

Members' Library Service Request Form

Date of Document	11/12/20
Originator	Head Of Communities & Partnership / Head Of Council Resources
Originator's Ref (if any)	
Document Title	COVID-19 – Update on the Management of Council Response and Recovery

Please indicate if access to the document is to be “unrestricted” or “restricted”, with regard to the terms of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

Unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Restricted	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	-------------------------------------	------------	--------------------------

If the document is “restricted”, please state on what grounds (click on grey area for drop-down menu):

For Publication

Additional information:

Authorised By	Monica Patterson
Designation	Chief Executive
Date	11/12/20

For Office Use Only:	
Library Reference	134/20
Date Received	11/12/20
Bulletin	Dec 2020

REPORT TO: Members Library Service

DATE:

BY: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: COVID-19 – Update on the Management of Council Response and Recovery

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 Following on from the previous COVID-19 reports to Council on 25 August 2020 and 27 October 2020, this report provides a further update of how the Council has managed both our ongoing response to supporting the national public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and action taken in support of recovery and renewal.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Council is asked to:
- i Note the contents of this report and to acknowledge the unprecedented effect the COVID-19 outbreak continues to have on both the East Lothian community and delivery of Council services;
 - ii Note the ongoing COVID-19 response in respect of service delivery and interventions necessary to continue to contain the spread of the virus, particularly the ongoing deployment of Business Continuity Plans in support of National Guidance and appropriate public health measures;
 - iii Note the establishment of the multi-agency East Lothian Safety Advisory Group 'Plus' to oversee the deployment of the proposed COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Centre at Queen Margaret University, early in 2021;
 - iv Note the ongoing relentless focus on engagement with the public through external communications encouraging compliance with Protection Level requirements to constrain the spread of the virus within East Lothian; and,

- v Note further updated COVID-19 Response and Recovery reports will be brought forward when appropriate.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Since March of this year the Council has been operating within a series of unprecedented constraints, restrictions and implications associated with the COVID-19 global pandemic. For a significant period, Council decision making was operating under delegated emergency powers although since August, we have managed to re-instate the vast majority of our governance arrangements albeit largely working on a remote/virtual basis, and it is expected these will continue for some time ahead.
- 3.2 Business Continuity Plans were formally invoked by the Chief Executive across all services on 24 March 2020. This remains the position, which means that responding to the COVID-19 emergency has been the Council's priority for ten months. Our strategy throughout has been to follow and support all relevant Scottish Government Guidance and to ensure that the Council continues to provide public services, minimising the impact of the developing COVID-19 outbreak, ensuring critical services are prioritised and that planning takes place for council services to recover wherever possible/permitted. As the pandemic continues our Business Continuity Plans and our Response and Recovery structures continue to flex to address the developing challenges brought from COVID-19 impact, national planning and any seasonal impacts.
- 3.3 The COVID-19 Command and Response Structure remains in place, with the Chief Executive designated as 'Gold Command'. The Council Management Team continue to hold a weekly COVID-19 Response and Recovery Meeting. The Head of Communities & Partnerships is 'Silver Command' and leads the Council's COVID-19 Emergency Planning Response, supported by the East Lothian Council COVID-19 Oversight Group (COG), and supporting sub-groups that continue to meet on a regular basis. The Head of Council Resources is 'Bronze Command' and is co-ordinating our actions in accordance with our approved Recovery and Renewal Framework, supported by the Multi-agency Recovery & Renewal Co-ordinating Group (MARRCG) and various supporting sub groups.
- 3.4 **COVID-19 Scotland's Strategic Framework**
Launched by the Scottish Government on 23 October 2020, the Strategic Framework of 'Protection Levels' was introduced across Scotland, with each of the 32 Local Authority areas placed into Protection Level 0 through to Protection Level 4; with Level 4 bringing the highest level of COVID-19 restrictions to bear on local communities and businesses. Initially, East Lothian was placed in Protection Level 3 and subsequently, on 24 November 2020, into Protection Level 2, and remains in Protection Level 2 at the time of writing this report.

