
Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	2 February 2021
Report By:	Corporate Director Environment, Regeneration and Resources	Report No:	PR/03/21/MM
Contact Officer:	Martin McNab	Contact No:	01475 714246
Subject:	COVID-19 Update		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on actions taken to mitigate the risks around the Covid-19 outbreak.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report updates members on a number of specific areas of work in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic including the vaccination strategy. It does not cover all service-related issues, for example education delivery, as the majority of these will be reported through the appropriate service committee. Action logs for decisions made on service delivery will also be reported through the appropriate service committees. The P & R Action log is attached for members noting at Appendix 1.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the Committee notes the report and the actions taken to date to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 outbreak in Inverclyde.

Martin McNab
Head of Public Protection & Covid Recovery

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021, Inverclyde had the highest rate of Covid-19 infection in Scotland peaking at over 580 cases per 100K. This appeared to be largely as a result of the arrival of the new, more infectious, variant at a point immediately before Christmas when restrictions in Inverclyde had been reduced to Level 2. The increase in Inverclyde was extremely rapid, however there has been a significant decrease in cases over the period since. The rate per 100K has since declined to 151 at the time of writing. While this is still a relatively high rate compared to mid-December the direction of travel has been consistent since the national introduction of tighter restrictions to combat the new variant.
- 4.2 The most significant advances in recent weeks have been in the progress in implementing the vaccination programme. Vaccination in Inverclyde commenced before Christmas for residents of nursing homes and frontline health and social care staff. In January the population over 80 is being vaccinated by GPs, largely at surgeries, and by the HSCP for those housebound. At the time of writing, the Council and Health Board are planning for the delivery of vaccination to cohorts under 80, initially largely at Greenock Town Hall, which should have commenced by the time of Committee.

5.0 ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

- 5.1 Internal and external communications, decision-making and response arrangements continue to be delivered through a strategic (CMT) and tactical (through our Council Resilience Management Team – CRMT incorporating Inverclyde HSCP) coordination and meeting structure. Additionally the HSCP continues to manage its response through the Local Management Resilience Team (LMRT) on which the Council has a number of representatives ensuring that the Council & HSCP are entirely joined up on decision making.
- 5.2 From a multi –agency perspective, the HSCP LMRT feeds into a GG & C Health Board-wide gold command structure covering acute, primary & social care on which some multi-agency partners are represented. The strategic level LRP continues to operate at the level of the Health Board incorporating the six constituent councils and appropriate multi-agency partners. Regular meetings are also held at Chief Executive level with the other local authorities and the health board.
- 5.3 The resurgence of the pandemic immediately after Christmas has obviously had an effect on staffing levels particularly through the loss of staff to shielding and the Council and HSCP continue to monitor and address the effect of this on service delivery through the structures outlined in 5.1 above.

6.0 WORKFORCE ISSUES

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 The table below provides approximate absence levels council wide and within some of our key essential service areas, as at 19 January 2021:

Council	
Historic average absence rate (%) (Pre Covid-19 to give a baseline comparator)	4.6%
Absence rate on 19 January 2021 (%) (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 7.6%</p> <p><u>Essential Services Breakdown (% of Service Area)</u></p> <p>Home Care 12.0%</p> <p>Other HSCP 3.6%</p> <p>Waste Management 9.5%</p> <p>Facilities 8.0%</p>

6.4 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):

	1.4.20	14.4.20	28.4.20	12.5.20	26.5.20	9.6.20	16.7.20	5.8.20	9.9.20	17.11.20	19.1.21
Council	19.0%	19.3%	18.5%	17.5%	17.6%	16.9%	7.5%	7.5%	7.7%	6.1%	7.6%
Home Care	N/A	N/A	27.3%	19.2%	20.2%	18.5%	7.8%	8%	7.9%	5.0%	12.0%
Other HSCP	N/A	N/A	21.87%	14.2%	17.3%	11.22%	6.3%	6.1%	6.2%	4.2%	3.6%
Waste Mgt	N/A	N/A	29.5%	24.3%	24.0%	23.9%	9%	8.9%	8.6%	8.0%	9.5%
Facilities	N/A	N/A	23.0%	26.1%	22.2%	14.6%	4.5%	4.6%	5.1%	4.6%	8.0%

6.5 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 recovery. 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.

