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| **Coronavirus (Covid-19) – briefing**  |

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Issued 21 April 2020

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| **Below is the latest briefing on the activity in managing the response to coronavirus (Covid-19).** **Local updates, council service changes and links to trusted sources of health guidance are published at *www.inverclyde.gov.uk/coronavirus*** |

**Council policy and resources executive**

The council’s policy and resources executive sub-committee met today (21 April 2020).

The sub-committee is the only operational committee in Inverclyde Council after all others were cancelled and the delegation of full powers in the emergency to the Council’s policy and resources executive sub-committee.

The full sub-committee papers are published online at: <https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2257>

Key reports reviewed at the committee include:

* A review of the council’s response to coronavirus (covid 19) which confirmed that the current suspension of parking enforcement should remain in place for a further six weeks, subject to any significant changes to Government guidance on social distancing;
* A report on changes to Civic Licensing: Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 and a separate request about taxi drivers and taxi operators by Councillor Chris McEleny which was defeated in a vote;
* A report outlined a proposal to bring forward community funding and grants to voluntary organisations funding support which included support for community centres, bowling clubs and other voluntary groups;
* An update on current engagement between the council and the Scottish Government, and
* An environmental services update including the commitment to recommence garden waste and begin the sale of permits within three weeks, that blue bin collections will be reinstated as soon as the council’s contractor is able to collect and process material and that the restoration of food waste will be kept under review. It also highlighted that grass cutting will commence in cemeteries and that the council is managing the increase in demand at Greenock crematorium also that officers are exploring a broadcasting service to support families in view of the restrictions on the number of people who can attend funerals.

**COSLA seeking £155m consequentials**

Council umbrella body, COSLA has written to the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Finance asking that the full £155 million of ‘consequentials’ comes to local government as councils continue to battle the covid-19 pandemic.

**School closures clarity**

The First Minister has clarified that no decisions have been made on school closures across Scotland. The clarity, at the Scottish Government daily briefing, was done following reports that the Depute First Minister has said in a radio interview that schools would remain closed until the summer.

**Business gateway services**

Council Business Gateway services across Scotland are supporting small to medium sized business cope with the effect of the covid-19 pandemic.

One-to-one appointments with specialist business advisors are available by video or phone. All previously planned workshops are now available, as webinars, and a suite of new resources have been developed to support businesses trying to adapt to new circumstances.

This includes a tutorial on business continuity planning, advice on shifting work to the home environment, how to use digital channels to communicate with customers and employees and support for those experiencing stress and anxiety.

Business Gateway’s website also gives those in self-isolation the opportunity to enhance their skills online, with free tutorials and guides on topics such as moving trading online, business continuity planning, PR and pausing or closing a business. These resources can be accessed through the [www.bgateway.com](http://www.bgateway.com)

**Social distancing rules strengthened**

Social distancing regulations introduced to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) have been confirmed and extended by the Scottish Government.

Temporary regulations restricting public gatherings and non-essential business activity have been in force since 26 March. The regulations must be reviewed every three weeks and are kept under continual review by the Scottish Government. A number of amendments have now been made to protect workers and provide further guidance for people in Scotland.

The adjustments to the regulations include formalising the two metre distancing rules to all businesses that remain open. Businesses that do not take all reasonable measures to enforce those rules could be fined or ultimately prosecuted.

Links to the updated guidance are published at the ‘Business support and advice’ section at [www.inverclyde.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/coronavirus)

**Support for the creative sector**

Creative Scotland has announced an additional £2million to further support and sustain the country’s creative community during the covid-19 pandemic which includes £1million from the Scottish Government and £1million from the Freelands Foundation. The Creative Scotland Bridging Bursary Fund (Arts and Creative), which is now open, offers one-off bursary payments of between £500 and £2,500.