East Lothian shares local authority boundaries with Scottish Borders Council (currently Protection Level 1), Midlothian Council (currently Protection Level

3) and the City of Edinburgh Council (currently Protection Level 3). The employment, tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors across these areas share a common customer base, with local people crossing these areas for employment and leisure. Close collaboration with neighbouring Councils has prevailed throughout our COVID-19 response. The Chief Executives and Emergency Planning / Resilience Officers hold frequent Regional and Local Resilient Partnership meetings to ensure effective regional response to the Pandemic.

3.5 COVID-19 Incidence Monitoring

In receipt of weekly COVID-19 data reports from Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland and NHS Lothian Health Protection Team, East Lothian Council conducts detailed scrutiny of this data to inform local prevalence and identify risk. Close collaboration and joint working across Council services, particularly with the Education Service, Protective Services and the Health & Social Care Partnership, supported by the NHSL Health Protection Team, ensures accurate and timely response to any positive COVID-19 cases or cluster outbreaks. NHS Lothian's Public Health Team's provision of case incidence data helps enable prompt response leading to direct engagement, as appropriate, with individuals, businesses and communities affected.

The key data monitored is the data used by the Scottish Government in its weekly review of local authority levels:

- Positive cases over the previous 7 days
- Case rate (cases per 100,000 population) over the previous 7 days
- Cases per 100,000 forecast
- Hospital bed forecast (at NHS Lothian level)
- ICU bed forecast (at NHS Lothian level)

Since moving into Protection Level 2 on 24 November 2020, East Lothian's indicators have consistently been within the national criteria set for Protection Level 2. However there has been a recent increase in positive cases:

- On 30th November there were 45 positive cases reported over the previous 7 days – cases per 100,000, 42.
- On 6 December there were 90 positive cases reported over the previous 7 days – cases per 100,000, 84.
- On 7 December there were 106 positive cases reported over the previous 7 days – cases per 100,000, 99.

The data shows a concerning increase in positive cases in the West of the county over a short period of time and does not, given the circa 3 day lag in national data collation, necessarily include very new cases identified in East Lothian e.g. relating to school pupil positive case which the Council will already know of within the community before those data filter through for inclusion in the national statistics.

Whilst these East Lothian levels remain within the Protection Level 2 threshold, levels may move above the threshold if the trend continues – making the county's combined efforts to suppress the spread of the virus all the more critical.

3.6 COVID-19 Support for People

Test and Protect: Information on the national Test and Protect Programme is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/news/test-and-protect-rolled-out-nationally/>. The Scottish Government supported this programme with the launch of Guidance (on 12 October 2020) relating to the support to be offered to those vulnerable people required to self-isolate, including people who are on the shielding list and people aged 65+. Demand on East Lothian has been low as many people require no support, having sufficient assistance from family, neighbours and friends – and from community groups. Only 3 self-isolating people (out of 414 notified to us by Test and Protect) have sought support from the Council's COVID-19 Helpline on 01875 824300, operated through the Contact Centre. 45 people have applied for the £500 Self-Isolation Support Grant with 25 eligible to be awarded the Grant.

Financial Insecurity: Tackling poverty and food insecurity remains a national priority. Scottish Government have issued funding and Guidance to Local Authorities to support those in their communities experiencing financial insecurity related to COVID-19. East Lothian Council has been allocated £327K, and work is underway, to support Free School Meal Provision during holiday periods through to Summer 2021, to supplement budgets for Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments, to provide Cash Support for Food Insecurity and for Fuel Costs.

