive Sub-Committee.

- 6.2 The HSCP update on testing is provided in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.11.

6.3 Testing is accessed via the government website:

- Citizen Portal <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test>
- Essential Workers self-referral <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-essential-workers>
- Employers Portal <https://coronavirus-invite-testing.service.gov.uk/DaraTestDemand/Login>

6.4 **Testing for Council Employees and the Wider Community:-** The Council is continuing to publicise and promote testing amongst Inverclyde Council staff including HSCP and the community. Testing referrals can be made more than once daily and will be accepted between 8am and 6pm. This has assisted in speeding up the referral process.

6.5 Since 1 May there have been fourteen referrals for Council staff and one for a household member for testing. Of the 15 results received so far all have been negative. Three of the referrals were self-referrals, two of which were inconclusive and resulted in another referral via the Council. Eight of the tests have been related to staff working in Education. Five have been for staff in Regeneration and Planning, one for Environmental and Protective Services two for HSCP.

6.6 **Staff Testing:-** Due to declining numbers of symptomatic staff requesting tests, NHSGG&C has taken the decision to discontinue staff testing across sites from Tuesday 14 July. Health and social Care staff should now use NHS inform to request a test and will be directed via the UKGOV testing process to attend Glasgow Airport, Port Glasgow Health Centre or if not able to travel, to request a home test kit. Numbers for staff testing in Inverclyde have declined with around 16 of an available 550 appointments used in the past fortnight. We will retain the ability to restart this service if required in future.

6.7 As staff testing is currently carried out within the Greenock Health Centre Assessment Centre, this now means that the site will be completely closed each morning allowing the corridor to be re-opened for access to the podiatry area. Increased Podiatry appointments will be available until 12pm each day from w/c 20th.

6.8 **Assessment Centre:-** A second review on the future of the assessment centres across NHSGG&C is underway to determine current and future capacity and demand. Over the past fortnight 34 out of 100 appointments have been used with 27 of these being made directly by GPs and 7 being made by the hub at NHS24. Last week only 11 patients were seen (22% of the CAC capacity) with no positive Covid tests carried out for some time. This is a positive indication of the low levels of Covid circulating within the community at the present time.

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE WITH SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

7.1 **Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture:-** following upon the review of this item at the 30 June 2020 meeting, the Executive Sub Committee agreed that the Leader of the Council should write to the Scottish Government with the Council's representations on the Newly Self Employed Hardship Fund and this is attached as **Appendix 3**.

7.2 **First Minister:-** The Chief Executive was requested at the meeting of the Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee on 2 June 2020 to write to the First Minister to seek support for families in Inverclyde and to request direct financial assistance for this campaign. The Chief Executive's letter and the response from the First Minister dated 16 July 2020 is **Appendix 4**.

7.3 **Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport:-** The Chief Executive was requested at the Policy and Resources Executive Sub-Committee on 30 June to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, advising her that Members remain concerned about the level of Covid deaths in Inverclyde and wished answers in relation to how the virus came into Inverclyde at the outset of the pandemic and how was it transmitted. The Chief Executive's letter and the Cabinet Secretary's response dated 9 July 2020 is **Appendix 5**.

8.0 WORKFORCE ISSUES

- 8.1 **Workforce issues:** The issues in terms of workforce availability and confidence are crucial. Officers from Organisational Development, Policy & Communications are in contact with COSLA colleagues relative to workforce statistics, illness/absence rates, working from home, etc. This information is being collated at a national level and is helping to inform discussions between senior leaders in SOLACE, COSLA and the Scottish Government regarding the impact of COVID-19 on service provision, and the key staffing issues that require some form of national consideration.
- 8.2 **Employee attendance:** Information is being gathered on a daily basis by managers across the Council. This allows managers to assess resource implications for delivering essential services and also to maintain contact and support those unable to attend work.
- 8.3 The table below provides approximate absence levels council wide and within some of our key essential service areas, as at 16 July 2020:-