6.6 The Health and Safety Executive are undertaking a series of spot checks of businesses as part of their monitoring of compliance with Covid 19 safety precautions. On 15th January an unannounced visit was made to the Greenock Municipal Buildings. During the visit the inspecting officer spoke with the Head of OD, Policy and Comms. The following areas were looked at:

- Compliance with the government directive that staff should work from home where possible.
- Evidence that Covid risk assessments are in place and staff familiar with these and the controls in place.
- What cleaning regimes are in place, the HSE indicated they were pleased that the level of cleaning had been maintained even through there were reduced numbers of staff in the building.
- Evidence of social distancing is adhered to both in practice and through signage and markings of the floor.
- Screens are in place in public areas where staff have to interact with visitors.
- Compliance with the wearing of face coverings by staff and public in the building and how this is enforced.
- Presence of hand sanitising stations and hand washing facilities.
- Processes if someone attends the workplace and develops with Covid symptoms or tests positive.

No issues were raised by the inspecting officer and they appeared satisfied with the controls in place.

6.7 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.

7.0 SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES

7.1 The Council continues to administer a number of funding streams for business grants on behalf of the Scottish Government. Teams within the Finance Service and the Regeneration and Planning Service have processes in place to release the support timeously however in a number of cases public announcements regarding support have been made several weeks before details of the application process and eligibility are communicated to the Council. This inevitably leads to a perception of delay at the local authority end even where this is clearly not the case.

Despite the understandable pressure to release payments as soon as possible, robust governance checks are in place to ensure that only valid payments are made. Business grant support payments made by the Council in 2020/21 now exceed £14 million with an estimate that this will exceed £18 million by the end of March.

Of the current live schemes the level of payments as at 28 January were as follows:

Strategic Framework Closure and Hardship - £899k to 273 Businesses
Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Top Up Grants - £1458k to 224 Businesses

The Council received £233k for Discretionary Grants and at present the scheme has been closed due to a combination of the number of applications and the need to await clarity on a number of outstanding specific Government Grants scheme. Assessment of the applications is ongoing and in the event the current funding is not all allocated, the scheme will be re-opened.

8.0 VACCINATION STRATEGY

8.1 Vaccination of residents in care homes commenced before Christmas and was largely completed early in the New Year. This first wave of vaccinations was delivered by the HSCP and coincided with the start of vaccination for frontline Health & Social Care staff which is ongoing at the time of writing this report. As of 25th January, 521 care home residents (92%) had received their first dose and 748 frontline staff (74%) in care homes had also been vaccinated. Second doses of vaccine for care home residents and staff will be delivered from 22nd February; these groups will be delivered from the middle of March onwards.

8.2 The priority groups in the population for vaccination has been set nationally by the Joint Council for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). At the time of writing this report, vaccination has commenced for the over 80s and is being delivered largely through GPs surgeries with vaccination of the housebound being delivered by the HSCP. The delivery of the first dose of vaccine to this group is programmed to be completed by the end of January with second doses to be delivered in April. As of 25th January, 1600 over 80s had been vaccinated

8.3 From the beginning of February, vaccinations will be delivered in Greenock Town Hall to groups 3 to 9 sequentially in the JCVI priority list. At the time of writing, it is expected that groups 3, 4 and 5, which comprise all those over 65 in sequential age bands together with the clinically extremely vulnerable, will have received their first dose by the end of February. There will obviously be a number of housebound in these groups and, at the time of writing, we are awaiting confirmation regarding delivery to them although it is obviously likely to mirror the arrangements for the over 80s.

8.4 From March onwards, groups 6 to 9 will receive their first dose with second doses for the earlier groups being delivered with some initial overlap although this should hopefully be limited to the care home residents and staff cohorts and possibly some overlap with the over 80s. Once the JCVI priority

groups have been vaccinated, it is likely that further vaccination centres will be required to cover the general population between the ages of 18 and 50 and planning is underway for this at a national level. It is however foreseeable that the vaccination centre at the Greenock Town Hall could easily be operational until the end of the year delivering first and second doses to the whole population.

