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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>15 September 2020</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Chief Executive</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>LP/102/20</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Aubrey Fawcett</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712701</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Scrutiny Report</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This report updates the Committee on relevant 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 Following upon the resumption of the regular cycle of committee meetings and decision-making, this report provides the Policy and Resources Committee with oversight of the actions implemented by officers in the COVID-19 emergency.
- 2.2 At its 28 July 2020 meeting, the Policy and Resources Executive Sub-Committee approved the resumption of the usual cycle of standing committee meetings by online remote access and has ceased its emergency functions at this time. Officers will continue to take relevant 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.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 That the Committee notes the actions taken to date to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 emergency in Inverclyde.

**Aubrey Fawcett**  
**Chief Executive**

## 4.0 BACKGROUND

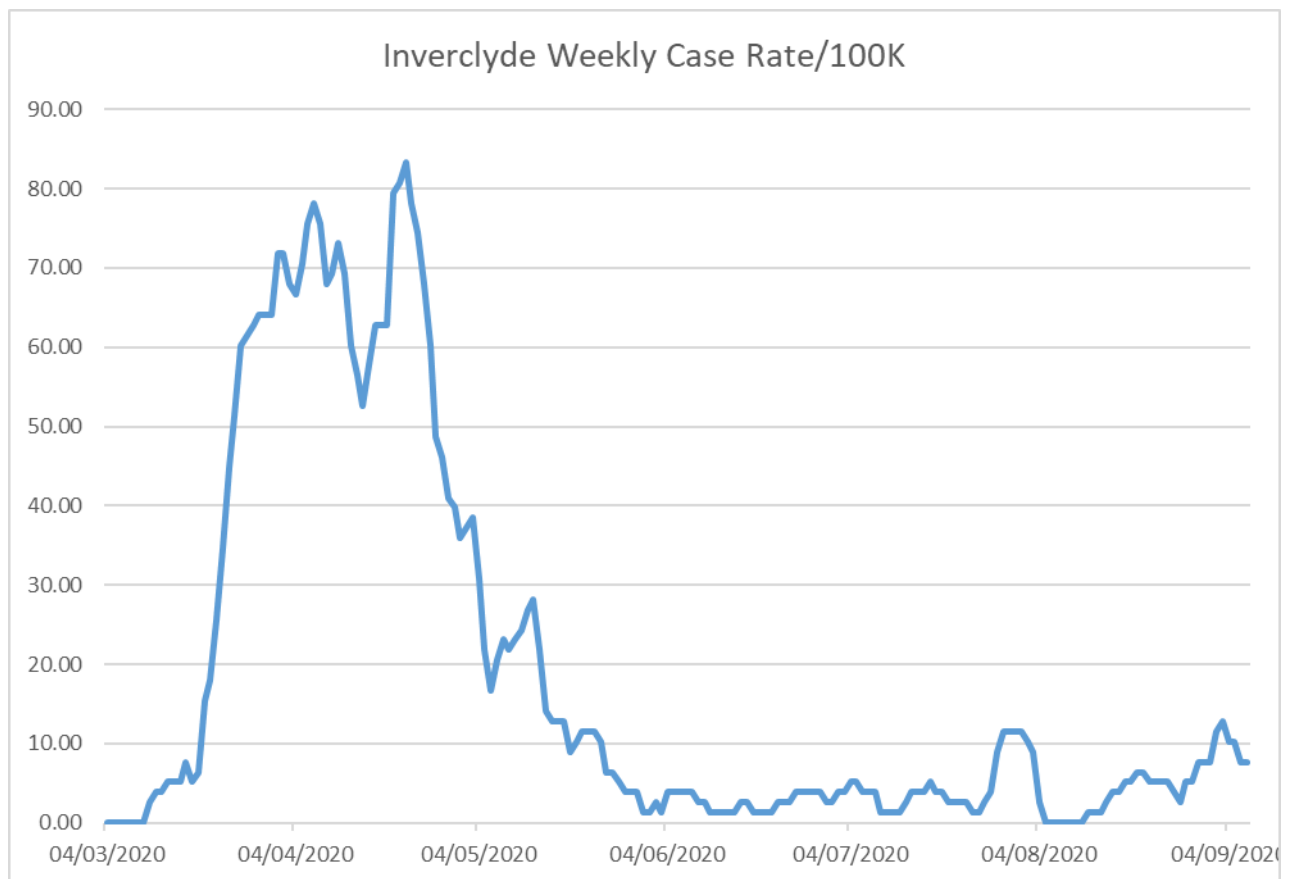
- 4.1 The Council and its partners have been working to implement arrangements to deal with the ongoing response to the COVID-19 emergency. These arrangements are based upon an established corporate and incident response structure. Staff are able, by virtue of their roles and responsibilities, to deal 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 any 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 any 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 meets regularly 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 The daily briefings which had been immediately implemented by the CMT during lockdown to ensure that all Members of the Council had advance notice of any service impact decisions have been discontinued at this time but there continues to be constant dialogue and contact with relevant Conveners and, where appropriate, Minority Group spokespersons/contacts on key issues. Key briefings are issued when circumstances require.
- 5.2 The following issues are identified and summarised as ongoing items for the Committee's information and for future business-planning:

### HSCP

- 5.3 **Older People and Adult Care Home Support:** Daily care home huddle safety meetings continue to monitor and support registered Older people and Adult Residential Care homes in terms of Infection Control, Staffing Levels and Personal Protective Equipment. Daily updates on staff and resident surveillance testing is reviewed as well as any immediate actions required to be undertaken. One care home is classified as at an amber risk due to a previous reduction in Care Inspectorate grades to a 2. These have been reviewed by the Care Inspectorate and increased to a 3.
- 5.4 **Staff Testing:** At present Health & Social Care staff who are symptomatic can access Covid testing via the national Test & Protect programme. Due to recent capacity issues in this system the HSCP has been in discussions with NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde to re-establish a testing centre at Port Glasgow Health Centre for Health & Social Care staff. It is hoped to utilise self testing kits to maximise capacity so that other staff groups could be potentially tested at the site.
- 5.5 **Assessment Centre:** The Covid Assessment Centre has been stood down at present by NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde. Work is underway as part of winter/Covid planning to establish a Respiratory Assessment Centre should this be required.
- 5.6 **COVID cases in Inverclyde:** Inverclyde has no active Covid infection in any care home environment. There have been 40 Covid deaths recorded in care homes since March 2020 in Inverclyde. Members will be acutely aware of the issues around rising infection rates in surrounding areas. The chart below shows the weekly infection rate in Inverclyde from the beginning of the outbreak. It should obviously be noted that the number of samples taken early on in the outbreak was relatively small therefore the likely underlying infection rate would have been significantly higher. Up to date case numbers can be found at <https://public.tableau.com/profile/phs.covid.19#!/vizhome/COVID->



### **Education and Communities**

- 5.7 **Closure of classes due to positive COVID-19 cases and school attendance:** To date three primary classes have been closed in Inverclyde schools due to positive cases of COVID-19. Education Services worked with Public Health Scotland to identify closure arrangements and to ensure effective communication. It is fair to say that Public Health Scotland are struggling with the current number of referrals and we have agreed that, unless there is a very complex case, then the Council's Environmental Health Service will chair initial problem assessment groups (PAGs) to identify closures. Directors across the West Partnership are sharing plans and best practice for localised outbreaks and closures. In addition to the closure of classes due to positive cases of COVID-19, school attendance for pupils in Inverclyde schools has been low since the start of term. Heads of Establishments and Education Services are working together to track attendance, provide support and to identify the issues arising.

### **Environment, Regeneration and Resources**

- 5.8 **Parking Enforcement:** Following both internal and external communications and advice given by parking enforcement staff on the ground, enforcement of "no waiting" parking restrictions is due to recommence on 14 September 2020. Time limited restrictions and car park charges remain suspended as reported to the August 2020 Committee. Enforcement of no-waiting restrictions will include double yellow lines, loading and bus bays and disabled bays.
- 5.9 **Business Grants:** The Business Grants scheme has been closed to new applications since August with officers clearing any remaining applications and dealing with any appeals. As at 31 August 2020 1,018 grants valued at £11.241million had been paid. Grant to cover this amount has been received from the Scottish Government.