Council	
Historic average absence rate (%) (Pre Covid-19 to give a baseline comparator.)	4.3%
Absence rate on 16 July 2020 (%) (This includes all those employees reporting sick, those isolating, those absent with caring responsibilities and those non-essential employees at home unable to work from home). Please note that this excludes employees working from home.	<p>Council Wide 7.5%</p> <p><u>Essential Services Breakdown (% of Service Area)</u></p> <p>Home Care 7.8%</p> <p>Other HSCP 6.3%</p> <p>Waste Management 9%</p> <p>Facilities 4.5%</p>

- 8.4 The table below provides a comparison of absence levels across the Council over the past few weeks which have been reported to this Committee (the breakdown of absence levels amongst essential services is not available for the 1st and 14th April dates):

	01.04.20	14.04.20	28.04.20	12.05.20	26.05.20	09.06.20	16.07.20
Council	19.0%	19.3%	18.5%	17.5%	17.6%	16.9%	7.5%
Home Care	N/A	N/A	27.3%	19.2%	20.2%	18.5%	7.8%
Other HSCP	N/A	N/A	21.87%	14.2%	17.3%	11.22%	6.3%
Waste Mgt	N/A	N/A	29.5%	24.3%	24.0%	23.9%	9%
Facilities	N/A	N/A	23.0%	26.1%	22.2%	14.6%	4.5%

There has been a significant reduction in absence levels in some areas as Scottish Government advice has been updated and employees are supported back to work following periods of self-isolation.

- 8.5 From this, the Executive Sub-Committee should note that it is essential for all officers to focus all efforts and available resources on addressing the Council's response to the emergency and, for that key reason, the support of all Members is requested in circumstances where the expectations of routine enquiries or normal timescales for operational response to Councillors cannot be met. The emergency will involve delays to otherwise usual Council business and recognition of this impact is needed and officers will, of course, continue to focus service support on the vulnerable in the community.

8.6 **Recovery plans:-** Recovery groups have been set up Council wide to plan how we resume services and support employees back into the workplace. A Checklist for Managers has been developed which will support recovery plans and will cover areas such as: communication and consultation, continuation of homeworking, returning employees to work on a phased basis, workforce planning, and health and wellbeing. The Health & Safety team continue to provide risk assessments, advice on appropriate PPE, are working in close liaison with property services to ensure buildings are ready so that employees and visitors can safely undertake the correct social distancing and hygiene behaviours, as well as developing guidance on 'social distancing in offices'. HR Policies around home and flexible working will be reviewed in light of the ongoing crisis and lessons learned. All work to date and in the future will involve full engagement with our trade union colleagues.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Finance

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Greenock Ocean Terminal	Building Contract	2020/21	£54,000	n/a	Earmarked reserve
Leisure	Inverclyde Leisure	2020/21	£36,000		Fund from Covid Costs

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments

9.2 Legal

There are no Legal implications other than as noted within this report.

9.3 Human Resources

There are no Human Resources implications other than as noted within this report.

9.4 Equalities

Equalities

(a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required
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(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO

9.5 **Repopulation**

All of the steps undertaken by Officers seek to support the long-term interests of the Inverclyde economy and to provide a secure and safe environment for its workforce.

10.0 CONSULTATIONS

10.1 The Corporate Management Team endorses this report.

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None

Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee
Weekly Update on Operational Decision Log
From Thursday 25 June 2020 to Wednesday 1 July 2020

