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**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**
**HELD ON THURSDAY, 25TH JUNE, 2020**

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# Please find attached the Appendix in respect Item 8 on the agenda for the above meeting

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| 8. | **Responding to Covid-19** (Pages 3 - 22)<br><br>Presentation by the Chief Executive. (Presentation attached.) | 20 mins |

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SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

# COVID-19 Response and Recovery

25 June 2020





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# Response

- Since early March the Council has been engaged in planning for and then responding to the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Our response has developed alongside national guidance across a range of areas.
- Only in recent weeks have we started to move towards some elements of a recovery phase, although some parts of the business remain very firmly in response mode due to the continued impacts on them.
- A corporate Response Group, a corporate Recovery Board and a specific Education Recovery Board are currently overseeing all elements of our response and recovery.



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# Response

## Community Assistance Hubs (CAHs):

- Hubs have been established in all 5 localities to provide locally-based support 7 days a week, with a focus on those ‘shielding’.
- They are part of a multi-agency approach to a co-ordinated response and include ourselves, NHS Borders, the Third/Voluntary Sector, Housing Associations and local Resilient Communities Groups.
- This approach has been extremely useful and is a model which we are keen to explore going forward to deliver locality-based support as ‘business as usual’.
- Food has been a huge area of focus, both for those who are shielding and vulnerable families and CAH's have worked with Resilient Community teams and Foodbank/Fareshare outlets to provide over 2,500 food parcels.



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# Response

## Shielding:

- Over the course of a number of weeks the number of local residents on the national ‘shielding’ list grew to more than 4,500.
- The Council was tasked with contacting each to understand their support needs, with over 90% successfully contacted – after repeated attempts where required.
- Of those needing support, the concern for the majority was access to food.
- By early June staff had assisted with the setup of over 1,200 grocery parcel deliveries, over 1,350 supermarket delivery slots, over 200 medication deliveries and numerous other services provided by teams in our Community Assistance Hubs.



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# Response

## Health and Social Care

- From the outset we have adhered to all national guidance on the use of PPE and have had no supply issues on the front line.
- SBC moved to sustained transmission on 17 April and full PPE worn by all care staff since then - a number of weeks before national guidance moved to sustained transmission and this requirement.
- We have worked exceptionally closely with NHS Borders colleagues, in particular the Infection Control Team and newly formed Community Infection Control Advisory Service, which has provided significant reassurance that we have been doing everything in our power to prevent transmission.
- In addition, NHS Borders nursing staff provided support.



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# Response

## Health and Social Care

- We have sadly had a number of residents in our care homes die where COVID-19 has been listed as a contributory factor on the death certificate.
- All care homes are now deemed clear of COVID-19.
- In line with Sottish Government guidance we have implemented a Care Home Response Team covering care home staff testing, assurance of infection control and staffing contingency.
- Visits to all care homes to provide assurance to the Care Home Oversight Group will be completed by the end of June.
- A weekly care home staff testing offer has been launched through the social care portal with enhanced support provided from NHS Borders' testing team to support this across all sites.



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# Response

## Health and Social Care

- Care at Home Services have worked tirelessly throughout to ensure this service provided sustainability throughout.
- Many staff have had to change roles during the crisis and required to assist in other care services.
- Our staff, including cleaning services, and numerous volunteers from other services and Live Borders have been fully supportive and have been an absolute credit to the Council.



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# Response

## Childcare Hubs/Schools

- Childcare Hubs have been operational since late March, providing vital childcare for key workers and also supporting vulnerable young people
- Currently over 550 children are using these hubs each weekday
- Regularly we have provided over 1,100 meals a day through hubs
- Schools closed on 20 March and teachers have been supporting home learning since this time. We have accelerated the Inspire Learning programme to ensure the maximum number of pupils benefit.

# Response

## Business

- The Council has been locally managing three business funds on behalf of the Scottish Government – the Business Support Fund; the Newly Self Employed Hardship Fund and the B&B Hardship Fund.
- These funds will all close for new applications on 10 July
- More than £28million has been paid out in total to date, with more than 2,500 successful applicants.
- Wherever possible Business Gateway has been signposting unsuccessful applicants to other support that is available from the UK and Scottish Governments.
- The Council has fully honoured its contractual commitments in paying suppliers flexible, eg local transport providers.