9.0 TESTING

- 9.1 The drive through testing facility at Parklea continues to operate every second day in tandem with the Crawfordsburn walk in facility. It is undoubtedly the case that the testing capacity available was extremely helpful in the initial phase of the current pandemic wave. Access to testing is essential to allow positive cases to be identified and limit the spread from undiagnosed cases and asymptomatic contacts. The availability of testing locally will have contributed to the relatively rapid decline in cases from the initial very high peak in late December.
- 9.2 At the time of writing, proposals have been submitted to the Scottish Government for wider asymptomatic testing in Inverclyde in partnership with GGC. The initial proposals were for workplace testing programmes in a couple of Inverclyde's larger employers and we are currently awaiting further engagement from the Scottish Government on this.

10.0 HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

- 10.1 The new lockdown at the end of 2020 has brought about a significant increase in call traffic to the three helplines currently manned by Public Protection staff. These are the original "shielding" helpline, which continues to be highlighted in letters to shielders; the national assistance helpline, which redirects callers from a national number to the Council; and the local helpline which is available to all Inverclyde residents requiring help and support. Inbound calls from those requested to self-isolate are also channelled through the national helpline number. All of the phone lines are directed to the same small team and appropriate support is offered regardless of the original channel. With the increase in calls, monitoring of the lines has been increased to seven days and messages left on the system out of hours are followed up the next morning.
- 10.2 The return of shielding together with people being asked to self-isolate has led to a resurgence of demand for emergency food parcels which are being delivered by the public protection team where need is identified. Referrals to CVS-Inverclyde from the helpline have also increased for services such as prescription delivery. There have also been a number of emergency issues with shielders and self-isolators being unable to access central heating and hot water repairs.
- 10.3 The Public Protection Team also receive a daily list of those requested to self-isolate by the NHS Test & Protect Teams. All of those on the list receive a proactive call from the team to establish whether any support is needed to enable them to do so. This call serves both as a means of offering support and also as a reinforcement of the message that those advised to self-isolate need to take this seriously. Those who might be eligible for Isolate & Support or Scottish Welfare Fund support are referred through to the Revenues and Benefits Team in Finance who will guide them through the application and assessment process.

11.0 REGULATION

- 11.1 The Environmental Health & Trading Standards teams in Public Protection continue to carry out advisory and enforcement visits to businesses to ensure compliance with the current Coronavirus regulations. These include following up complaints from the public and employees in businesses and engaging with Police Scotland, the Health & Safety Executive and other agencies where powers under the regulations or other legislation lie with those bodies.
- 11.2 The Public Protection service also receives daily reports from Test & Protect identifying businesses and other settings where there have been cases of Covid-19 identified through the contact tracing process and these are followed up. There are also regular meetings between the council and the Public Health team at GGC both scheduled and in reaction to outbreaks to ensure that appropriate investigations are carried out and controls applied. Members will be aware of allegations regarding failures to implement controls in hospitality settings prior to Christmas which may have played a part in the rise in cases in Inverclyde immediately after Christmas. These were the subject of meetings with public health between Christmas and New Year and will be subject of a report to the Licensing Board if

appropriate when investigations are concluded.

12.0 EVENT PLANNING AND COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

- 12.1 Throughout 2020 mass gatherings have been subject to limitations across the country and this has had an effect on events with cancellations or with them being delivered differently, particularly online. The council's main event schedule and remembrance commemorations was subject to cancellation with new arrangements put in place to mark events and remembrance commemorations in most occasions online.
- 12.2 The CMT has reviewed the list of events planned for 2021 and approved a series of event planning principles, recognising that events throughout the year are likely to be subject to change. The principles for each event are included at Appendix 2 but broadly highlight that if Inverclyde remains above or at Covid protection level 2, smaller events and remembrance occasions which cannot be rescheduled will be cancelled for large in-person events and the communications, tourism and health and safety service will build on the work in 2020 and deliver events online. Larger events that could be rescheduled, particularly those earlier in the year, will be examined with event partners for potential rescheduling to later in the year, but would continue to be subject to the prevailing Covid protection levels and the principles set out in appendix 2.
- 12.3 If Covid protection levels are below 2 (levels 1 or 0) in-person events may be able to take place subject to additional infrastructure or limitations on attendance to support compliance with national guidance.