Head of Legal & Property Services
GM/KB
2 July 2020

Service Impact	Reason	Reported to CMT	Supporting Report Yes – N/A	Implemented	Officer
Environment, Regeneration & Resources Directorate					
<u>Legal and Property Services</u>					
65. Postpone commencement of taxi fare scale review from June 2020 to November 2020.	To take account of COVID -19 impact on the Inverclyde community in consultation with taxi trade and as statutory review timescales permit completion no later than May 2021	Yes	Yes	25.06.20	GM
<u>Environmental & Public Protection</u>					
66. Progressively re-open Play Areas, subject to Scottish Government guidance	To restore service provision to communities	Yes	N/A	25.06.20	GMacF
67. Review the charging policy for multiple burials and multiple interments of ashes and assess multiple cremation charges.	To recognise COVID-19 impact and to take account of all other occurrences of multiple deaths	Chief Executive	N/A	28.06.20	GMacF
Health and Social Care Partnership					
68. Restore centre based Learning Disability Care Services at the Fitzgerald Centre for 20% of service users by 11 August 2020.	To support service users and their carers as soon as possible with an incremental approach to embed social distancing and respiratory hygiene processes and taking account of PPE and transport requirements.	Yes	Yes	30.06.20	LL
69. Older persons' care services-review after 31 July 2020	Day centres provision for older people will be reviewed once shielding restrictions relaxed	Yes	Yes	30.06.20	LL

Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee

Weekly Update on Operational Decision Log

From Thursday 2 July 2020 to Wednesday 8 July 2020

Head of Legal & Property Services

GM/KB

9 July 2020

Service Impact	Reason	Reported to CMT	Supporting Report Yes – N/A	Implemented	Officer
ALL DIRECTORATES					
70. All Offices and Depots to have phased re-opening in period 20 to 31 July 2020, subject to Scottish Government advice, with opening to the public at CSC and at HSCP offices on an appointment-only basis from the 15 July; access to Museum and Greenock, Gourock and Port Glasgow Libraries on limited pilot scheme basis from that date	To plan for Scottish Government possible announcement on phased progression of the Route Map and to restore, within social distancing and health restriction criteria, access to all operational locations safe access to relevant staff and the public.	Yes	As per Recovery Plan and Scottish Govt. guidance	02.07 2020	CMT
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP					
71. Revision: Restore centre based Learning Disability Care Services at the Fitzgerald Centre for 20% of service users on dates and schedule conform to Scottish Government guidance	To support service users and their carers with an incremental approach to embed social distancing and respiratory hygiene processes and taking account of PPE and transport requirements	Yes	As per Recovery Plan and Scottish Govt. guidance	07.07.20	LL

Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee

Weekly Update on Operational Decision Log

From Thursday 9 July 2020 to Wednesday 15 July 2020

Head of Legal & Property Services

GM/KB

16 July 2020

Service Impact	Reason	Reported to CMT	Supporting Report Yes – N/A	Implemented	Officer
EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT					
72. Use of Emergency Powers sought and obtained for School Trips - Refunds to parents for up to £75,000 relative to payments currently unrecovered or uninsured for cancellation of school trips due to COVID-19	To deal equitably with the case-by-case arrangements for school trips and reimburse parents whilst schools pursue insurance claims. The unrecovered costs to be funded from the Schools' Budget and, where possible, from within the individual school resources.	Yes	Yes- Emergency Powers report submitted to Members	09.07 2020	RB
ENVIRONMENT, REGENERATION AND RESOURCES					
73. Prioritised and phased re-opening of public toilets as from 20.07.20 commencing with Inverkip, Fore St, Port Glasgow, Ashton Prom, Gourrock, Esplanade, Greenock (and working with Clyde Muirshiel re Lunderston and Cornalees)	To restore public services to the Inverclyde public and to visitors and to provide for suitable cleaning and hygiene processes within the facilities	Yes	Yes	09.07.20	MMcN

Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee
Weekly Update on Operational Decision Log
From Thursday 16 July 2020 to Wednesday 22 July 2020

