

ANGUS COUNCIL

SPECIAL COUNCIL – 3 APRIL 2020

ANGUS COUNCIL COVID19 RESPONSE

REPORT BY MARGO WILLIAMSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

ABSTRACT

This report seeks to provide an update on the actions of Angus Council in preparation, readiness and the ongoing response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 Members are asked to note:-

- (i) The preparation and readiness for a pandemic;
- (ii) The response actions of the council to date; and
- (iii) The ongoing response which continues in challenging and unprecedented territory.

1.2 Members are asked in relation to the Humanitarian Assistance Centre to agree:-

- (i) to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to enable the delivery of emergency service provision to vulnerable adults and families for a period of up to six months in the first instance;
- (ii) that this delegation will be limited to the use of the additional funding available from Government and if necessary the reallocation of existing Council budgets; and
- (iii) to note that regular formal progress reports in this regard will be brought to members, supplemented by informal updates when appropriate.
- (iv) to note the use of the Chief Executive's emergency power as outlined in paragraph 4.1 of this report relative to the Humanitarian Assistance Centre.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1 COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan city, China in December 2019. A coronavirus is a type of virus and typical symptoms include: fever, a cough that may progress to a severe pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. More severe symptoms are likely in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with underlying health conditions.

2.2 This is a rapidly changing situation. Given the scale of this global crises, the [World Health Organisation](#) has now declared this a pandemic and a full emergency response has been activated. Pandemic is a high level hazard on the national risk assessment and therefore considered one of the highest risks facing the UK.

2.3 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and Contingency Planning (Scotland) Regulations 2005, (as amended 2013) places statutory duties on Angus Council, to risk assess, plan, prepare and respond to, and support the recovery from a range of incidents and emergencies. This includes publishing our [emergency plan](#), and ensuring that the council can continue to perform its key functions / essential services (critical activities) in the event of an emergency, through business continuity plans. This means that the preparation and planning for a pandemic has been underway for a considerable time.

2.4 There is no doubt that we are facing unprecedented territory in the weeks and months ahead. This is challenging and tough for all of our citizens, communities, businesses and our workforce. The UK Government and the devolved administrations have announced sanctions on social distancing **for all** citizens, aligned to the [Four Nations Action Plan](#) and the ongoing critical assessment of the trajectory of the pandemic. The sanctions are summarised as follows:

- **Stay At Home – this is what will save lives.**
- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home). Many businesses have been advised to close and there is to be no mass gatherings or events. Categories of essential and key workers have been established.
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times. Exercise once a day. Do not travel anywhere else unless essential for food, supplies or pharmacy (or work as an essential/key worker)
- Wash your hands frequently following health protection guidance.
- Do not meet others, even friends or family and no social gatherings.
- You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.
- Those with significant underlying health conditions, or are over the age of 70, or have an illness defined as high risk must remain at home and isolate for up to 12 weeks. Subsequently, letters have been distributed from the NHS to those identified as most vulnerable. This is categorised as "shielding" and outlines the measures that must be adhered to for their own health, safety and wellbeing. Information is also included for assistance that is available locally and nationally.

3. ACTIVATION & RESPONSE

3.1 Governments including the devolved administrations, have fully activated their emergency plans. The Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) and the Scottish Government Resilience Room (ScGoRR) have been activated, and ministerial and partnership meetings are being held daily.

3.2 The Multi-Agency Co-ordination Centre (MACC) for Scotland is now operational and includes representatives of all sectors and responding agencies. This provides a focal point for co-ordination and communication across all resilience partnerships within Scotland and Scottish Government.

3.3 Nationally and locally all agencies have fully activated their emergency plans, and declared this pandemic an emergency, including Angus Council and neighbouring local authorities.

3.4 In Tayside, the Resilience Partnership has convened, attended by chief officers from all local partner agencies, including the council's chief executive.

3.5 **Angus Council has undertaken the following actions to date:**

- Activation of a full emergency response aligned to the council's emergency plan.
- Activation of the council emergency centre plan, which is the command, co-ordination and communication hub for dealing with any emergency. The emergency centre is assessing and analysing information on a daily basis from all services. (Social distancing protocols in place)
- All business continuity plans for essential services invoked and continuing to deliver critical activities.
- On call arrangements for senior team and other specialist areas.
- Pandemic has been added to the corporate risk register as an emerging and current risk.
- Incident management teams are meeting daily. This includes Angus Health & Social Care Partnership and Angus Alive. Daily notes and actions are produced.
- Daily briefings to staff, including questions to Yammer and also frequently asked questions.
- Situation reports daily including to elected members.
- IT and digital assessment for home working, including additional provision of equipment and resources complete, with ongoing service support.

