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| **Covid 19 (coronavirus) – briefing**  |

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Issued 18 March 2020

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| **Below is the latest briefing on the activity in managing the response to COVID 19 (Coronavirus). The position is changing continuously across the country but at this time, there are no positive cases in Inverclyde.** |

**Schools**

The Scottish Government has announced the closure of Scottish schools and nurseries from the end of the school day on Friday 20 March. We have been working on plans to support our pupils during closure and will announce arrangements as soon as we can.

**Watt Institution and libraries-**

Due to staff shortages the Watt Institution and libraries closed to the public today at 1pm until further notice.

Online library services will continue to be available and these will be promoted to customers, particularly through social media.

**Inverclyde Leisure-**

Inverclyde Leisure is closing all of its facilities from close of business today (Wednesday 18 March).

**Road crossing patrollers -**

Due to the consequences of health guidance for Covid-19 (coronavirus) there may be a shortage of road crossing patrollers.  We are attempting to provide cover for the busiest routes, but from Thursday 18 March 2020 we cannot guarantee that there will be a road crossing patroller at all current crossing points.

**COSLA guidance to councillors -**

Below is a guidance note issued directly to councillors by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA).

**Introduction**

This briefing gives an up-to- date position in relation to National Events linked to Coronavirus (COVID-19) for all elected members in Scotland.

COVID-19 is an illness caused by a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan city, China. It can cause a cough and / or fever.

Generally, it can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people and those with long-term conditions such as diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

The number of cases and the risk level in the UK is updated regularly here - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

**Purpose**

The purpose of these briefings is to provide an overview of work ongoing at national and local level for you as leaders of your communities to provide the necessary reassurance to your local communities.  There will be specific local guidance and information which will come to you from your local authority officers which we will not duplicate.

**Resilience Partnerships**

Resilience officers are working collaboratively across the country and there are national links between their co-ordination and COSLA officers.

**SGORR meetings**

The COSLA President and Vice President will attend the weekly SGORR meetings with Scottish Government (SGORR stands for Scottish Government Organisation of Resilience and Recovery).  This will ensure that we are providing important support to the national effort as well as representing the needs of the 32 local authorities as they undertake vital work to support communities.

In order to support our participation in SGORR, the Spokespeople and Political Group Leaders will join the President and Vice President in a weekly call.

**Personal safety**

With regard to the most recent advice from the Prime Minister and the First Minister this afternoon, it would be appropriate to cancel surgeries and unnecessary appointments with your constituents, unless you can do this remotely using technology.  Whilst you or the constituent may be in good health, it is incumbent on all of us to reduce the risk to our more vulnerable communities.  COSLA would recommend taking local advice from your chief executive on how to make this known on a consistent local basis.

**COSLA Business**

COSLA is following the relevant protocols and guidance, as well as continuing to work closely with the Scottish and UK Governments, the NHS, the World Health Organisation, Health Protection Scotland and other agencies to ensure the situation is managed as effectively as possible.

Officers are reviewing our business continuity plans and currently have a number of measures in place.  This includes restricting access to our offices and conference facilities to anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms to limit the spread of the virus.

On the basis of national advice, this month’s Convention on Friday 27 March has been cancelled. Also, further to consultation with the Presidential team, Group Leaders and Spokespersons, it has been agreed that all non-essential meetings will be cancelled until further notice.  This means that the COSLA Health and Social Care Board meeting will not be held on Friday, 20 March.

This is a rapidly changing situation and COSLA will continue to be guided by our colleagues in Health Protection Scotland on the holding of meetings.

If you, or your officers, require any clarity from COSLA officers on policy matters, please feel free to contact the team in the usual way.

**In summary**

You will appreciate that this is an extremely fast-changing situation which brings significant challenges in terms of communication. Your council will be advising you on how things are progressing at the local level. The purpose of our briefing will be to alert you to national issues and sign posting you to any national advice that we think you should be made aware of.

A dedicated page will be created by COSLA which will include any updates and includes links to national health and travel advice.

Further briefings will be issued at least weekly if not more frequently as the situation evolves, updating the national position and signposting members to any national advice.

Useful links

Latest UK information - <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

Latest Scottish Government -  <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Scottish Government guidance for events of over 500 - <https://www.gov.scot/news/large-gathering-guidance/>

NHS Inform Guidance - <https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus>

Business Support Guide - <https://news.gov.scot/news/gbp-320-million-package-of-support-for-businesses>