Head of Legal & Property Services
GM/KB
23 July 2020

Service Impact	Reason	Reported to CMT	Supporting Report Yes – N/A	Implemented	Officer
H S C P					
74. Make provision for sustainability payments to Older People Care Homes for those adversely impacted by COVID-19	To provide additional financial assurance and support to the care home sector taking into account the Joint CoSLA and Health & Care Scotland Guidance.	Yes	Yes	16.07 2020	LL
ENVIRONMENT, REGENERATION AND RESOURCES					
Environment and Public Protection					
75. Recommence Taxi / Private Hire testing as from 3 August 2020 in accordance with Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency guidance.	To support and maintain standards of vehicle roadworthiness for public safety and in consultation with the taxi trade.	Yes	Yes	21.07.20	KL



T : 0300 244 4000
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Stuart McMillan MSP
Stuart.McMillan.msp@parliament.scot

APPENDIX 2

Our Reference: 202000036693

21 July 2020

Dear Stuart,

Thank you for your email of 11 May about the proposed disembarking of crew from certain ships berthing at Greenock. I note the points that you raise, especially in light of concerns expressed by councillors and the local population about the impact COVID-19 is having in your constituency. I am sorry for the delay in my reply.

As you say, the legislative context within which we operate is that Border control is reserved to the UK Government while Port Health is devolved to Scotland. The Local Authority and the local NHS Board have statutory responsibility for port health. We are therefore working closely with Health Protection Scotland, Inverclyde Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde on this matter.

Schedule 21 Part 3 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 provides powers to require people to be detained for testing and assessment, and for requirements such as quarantining or restrictions of movement to be made.

We understand that the proposal in this instance was for a small number of vessels to arrive with only crew on board, some of whom may require to be repatriated. This would be carried out in line with health protection advice. Vessels would then take on stores and be anchored with a skeleton crew staying on board. This has occurred already in other ports around the UK including the Firth of Forth. Well established protocol exists to allow local councils, who are responsible for port health incidents, to effectively prevent any spread of COVID-19. There are procedures on declarations of health for ships arriving in Scottish ports and also procedures to be followed in the case of disembarkation being required from the ships. We understand that ships have now docked in Glasgow with a skeleton crew and no passengers on board. We will continue to liaise with the local authority on this and understand meantime that the ship has advised there are no instances of COVID-19 on board.

I hope that this provides some reassurance to you that authorities at both national and local levels take our responsibilities seriously when it comes to the health and wellbeing of all of those living and



working around our ports.

Yours sincerely,

GRAEME DEY



APPENDIX 3

Leader of the Council

Fiona Hyslop MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture
T3.26
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Fiona.Hyslop.msp@parliament.scot

Direct Line: 01475 712727
Email: stephen.mccabe@inverclyde.gov.uk
Our Ref: SMCc/
Your Ref:
Date: 14th July 2020

Dear Ms Hyslop,

I write to advise you that Inverclyde Council's Policy and Resources Executive Sub-Committee on the 30th June 2020 discussed the plight of some of our local businesses who are failing to access support from the various Government schemes to assist companies during the current pandemic.

Whilst I appreciate that business support interventions from both the United Kingdom and Scottish Governments for businesses affected by COVID-19 have provided significant support for many businesses both in Inverclyde and across Scotland I am writing to you on behalf of a number of Inverclyde business owners who find themselves ineligible for business support during these very challenging times.

I am deeply concerned that despite officers engaging with both representative bodies and directly with your officers, local businesses have, and still are "falling through the cracks" Whether it be a limited companies with a sole director as the employee or newly self-employed individuals who have had part year PAYE income or those who claimed universal credit, the lack of eligibility to access mainstream COVID-19 funds has been very damaging to their small businesses. I would therefore urge you to give consideration to those businesses / individuals who have not been able to access funds and seek a special intervention to remedy this unfortunate situation.

Members of Inverclyde Council and our local businesses look forward to hearing from you on what assistance the Scottish Government can provide.

Yours sincerely


Stephen McCabe
Leader of Inverclyde Council

APPENDIX 3

Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Fair Work and Culture
Fiona Hyslop MSP



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Councillor Stephen McCabe
Email: Jackie.McLaren@inverclyde.gov.uk

Our ref: 202000061441
23 July 2020

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your letter of 14 July regarding the support provided to business affected by COVID-19.