- HR sub group convened to discuss, review and update HR policies, absence monitoring and redeployment options, having regard to CoSLA briefings and in discussion with trade unions. Work has also been undertaken to update resourcelink to collate workforce profile information.
- Care and support of employees to ensure as much information can be provided as possible. COVID19 email box in place for general enquiries.
- Established a Humanitarian Assistance Centre (virtual) sub group, to meet the needs of those identified as most vulnerable through the “shielding” process and to work with the third sector and co-ordination of volunteers. This will be a significant area of work.
- Full engagement with third sector and joint working including computer software solutions to support the interdependencies of volunteering.
- Local hubs have been established by Education and Life Long Learning to accommodate children of key workers and those deemed vulnerable.
- Customer contact centre receiving increased web chat calls and a reduction in the number of phone calls, to ensure that this is prioritised for those who are vulnerable and requiring urgent assistance. This is working well with a high percentage of channel shift to web chat.
- Review of buildings and services, complete to enable effective use of resources during this pandemic. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- Review of statutory requirements with housing regulator.
- Continued delivery of waste services, with closure of recycling centres.
- Stock of supplies being co-ordinated by facilities management team and including personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand wash, sanitiser and wipes.
- PPE challenges from national distribution hub, this is improving and some stock released.
- Webpage developed and updated with daily information and service information. This is also signposting to national information, including health, business grants, universal credit and crisis loans.
- [Health Protection Scotland](#), and [NHS Inform](#), provide good information, as does the [gov.uk](#) site. These pages are updated daily and are credible sources
- Revenue & benefits service supporting digital process for business grants and school meal voucher payments. Large increase in calls for benefits and crisis grants.
- Review of governance and delegated authorities coordinated via Director of Legal and Democratic Services.
- Legal team reviewing Coronavirus Act 2020 to identify and assess implications for Angus Council.
- Safety service has produced updated risk assessments and templates for staff who are categorised as vulnerable, and, for services with regard to social distancing.
- Full Integration with Business Angus and Chamber of Commerce to support businesses.
- Recovery sub group to be activated.

4. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE CENTRE

- 4.1 Angus has over the past week been preparing to establish a HAC as per the ‘ask’ of Government during this difficult period for people. In the first instance the priority will be to put in place arrangements for those people identified as being in the highest risk group. Establishing the HAC has been progressed under the chief executives delegated authority arrangements as follows:–

‘in an emergency, to initiate action under any statutory procedure related to a function of the Council, subject to a report being made to the appropriate Committee at the first opportunity on any item for which Committee approval would normally be necessary;’

- 4.2 Approval is now being sought from Council to continue the HAC, this being the first opportunity to bring this report to Council.
- 4.3 Details of what is included in the HAC in respect of shielding the most vulnerable will focus on ensuring the supply of food and medicines, responding to other issues such as fuel, people’s wellbeing needs and escorting people to essential appointments.

- 4.4 Arrangements have now been established nationally to ascertain the needs and wishes of the proportion of Angus residents in the national figure of 200,000 with the necessary support arrangements to be put in place when we are informed who is in scope for this support.
- 4.5 Consideration of the development of a second phase of support that goes beyond the proportion of Angus residents identified as requiring shielding to those people and families in need of additional support as a consequence of COVID 19 is in progress.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The impact and consequences of the global pandemic is unprecedented on our citizens, communities, workforce and businesses. The wider interdependencies of the global supply chain and economic impact is far reaching. The role of Angus Council is therefore vital in terms of supporting the continued response and longer term recovery actions.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 It is not fully possible at this time to estimate what the financial implications of the council's response to the pandemic will be. In the event that the council's contingency funding needs to be accessed members will be asked to provide approval for such action.
- 6.2 Funding support is being offered nationally and further detail on this is provided separately on the agenda.
- 6.3 Funding support is also being made available to Third Sector partners which may be used to support the humanitarian assistance centre and associated volunteering delivery.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Corporate Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Equalities Implications

The recommendations in this report will have no negative differential impact on persons with protected characteristics.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

Report Author:

Jacqui Semple, Manager, Risk, Resilience and Safety, Strategic Policy, Transformation & Public Sector Reform

Email Details: SempleJ@angus.gov.uk