3.7 COVID-19 Community and Business Support

Business Support Grants: as at 25 November 2020, the following Business Support Grant activity has been undertaken providing much needed financial support to the East Lothian business community:

Payment	Type	Amount	Comments
Business Support Grants (April to 10 July 2020)	Grant	17,636,250	1,573 organisations supported, funding provided by Scottish Government
Newly Self Employed Hardship	Grant	216,000	108 Sole Traders supported by funding provided by Scottish Government
Hospitality (Scottish Enterprise) (CTHEHF) Hardship & Pivotal (PERF)	Grant	431,995	159 organisations supported, funding provided by Scottish Government
Soft play (One-of award, November 2020)	Grant	45,000	3 organisations supported, funding provided by Scottish Government

Payment	Type	Amount	Comments
Business Closure Grants (9 Oct - 3 Nov 2020)	Grant	375,150	123 organisations supported, funding provided by Scottish Government
Business Hardship (9 Oct - 3 Nov 2020)	Grant	56,845	36 organisations supported, funding provided by Scottish Government
Strategic Framework (Closure) Nov 2020	Grant	26,000	13 organisations supported, funding provided by Scottish Government (Ongoing)
Strategic Framework (Restrictions) Nov 2020	Grant	100,100	67 organisations supported, funding provided by Scottish Government (Ongoing)
TOTAL		18,887,340	

In addition to the above Strategic Framework grant support already in place, the Council is currently administering a one-off **Furlough Support Fund Grant**. This is a retrospective grant covering those businesses that were subject to closure between 9 October and 3 November 2020.

It is also important to note that Strategic Framework grant support is of an ongoing nature as opposed to earlier intervention support which was “one-off”, bringing ongoing resourcing implications for the Council.

In accordance with the announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance on 9 December, further discretionary business support funds are to be made available, although at the time of writing further clarification on the detail and distribution of the schemes including which ones will be delivered via Local Government is still to be provided.

Total support to be provided nationally amounted to £185m and sectors / activities likely to be covered include hospitality, events industry, food and drink, brewers, travel agents, tour and coach operators, brewers, self-catering and B&Bs, indoor football, visitor attraction and taxi drivers. Specific national funding amounts were mentioned as follows:

- £1.5m for travelling shows
- £15m for wedding venues and wedding sector supply chain
- £19m for taxi drivers (**expected via LAs**)
- £15m for mobile contact services (**expected via LAs**)
- £16m for tourism and hotels / self-catering
- £30m for one off payments to hospitality & hotels – top up under Strategic Framework Fund (**expected via LAs**)

Our multi-agency Connected Economy Group, from a multi-agency and partnering perspective and supported by Protective Services, Economic Development Services and Finance Services, continue to ensure that local businesses have timely and accurate information and advice in compliance with the all COVID-19 restrictions and Public Health operating requirements.

Active promotion of 'Stay Safe, Support Local, Love East Lothian' continues to encourage local people to remain within East Lothian for all their retail and leisure needs, actively promoting good behaviours, helping businesses deliver safely – and in so doing supporting our local economy.

Business Regulation and Support: On 2 November, The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 came into force. These Regulations set out the restrictions and requirements which apply in the different levels applied to Scottish local authority areas. The enforcement of the Regulations relate to the:

- Requirement to close certain premises to members of the public.
- Requirement on a responsible person to take measures to minimise risk of exposure to coronavirus in their premises.
- Restrictions on the opening times and sales in certain public houses and food and drink premises.
- Requirement to obtain and record visitor information in a relevant hospitality premises.
- Restriction on gatherings in public places and private dwellings.
- Wearing of a face covering on public transport and certain indoor premises.

Officers within Protective Services - Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Safer Communities teams - and Police Constables, are authorised to deploy these Regulations to 31 March 2021.

Protective Services continue direct work in our communities and with the business sector, supporting safe deployment of the Government's COVID-19 Regulations and public health guidelines. Officers have conducted supportive evening/weekend monitoring visits across the county's hospitality sector – visiting some 120 hospitality and related business premises - since East Lothian moved into Protection Level 2 on 24 November 2020. This joint working with Economic Development, Licensing Service, and Police Scotland, continues to support the safe operation of the business and hospitality sectors in compliance with Scottish Government Guidelines for public health management and reducing the spread of the coronavirus.