Recognising the challenges faced by individuals and businesses caused by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic the Scottish Government acted quickly to put in place a package of support for business.

We have committed over £2.3 billion of business support measures, tailored to the particular needs of the Scottish economy. This support includes extra rates reliefs for non-domestic properties, the coronavirus business support fund and a £185 million package of targeted support for SMEs and the self-employed.

We are passing on every penny of the consequential funding received from the UK Government for business support, and more, directly to businesses, and more businesses in Scotland were made eligible through our decisions than would have been under the UK Government approach. We have also aimed to plug the gaps in existing UK-wide schemes.

We recognise that, as referred to in your letter, some businesses may not meet the eligibility criteria for our support schemes. You will appreciate that in offering support we have had to make difficult decisions and balance helping as many businesses as possible against affordability.

I would assure you that we continue to listen to the needs of businesses across Scotland to ensure they are receiving the maximum possible help and support during this unprecedented economic challenge. To ensure funds do not sit for too long in schemes that are attracting few applications, we recently closed the coronavirus business support fund to new applications. This will enable us to ensure that any remaining resources can be used to help business in other ways, as we have already started to do for the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund. We will be actively considering how any remaining money will be re-routed to support business where it is most required.

You also highlight the particular examples of limited companies with a sole director, and newly self-employed individuals. Although we welcome the UK Government's Self-Employment Income Support Scheme because it provides much needed support for many self-employed

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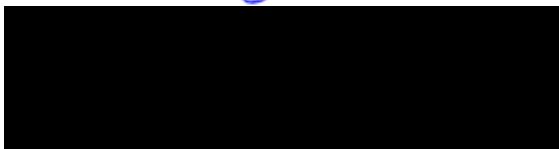


people in Scotland, we recognise that some self-employed people will fall outside of the eligibility of the scheme, including sole directors and those whose income from their self-employment comprised less than 50% of their total income for the 2018/19 tax year. As you will appreciate the scheme and the rules regarding its administration are reserved matters. However, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance wrote to the UK Government on 9 April to state our reservations to the Self-Employment Support Scheme being a blanket response to be applied to all self-employed individuals regardless of their differing financial situations and legal status.

The Scottish Government's Newly Self-Employed Hardship Fund was targeted at those people who were ineligible for the UK scheme, and was intended to provide a limited amount of support to people who had recently become self-employed and were experiencing hardship. We have called on the UK Government to provide additional funding for people who became self-employed in the 2019-20 financial year.

The Scottish Government is determined to help keep companies in business and we have worked tirelessly to keep business afloat. The package of business support remains under regular review and we will continue to work with the UK Government and consider any further support which may be required to fill the gaps or for the specific needs of Scotland's business community.

Kind regards



FIONA HYSLOP

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APPENDIX 4

Our Ref: AF/JMcL

Date: 9th June 2020

Ms Nicola Sturgeon MSP
The First Minister
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Aubrey Fawcett
BSc(Hons), DAAS, DipTP, RIBA, ARIAS, MRTPI
Chief Executive
Municipal Buildings
Clyde Square
Greenock
PA15 1LY
Tel: 01475 712701
Chief.executive@inverclyde.gov.uk

Dear First Minister

On 2 June 2020, Inverclyde Council's Policy and Resources Executive Sub-committee, in its capacity as the emergency committee for the Council during the COVID-19 pandemic, met and reviewed a motion about a campaign to support families in poverty in Inverclyde.

That support was agreed and consequently I am writing to you on behalf of the Council to seek support for the motion, the campaign behind it and action to deliver direct financial support to families in poverty.

While poverty in families transcends the current coronavirus pandemic all evidence shows that those living in poverty are among the worst affected by the virus.