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# Response

## Business

- Members will be aware of a number of recent announcements regarding potential redundancies affecting locally based businesses and some national companies which have local operations.
- These announcements are a reflection of the challenging economic climate created by COVID-19, but the timeline of the announcements is driven by redundancy consultation periods and changes to the furlough scheme.

# Response

## Business

- The Council will, working alongside partners, most notably South of Scotland Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland, provide all necessary support to these businesses and, when appropriate, support with any Partnership for Continuing Employment (PACE) events for employees.
- We remain hopeful that, as we move through the Scottish Government's phased route map out of lockdown, the number of employees actually facing redundancy will be lower than the headlines presently quoted.

# Response

## Information Technology

- Work undertaken with our IT partners CGI has been crucial to the effectiveness of our response. Key work has included:
    - Upgrade of direct access capability, with over 1,200 staff on average accessing SBC emails, systems and files from home on a daily basis
    - Roll out of video conferencing facilities through MS Teams
    - Accelerated upgrade to Windows 10 laptops for priority users
    - Continued roll out of the Inspire Learning project to enable home learning:
        - All secondary teachers and pupils complete
        - All primary teachers complete
        - P7, P6 and P5 pupil roll out commenced



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# Recovery

## General Approach

- It is absolutely clear that there will certainly not be a return to how we operated pre-coronavirus.
- We were already progressing our Fit for 2024 programme, which aims to transform the Council and services to meet current and future challenges, and while we are revisiting this in the light of COVID-19, we must continue to change and adapt, including:
    - More remote/agile working
    - Process improvements
    - Reduced staff travel
    - Smaller property estate



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# Recovery

## General Approach

- To meet ongoing requirements in respect of physical distancing there will be significant resource implications across many of our services, and this will not simply impact on frontline services.
- The Council must transform, and quickly, how it works and provides services right across the board – few areas will be unchanged.
- A survey of staff and the feedback from service managers is enabling work to start to design the ‘new normal’ for SBC



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# Recovery

## Staff Implications

- There are a number of examples already of how our staff resources will be impacted by the ongoing response phase in some areas and the work required in the recovery phase
    - The provision of kerbside waste services has required additional staff resourcing to ensure that social distancing is maintained, as has the reopening of Community Recycling Centres
    - The demands on staff has been, and continues to be, unprecedented given the scale and nature of the response. The recovery phase will be no less demanding.
- As we move forward these impacts will affect some service delivery and require difficult corporate decisions to be made on which services are prioritised.



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# Recovery

## Education

- In line with Scottish Government guidance our schools will re-open to pupils on 11 August.
- Some staff returned in mid-June to support pupil transitions and school leavers and to prepare for August.
- We of course hope that coronavirus is sufficiently supressed to allow the full return of pupils in August if safe to do so.
- However, at the same time we have developed a blended learning offer, meaning a combination of in-school and home learning, should a full return not be possible. Details will be communicated to parents, pupils and staff this week.
- It is essential that we provide this information in case these arrangements are required at 11 August.



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# COVID-19 Response and Recovery

## Next Steps

- Maintain and manage financial and staff resources to support continued response across relevant service areas and also support recovery efforts
- Further develop recovery plans for implementation when restrictions are eased
- Continue to review, refresh and move forward with Fit for 2024 programme and plans
- At all times be prepared should any increase in COVID-19 cases locally or nationally require an immediate response



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# Finance

- The Council is submitting regular returns through COSLA and the IJB mobilisation group to estimate the financial impact of COVID-19 on Scottish Borders Council.

- Latest projections estimate an impact of around £15m pressure for 2020/21 from a combination of loss of income and service pressures which can be categorised as:

    - Additional unplanned expenditure
    - Loss of income
    - Delays in delivery of Financial Plan savings



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# Finance

- In response to the budget gap the Council has taken management action across all areas to remove all non-urgent spending, maximise financial plan savings and review departmental income and expenditure. This exercise is supporting the development of a fund to directly support the corporate response and recovery efforts.
- To date, the Scottish Government has provided funds to support the COVID response totalling £5.587m, whilst internal reviews of budgets has identified £2.548m of available Council funding.
- Additional flexibility in current specific grants, cash flow support and the conversion of NDR funding to revenue support grant will also assist in meeting some of the pressure.
- A more detailed paper on finance is included on the agenda.



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