13.0 IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Finance

Financial matters are the subject of a separate report from the Chief Financial Officer.

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/(savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With effect from	Annual net impact £000	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Legal

- 13.2 None

Human Resources

- 13.3 The Head of Organisational Development, Human Resources and Communications has been consulted on the legal implications of the appendix.

Equalities

13.4 Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES (see attached appendix)
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.

13.5 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

13.6 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

Repopulation

13.7 There are no impacts on repopulation arising from this report.

14.0 CONSULTATIONS

14.1 The Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications and the Chief Financial Officer have been consulted on this report.

15.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 None

Policy & Resources Committee

Operational Decision Log: 2021

**From: w/c 8 January 2021
To: 28 January 2021**

**Chief Executive
AF/SC**

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – OPERATIONAL LOG 2021

	Service Issue	Action Taken	Reported to CMT	Supporting Report Yes – N/A	Implemented	Officer
	<u>Finance</u>					
1.	Registrars: Marriage Ceremonies – Current COVID protection levels throughout the UK which affect Marriage Ceremonies require that restrictions in marriage bookings be implemented to protect Registration employees and to reduce the risk of COVID transmission.	(1) no marriage bookings to be taken until the end of February from persons not resident in Inverclyde and the situation to be reviewed at that time; and (2) no new local bookings in February unless there is a critical situation (e.g. imminent end of life)	14.1.21	Yes	14.1.21	Chief Financial Officer
	<u>Other</u>					
2.	Planning and Setup of Mass Vaccination Clinics	1. CMT agreement that Greenock Town Hall would be used as the primary mass vaccination centre. 2. Further agreed that Port Glasgow Town Hall could be used as and when required as an additional centre.	Initial report and options appraisal considered by CMT 10 December 2020 Final Decision following consultation with GGC Jan 2021	Yes for initial December options appraisal	1 Feb 2021	M McNab
3.	Planning and Setup of Mass Vaccination Clinics	CMT agreement to use of part of Cathcart Street Car Park for vaccination Centre Parking	28/1/2021	No	1 Feb 2021	M McNab

APPENDIX 2: EVENT PLANNING AND COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

Below is a list of events planned to be held in 2021 and a brief summary of the proposed delivery:

April - anniversary of The Radical War

The council's involvement in supporting and planning a commemorative event in 2020 was based on approaches from the community to mark the 200th anniversary. In 2021 it is anticipated that the community will be unlikely to be able to organise a large scale in-person event and it is proposed that for 2021 if travel and mass gatherings restrictions remain above or at protection level 2, the council marks the occasion with a single representative laying a wreath and the occasion is also marked online and that the laying of a wreath either singularly or as part of a larger community-led event becomes an annual act of commemoration.

April - International Worker's Memorial Day

If Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to three weeks prior to the date of International Workers Memorial Day it is proposed that an in person civic event planned for Clyde Square, Greenock does not take place and that a representative of the council lays a wreath and the occasion continues to be marked online. If the Covid protection level is below 2 up to three weeks prior to the event, the service will plan to hold an in-person event in line with national event planning guidance.

May – Gourock Highland Games

If Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to six weeks prior to the date of The Gourock Highland Games it is proposed that an in person event does not take place and that the date is marked online to ensure that the position as the 'start of the Scottish season' for piping and Games events is marked.

In addition, communications, tourism and health and safety officers will negotiate with partners, including the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association (RSPBA) and the Scottish Highland Games Association (SHGA) to reschedule the event to later in the season, potentially, to mark the end of the Scottish season depending on how any Covid restrictions affect other events across the country and the national championships.

If the Covid protection level is below 2 up to six weeks prior to the event, the service will plan to hold an in-person event in line with national event planning guidance with the expectation that this will involve restricted numbers and additional infrastructure.