The motion, which was proposed by Councillor Colin Jackson is attached in full, notes that a study by think tank, The Institute for Public Policy Research found that nearly half of families with children in Scotland are struggling to make ends meet through the current Covid-19 crisis.

The report states that 300,000 households with children in Scotland (49%) are struggling to make ends meet or are in serious financial difficulty and that the coronavirus pandemic is having a devastating impact on family finances.

Here in Inverclyde you will have seen we have been one of the worst affected areas by covid-19 with the highest death rates in the country. This year, Inverclyde has also become the area with the highest levels of deprivation in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) statistics. In Inverclyde 7,886 people are in receipt of Universal Credit (April 2020 figures), the highest level since recording began.

According to the SIMD figures levels of acute deprivation in Inverclyde have almost doubled between 2016 and 2020. Data zone S01010891 in Greenock town centre is the most deprived data zone in Scotland. Also, there are 21 data zones within Inverclyde within the 5% most deprived in Scotland. Income and employment deprivation are highly significant issues for the whole of Inverclyde. The area has the second highest level of income deprivation in Scotland and the highest level of employment deprivation in Scotland.



13,945 (17.7%) of the local population is income deprived, compared to 12% in Scotland, but levels rise dramatically in our most deprived data zones. There are 7,126 people in Inverclyde that are employment deprived. This is 14.3% of the population and is higher than the Scottish average of 9%. Families have lost income due to covid-19 whether being furloughed or losing their jobs resulting in lack of income.

During this crisis, there has been a great deal of support from both the Scottish and UK Governments, local councils and other public services and the wider community to support families and individuals particularly geared towards helping them adhere to the lockdown rules.

As the country moves towards more normality the poverty gap and growing financial hardship will be more exposed.

As a step towards helping to alleviate the devastation caused in families in poverty the council is seeking Scottish Government support for the wider campaign and a direct payment of £250 to every child in a family in serious financial difficulty as an emergency package.

Yours sincerely



Aubrey Fawcett
Chief Executive



APPENDIX for letter to First Minister

Emergency Package to Prevent Child Poverty Crisis – Notice of Motion by Councillor Jackson

“(i) A study by IPPR (Scotland) has reported that nearly half of families with children in Scotland are struggling to make ends meet through the current Covid-19 crisis. The report states that 300,000 households with children in Scotland (49%) are struggling to make ends meet or in serious financial difficulty, that the coronavirus pandemic is having a devastating impact on family finances.

(ii) Over 100 children’s charities, faith groups, academics, think tanks, poverty campaigners and trade unions support a direct financial boost for all families living on low incomes to support them through the coronavirus crisis. Signatories include the STUC, Scottish Women’s Aid, Scottish Association for Mental Health, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, IPPR, Barnardo’s, Poverty Alliance, Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland and One Parent Families Scotland.

(iii) The latest Scottish index of multiple deprivation (SIMD) ranked Greenock town centre and east central the most deprived part of the country and the latest figures from the National Records of Scotland ranked Inverclyde local authority as having the highest Covid-19 death rate in the country.

(iv) Inverclyde families are at a higher risk of falling into financial hardship. Inverclyde Council ask that the Scottish Government support calls to step in to provide new payments to financially starved households, that in addition to support provided by the UK Government, through the powers already available to the Scottish Government, the First Minister fund an emergency package to prevent a child poverty crisis, to provide a new payment of £250 to every child in families in serious financial difficulty.”

APPENDIX 4

DIRECTORATE FOR HOUSING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
DHSJ : Social Justice and Regeneration



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Aubrey Fawcett
Jackie.McLaren@inverclyde.gov.uk

Our Reference: 202000054724

16 July 2020

Dear Aubrey Fawcett,

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 June to the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, seeking support for additional financial measures for families in poverty and advising of research undertaken by IPPR Scotland. The First Minister has asked me to respond as a policy officer in the Social Justice Strategy Unit.