In the majority of visits, officers have found a good level of compliance with the legal requirements and guidance and have been able to engage effectively with the local hospitality sector. There was one ongoing incidence of non-compliance which resulted in enforcement action being taken by officers in the interests of protecting public health. The officers continued to work with the business to secure compliance.

3.8 COVID-19 Vaccine and Mass Vaccination Programme

The first COVID-19 vaccination was administered in the UK on 8th December 2020. NHS Lothian has been instructed by Scottish Government to prepare operations for the deployment of the COVID -19 vaccine across the Lothians; deployment of the vaccine to nationally defined priority groups e.g. front line health and social care staff and care home residents, began in East Lothian on 8 December 2020.

Following this first phase roll out of the vaccine, a Mass Vaccination Programme will take place nationwide. The roll out in the Lothians is being led by NHS Lothian and the first East Lothian multi agency meeting was convened on the 14th October, with a Lothian-wide meeting held on 27 November 2020. The nearest Mass Vaccination Centre for East Lothian residents will be established at Queen Margaret University and will be operable early in 2020. The multiagency Safety Advisory Group 'Plus' – overseeing the planning and deployment, and safe operation of the site – took place on 9th December 2020, Chaired by Iain Gorman, Head of Operations within the East Lothian Health & Social Care Partnership.

3.9 Communication and Community Leadership

Effective external communication continues to be a critical component in support of managing our response to COVID-19. Emphasis continues to be placed upon mirroring national media campaigns through the use of local press and social media releases, reiterating key public health messages – particularly relating to national travel restrictions between Protection Levels, public safety in hospitality settings and the 'FACTS'.

Communications Officers, across neighbouring authorities, Police Scotland and NHS Lothian, collaborate to ensure common, timely and complimentary public messaging relating to the impacts of COVID-19, and Protection Level restrictions, in each of the respective local authority areas. It continues to be our priority to ensure effective communication and engagement with our communities, with particular messaging and involvement with parent/carer communities and the business sector, ensuring wide community understanding of the COVID-19 response activity, and of the significant contributions community and business members can make towards containing the virus' spread.

The Chief Executive continues to provide weekly briefings to Elected Members and employees. Regular internal briefings continue with our workforce and also with our Joint Trade Unions

3.10 Recovery and Renewal Framework

The Multi-agency Recovery & Renewal Co-ordinating Group (MARRCG) met on 30 November 2020 for the fifth time, overseeing the ongoing programme of work contained within the Action Cards of the 5 Recovery and Renewal Key Area Groups: Economy, Education & Children's Services, Community, Health & Social Care and Infrastructure & Environment. Version 1.4 of the

Recovery and Renewal Framework contains updated Action Cards and was agreed at the meeting on 30th November and is available for reference within the Members Library Service at:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16706/members_library_service.

3.11 **General COVID Context**

As has previously been reported, the COVID-19 pandemic is very different from any of the Civil Emergencies that have been experienced, planned for and rehearsed. Emergency Planning Recovery and Renewal will continue for a long time and will inform the reshaping of Council priorities, resource allocations and services in the years ahead.

As 2020 draws to a close and, through the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine, hope is now with us that 2021 may see the Council move forward into fuller 'Recovery' mode. The next few months will see a number of concurrent risks impact upon our capacity to focus on recovery – COVID-19, Brexit and Winter Emergency.

East Lothian Council has and will continue to work fully within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) (Scotland) Regulations, 2005. As a Category 1 responder, the Council works closely with all Category 1 and 2 responders, particularly through the East Regional Resilience Partnership (RRP) and Lothian & Borders Local Resilience Partnership (LRP) Groups. This has allowed ELC resilience staff to maintain regular contact with resilience staff in partner agencies, particularly NHS Scotland, Police Scotland and nearby local authorities to pass on information quickly and appropriately to ensure lessons learned are taken into account when forming strategic, tactical and operational policy and action – of particular importance as neighbouring local authorities in Lothian & Borders are currently allocated into differing Protection Levels.