June – Clyde Comedy Festival

If Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to six weeks prior to the date of the Clyde Comedy Festival it is proposed that the event continues to be cancelled but that officers examine options for supporting the event later in the year subject to Covid restrictions and how the landscape looks for events across the country.

If the Covid protection level is below 2 up to six weeks prior to the event, the service will plan to work with local venues to examine the options to hold an in-person event in line with national event planning guidance.

June – Armed Forces Day (local flag raising)

If Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to three weeks prior to the date of Armed Forces Day it is proposed that an in person civic event does not take place and that the occasion continues to be marked online. If the Covid protection level is below 2

up to three weeks prior to the event, the service will plan to hold an in-person event in line with national event planning guidance.

June – Armed Forces Day (Paisley Abbey Commemoration)

The service will work with partners in Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire on the planning for a commemoration event in Paisley Abbey on the basis that if Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to six weeks prior to the date of Armed Forces Day it is expected that an in person civic event does not take place and that the occasion continues to be marked online. If the Covid protection level for all three areas is below 2 up to six weeks prior to the event, subject to negotiations with partner councils, the service will plan to hold an in-person event in line with national event planning guidance.

June – Port Glasgow Comet Festival

If Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to six weeks prior to the date of The Port Glasgow Comet Festival it is proposed that an in person event does not take place and that the service works with The Port Glasgow Comet Festival Committee to hold the event later in the year, subject to Covid restrictions changing.

If the Covid protection level is below 2 up to six weeks prior to the event, the service will plan to hold an in-person event, subject to the festival committee wishing to continue to hold the event, in line with national event planning guidance with the expectation that this will involve restricted numbers and additional infrastructure.

July – Achi Baba

If Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to three weeks prior to the date of Achi Baba it is expected that an in person event will not take place and that the council marks the occasion with a representative laying a wreath on behalf of the community. If the Covid protection level is below 2 up to four weeks prior to the event, the service will plan to support an in-person community-led event in line with national event planning guidance.

September – Merchant Navy Day

If Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to three weeks prior to the date of Merchant Navy Day it is proposed that an in person civic event does not take place and that the occasion continues to be marked online and the red ensign flown above the council's Municipal Buildings. If the Covid protection level is below 2 three weeks prior to the event, the service will plan to hold an in-person event in line with national event planning guidance.

September – Doors Open Day

If Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to eight weeks prior to the date of Doors Open Day it is proposed that an in person event does not take place and that the occasion continues to be marked online. If the covid protection level is below 2 eight weeks prior to the event, the service will plan to hold an in-person event in line with national event planning guidance.

October – Garden of Remembrance

If Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to three weeks prior to the date of The Garden of Remembrance it is proposed that an in person civic event does not take place and that the garden continues to be created to support the community to remember and the occasion in partnership with Poppy Scotland and that the occasion is also marked online. If the Covid protection level is below 2 three weeks prior to the event, the service will plan to hold an in-person event in line with national event planning guidance.

November – Annual fireworks event

If Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to six weeks prior to the date of Annual Fireworks it is proposed that an in person event does not take place and is not rescheduled in 2021. If the Covid protection level is below 2 six weeks prior to the event, the service will plan to hold an in-person event in line with national event planning guidance.

November – Remembrance Sunday

It is expected that Remembrance Commemorations will be subject to specific Government guidance if the Covid compliance measures are still in place in November 2021. The planning for Inverclyde's commemoration events in towns and villages would be rooted in compliance with that guidance and the general principle that if Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to three weeks prior to the date of Remembrance Sunday that an in person event does not take place and that the council continues to mark the occasion with representatives laying a wreath at each of the town and village war memorials. If the Covid protection level is below 2 up to three weeks prior to the event the service will plan to hold an in-person event in line with national event planning guidance.

November/December – Christmas light switch ons

If Inverclyde's Covid protection level remains above or at 2 up to four weeks prior to the date of the Christmas light switch ons it is proposed that an in person event does not take place and the council continues to mark the event online. If the Covid protection level is below 2 four weeks prior to the event, the service will plan to hold in-person events in towns and villages in line with national event planning guidance.