We are aware of the acute strain that the coronavirus pandemic is putting on individuals and communities across Scotland, compounding the issues that children and families in poverty face. At times such as these, the urgent need to tackle poverty and inequality comes into ever sharper focus.

At the outset of the pandemic, we committed to meeting the scale of the challenge head on and have committed billions in additional investment to do just that. This includes over £2.3 billion in support for businesses enabling them to keep people, including parents, employed. In addition we have targeted specific intervention for self-employed individuals experiencing hardship so we can ensure people, regardless of their employment status are supported.

For our communities, we committed £350 million of new funding to support those most at risk and ensure that public services, third sector and community organisations are able to step up and meet the needs of people across the country. This includes more than doubling the resource available for the Scottish Welfare Fund to a total of £80.5 million, providing support to individuals in financial crisis. We have, to date, allocated over £100 million of new funding to local authorities from this package, with £50 million of flexible hardship funding to meet local needs and £30 million of initial investment targeted at food insecurity.

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Beyond the scope of the communities funding package we recently committed a further £27.6 million to local authorities to tackle food insecurity and support individuals at risk. This includes the extension of Free School Meal provision until schools start back on 11 August, benefitting around 175,000 children and young people across Scotland. An additional £155 million of consequentials were announced for local authorities on 26 May and paid in June.

Through this unprecedented package of support, we have committed £125 million of funding to support third sector and community efforts across Scotland to ensure they can provide tailored support for those in need through our Wellbeing and Supporting Communities Funds, from which Inverclyde is benefitting. For example, from our Supporting Communities Fund we awarded £40,000 to Inverclyde Community Development Trust and £140,000 to Oak Tree Housing Association, helping them respond to community needs. We have published a Communities funding [mapping tool](#) which highlights investment by local authority, and details of individual organisations receiving funding can be found on the [SCVO website](#).

As we progress through the routemap and towards our new normal, we are working to repair the social and economic damage wrought by the pandemic. The IPPR campaign you cite is right to note that there are certain powers available to us to take further action but these are limited, just as resources are finite, and we must prioritise. That is why in June we announced a further boost to the support available to carers – many of whom are women and are facing additional financial pressures. Thanks to the successful passage of our second Covid-19 Bill on 26 May, around 83,000 eligible carers received an extra £230.10 through a special one-off payment in June - backed by investment of £19.2 million. We have also confirmed delivery of the Scottish Child Payment as a priority to make this new payment available to low income families as soon as practicable in the current circumstances.

We are taking significant steps to support individuals and communities across Scotland and remain firmly committed to working together to tackle poverty and inequality and deliver a fairer, greener and more prosperous Scotland.

Yours sincerely

Christine Gilmore
SJR : Social Justice Strategy Unit

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APPENDIX 5

Our Ref: AF/JMcL

Date: 2nd July 2020

Jeane Freeman MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport
T3.23
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Jeane.Freeman.msp@parliament.scot

Aubrey Fawcett
BSc(Hons), DAAS, DipTP, RIBA, ARIAS, MRTPI
Chief Executive
Municipal Buildings
Clyde Square
Greenock
PA15 1LY
Tel: 01475 712701
Chief.executive@inverclyde.gov.uk

Dear Ms Freeman,

Covid-19 Mortality Rates in Inverclyde

I refer to our telecom meeting on the 19th June 2020.

Can I first of all thank you for taking time to discuss with me the concerns of Members about the level of Covid-19 and excess deaths in Inverclyde. In this regard I have informed our Policy and Resources Executive Sub – Committee on 30th June about our discussions and it was agreed that I write to you again advising that Members remain concerned about Inverclyde having the highest level of recorded Covid-19 deaths per head of population in Scotland and are asking for a specific research to provide answers to the following:

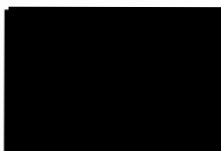
- How did the coronavirus come into Inverclyde?
- How was it transmitted?
- What action could be taken to avoid such a high death rate in future?