The close contact and participation with partner agencies allows for additional concurrent risks to be identified, recognised and addressed, such as severe weather, EU Exit and any other unexpected occurrence that may impact on East Lothian. By addressing and planning for our multi-agency response to concurrent risks, the Council is in a good position to manage these in support of remaining within Protection Level 2 restrictions.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct policy implications associated with the report recommendations, although it is anticipated that response and especially recovery and renewal activity may result in significant future policy alterations for the Council and other stakeholders. Any such policy implications will be subject to the appropriate governance and approval arrangements of each organisation.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The specific recommendations made within this report do not directly affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy. Recovery and Renewal Plans developed will however be subject to Integrated Impact Assessments.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 **Financial:** The financial implications associated with the Council's response and recovery actions to date are considerable and are likely to increase significantly over the coming months and are also likely to have implications for future financial plans.

With funding from national governments very much a moving feast, it is virtually impossible to advise what this will ultimately mean in net terms for final outturn performance, nor the extent of the impact upon future budgets. Based upon funding announcements that have been made at the time of report writing, the council will still face a significant net deficit in respect of COVID-19 related activity.

A more detailed review on the financial implications facing the Council has been undertaken in the context of the 2020/21 Financial Year and is the subject of a separate report being considered at Council on 15 December 2020. This will set the context for any decisions required to manage the financial commitments for the Council in both the short and medium term, including where appropriate any modification to the Council's approved financial strategy.

- 6.2 **Personnel:** Council staff in essential direct service delivery services and roles e.g. Social Care, Connected Communities, Customer Services, Waste service et al., continue to deliver direct business critical service across the community throughout the emergency response to COVID-19 and in support of recovery efforts.

In respect of Business Support Grants, work is progressing in preparation for the administration of the additional schemes announced (See paragraph 3.7). It is important to recognise the impact on staffing resource for those involved including the demands placed on them from earlier schemes and the impact that this will have on the capacity of staff to undertake other workstreams both in respect of ongoing Response, Recovery & Renewal and normal business.

Homeworking remains a significant and necessary feature, especially for those who are office based and whose workplace remains unavailable or under constraint. It is estimated that approximately 700 members of staff are still working from home and it is likely they will be doing so for some time.

This is a considerable change as to how we work as a Council and many HR policies are currently under review to reflect this.

Regular Joint Trades Union meetings ensure timely and open dialogue over any workforce issues generated by COVID-19 response.

- 6.3 **Other:** Continued positive and collaborative working relationships with community planning partners, e.g. Police Scotland, Volunteer Centre East Lothian, Area Partnerships, Community Councils and our wide network of community groups and organisations, has ensured effective cross-agency co-operation and deployment of resources to meet the COVID-19 challenges experience across East Lothian.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 COVID – 19 – Management of Council Response and Recovery – Report by the Chief Executive dated 25th August 2020.
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16617/east_lothian_council
- 7.2 East Lothian Council COVID 19 Recovery and Renewal Framework Document, Version 1.3 – Report by Head of Council Resources to the Members Library Service dated 5th October 2020.
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16705/members_library_service
- 7.3 2020/21 Q1 and Top 50 Performance Indicators 2019/20 – Report by the Head of Communities & Partnerships to the Policy & Performance Review Committee dated 7th October 2020.
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16719/policy_and_performance_review_committee
- 7.4 COVID-19 – Update on the Management of Council Response & Recovery - Report by the Chief Executive dated 27th October 2020.
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16619/east_lothian_council

AUTHOR'S NAME	Sharon Saunders and Jim Lamond
DESIGNATION	Head of Communities and Partnerships / Head of Council Resources
CONTACT INFO	ssaunders1@eastlothian.gov.uk jlamond@eastlothian.gov.uk
DATE	11 December 2020