### **6.0 COVID-19 TESTING**

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

- 6.2 **Mobile Testing Units:** Due to an increased demand for Covid testing coinciding with the return of schools in mid August, the Mobile Testing Unit at Port Glasgow Health Centre experienced an exceptional demand for tests which resulted in traffic congestion impacting on the centre of Port Glasgow. As a result of this the test site has been moved to the Parklea area, working seven days a week. Due to the increased infection rate in West Dunbartonshire, the MTU will be split between Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire for the time being.
- 6.3 The Council has also been in discussion with the Scottish Government in relation to establishing a walk in testing centre with a capacity of three hundred tests a day which would be located in a central area designed for pedestrian use. Local test sites are designed to serve potentially more vulnerable people who may only be able to access a test site by walking. The intention would be for the walk in test centre to be deployed for a minimum of three months. Walk in test centres do not require Council or HSCP staff capacity to run them and are self contained requiring only a fixed location (inside if possible) with facilities.
- 6.4 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>
- 6.5 **Health & Social Care Staff Testing:** At present Health & Social Care staff who are symptomatic can access Covid testing via the national Test & Protect programme.
- 6.6 **COVID19 Care Home Testing for Residents & Staff:** Care home staff are tested once a week via the Social Care Testing Portal with results being given directly back to care homes. In Inverclyde testing rates in all care homes remains high at almost 100%. Resident surveillance testing continues with a 10% sample taken from each Older People or Adult Care Home on a three weekly cycle. Care Home results are slightly delayed and GG&C Health Board is working with Government to address this.
- 6.7 **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. Priority testing referrals can be made more than once daily and will be accepted between 8am and 6pm.
- 6.8 In order to streamline the process and to help deal with a rise in demand for testing an additional two email addresses have been set up. One specifically for Education; [school.covidtest@inverclyde.gov.uk](mailto:school.covidtest@inverclyde.gov.uk) and the other for all other council employees; [covid.test@inverclyde.gov.uk](mailto:covid.test@inverclyde.gov.uk). Monitoring of the school request email box is carried out by both education staff and health and safety in order to meet increased demand. Information on Icon has been updated and all Education Heads of Establishments have been informed of the changes.
- 6.9 There has been a significant increase in testing referrals since the start of the new school term. Since 1 May to 14 August there were 20 referrals for testing made, an average of 1.3 per week. From 17 August to 4 September there were 85 referrals made, an average of 28.3 per week.

Reasons for the referrals being made:

- 86 were due to the person having symptoms
- 8 were for contacts of someone with Covid 19
- 8 were for reassurance/possible contact
- 3 were retests

Persons referred:

- 80 were employees
- 25 were household contacts

Referrals by Service area:

- 76 – Education
- 7 – Culture, Communities and Educational Resources
- 6 – Regeneration and Planning
- 5 – Strategy and Support Services
- 3 – Environment and Public Protection
- 3 – Finance
- 2 – Organisational Development, Policy and Communications
- 1 – Criminal Justice and Children’s Services
- 1 – Health and Community Care
- 1 – Legal and Property Services

There has been one positive case reported as part of the referral process.

## 7.0 WORKFORCE ISSUES

- 7.1 **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.
- 7.2 **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.
- 7.3 The table below provides approximate absence levels Council wide and within some of our key essential service areas, as at 9 September 2020:-

<b><u>Council</u></b>	
<b>Historic average absence rate (%) (Pre COVID-19 to give a baseline comparator.)</b>	4.3%
<b>Absence rate on 9 September 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.</b>	<p>Council Wide            7.7%</p> <p><u>Essential Services Breakdown (% of Service Area)</u></p> <p>Home Care                7.9%</p> <p>Other HSCP                6.2%</p> <p>Waste Management      8.6%</p> <p>Facilities                    5.1%</p>

7.4 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 1 and 14 April dates):

	01.04.20	14.04.20	28.04.20	12.05.20	26.05.20	09.06.20	16.07.20	05.08.20	09.09.20
<b>Council</b>	19.0%	19.3%	18.5%	17.5%	17.6%	16.9%	7.5%	7.5%	7.7%
<b>Home Care</b>	N/A	N/A	27.3%	19.2%	20.2%	18.5%	7.8%	8%	7.9%
<b>Other HSCP</b>	N/A	N/A	21.87%	14.2%	17.3%	11.22%	6.3%	6.1%	6.2%
<b>Waste Mgt</b>	N/A	N/A	29.5%	24.3%	24.0%	23.9%	9%	8.9%	8.6%
<b>Facilities</b>	N/A	N/A	23.0%	26.1%	22.2%	14.6%	4.5%	4.6%	5.1%

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

7.6 From this, the 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.

7.7 **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 continues to provide risk assessments, advice on appropriate PPE, is 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.

## 8.0 IMPLICATIONS

### 8.1 Finance

At the 11 August meeting of the Committee it was agreed to reallocate £4.61million from Reserves to meet the net estimated costs identified to date of Covid. This sum will be kept under review once any further funding from Scottish Government is clarified.

#### Financial Implications:

##### One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Reserves	Various	20/21	£4.61million		Approved 11.8.20

##### Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

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

## 8.2 Legal

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

## 8.3 Human Resources

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

## 8.4 Equalities

### Equalities

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

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YES (see attached appendix)

X
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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

(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?

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YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.

X
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NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

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YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

X
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NO

## 8.5 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.

## 9.0 CONSULTATIONS

9.1 The Corporate Management Team endorses this report.

## 10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None