You indicated in our meeting on the 19th June that Public Health Scotland was undertaking research work in collaboration with the University of Glasgow and it may of benefit to extend the University's commission to include a specific study of what happened in Inverclyde. The Council is willing to contribute to the costs for this additional work and would ask that this study is commenced and completed as soon as possible.

For your information, I intend updating Members on progress of this request at our next Committee meeting on the 28th July 2020.

I look forward to hearing from you and specifically what contribution may be required to enable this study to be progressed with some urgency.

Yours sincerely



Aubrey Fawcett
Chief Executive



Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport
Jeane Freeman MSP



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Aubrey Fawcett
Inverclyde Council

By email: Chief.executive@inverclyde.gov.uk

Cc: Angela.Leitch@nhs.net

Your ref: AF/JMcL

9 July 2020

Thank you for your letter of 2 July 2020 raising the continued concerns of your Members.

Given the seriousness of this matter, I have spoken with colleagues at Public Health Scotland and they have agreed to look into this issue further. PHS are able to look at the data for Inverclyde and compare with data from other areas of Scotland to find out how Covid-19 was transmitted in Inverclyde. This would include looking at the first cases with Inverclyde post codes and the temporal relationship with other causes.

Once that work is complete, PHS have offered to engage directly with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to discuss their findings. They can then explore if there were any specific events in Inverclyde during the period in question that could be the subject of further investigation, including potential for genomic sequencing.

We do know that the pandemic is impacting differently on different parts of the country and different population groups. Deprivation profile is a significant contributor to this, which will be of particular significance in Inverclyde. PHS has published a number of papers specifically associated with deprivation and more information can be found on their website: <https://beta.isdscotland.org/find-publications-and-data/population-health/covid-19/covid-19-weekly-excess-deaths/>.

There is also a wider body of work on the impact of poverty and inequality on health in the West of Scotland. PHS published a report last week with the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, which looks at pre-COVID progress around the actions set out in the 2016 report [History, politics and vulnerability: explaining excess mortality in Scotland and Glasgow](#).

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The original report reviewed the evidence for the likely causes of the high levels of excess mortality seen in Scotland and Glasgow compared with elsewhere in the UK and made 26 specific policy recommendations aimed primarily at Scottish Government and local government. The new report [Policy recommendations for population health: progress and challenges](#), finds a mixed picture with several positive developments in relation to national and local policy, but also a number of areas where there has been little progress.

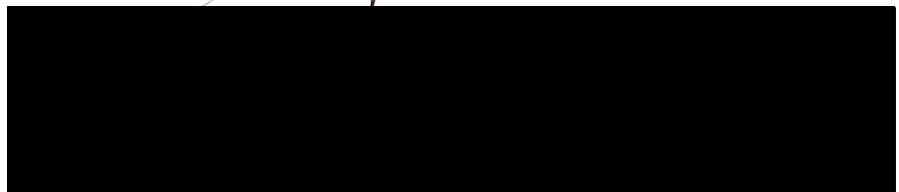
As you mentioned in your letter, research is about to commence with the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh and the Poverty Alliance to understand how to mitigate the medium to long term impacts of the pandemic.

Hopefully this research can help inform future actions to prevent this from happening again in the future in Inverclyde. As the Health Secretary, I have taken a number of steps to control the spread of the virus across Scotland and prevent this rise in the R number. Most notably, our Test & Protect programme, launched on 28 May, is specifically designed to break chains of transmission in the community. Our expert contact tracers will support the management of outbreaks by identifying anyone who the tested individual has had close contact with. Those close contacts will then be asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

As agreed with COSLA and SOLACE, support will be made available to local authorities via the National Assistance helpline for people who are at risk and do not have people near them who are able to help.

I hope you find this letter useful. I have copied my response to Angela Leitch, Chief Executive of PHS, and I would encourage you to contact her regarding the data study and the Poverty Alliance work.

Kind regards



JEANE FREEMAN

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