



REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 17 JUNE 2020

SUBJECT: CHIEF EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO COVID 19

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Council of the activities within the Chief Executive's portfolio that have been undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide a response to the emergency
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Moray Council following a decision of Moray Council on 25 March 2020 to temporarily suspend all delegations to committees as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (para 2 of the minute refers).

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Council review and note the activities within the Chief Executive's portfolio that have been undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide a response in terms of the Council's statutory obligations and related Council policy and practice respectively.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report provides an overview of how the Council faced having to cope with the effects of a major sudden emergency.
- 3.2 No hard and fast rules to meet all emergencies can be drawn up as time, nature, scale will determine the kind of response made. No single organisation is entirely responsible for dealing with emergencies in the United Kingdom.
- 3.3 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and its associated regulations and guidance recognise the fact that many agencies are involved in responding to emergency. The Act therefore defines two categories of responder. These are described as Category 1 and Category 2 responders. Councils like Moray are classed as Category 1 responders. Category 1 responders prepare and respond to emergencies and Category 2 respondents co-operate and share information with Category 1 responders.

- 3.4 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 defines an emergency as “an event or situation that threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK”. The general caveat is that the situation is on a scale beyond the capacity of normal operations and requiring the special mobilisation and organisation of services.
- 3.5 As a Category 1 responder the main roles of the Council in an emergency are to:-
- Support the activities of the emergency services;
 - Care for people affected by the emergency;
 - Maintain day-to-day services; and
 - Co-ordinate the recovery aspects of the emergency.
- 3.6 As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak being declared by the World Health Organisation as a pandemic, the Council had to undertake a range of activities that critical public services continued to be delivered and to respond to the emergency. This had to be done at a pace in a dynamic and changing environment.
- 3.7 This report provides an overview of the activities undertaken to help support Moray citizens during the period from March to May.
- 3.8 **Moray Council Emergency and Incident Management Team (IMT)**
- 3.8.1 The scale of the incident and Council policy required establishment of an emergency Incident Management Team (IMT). Chaired by the Chief Executive, the purpose of IMT was to allow the Council to act effectively to:
- Determine the extent of the emergency;
 - Agree strategy, tactics and priorities both in the short and long term;
 - Initiate and deliver response actions;
 - Obtain and allocate resources;
 - Liaise with all other involved agencies to exchange information and ensure an integrated unified response to the incident;
 - Monitor progress of operations and produce regular situation reports;
 - Issue regular briefings;
 - Ensure a comprehensive log of events and record of costs is maintained;
 - Prepare to take over and lead the recovery and renewal phase.
- 3.8.2 Between 10 March and 12 May there were 23 meetings held of IMT and these covered a range of issues such as:-
- Situation Reports to provide oversight and escalate issues
 - Oversight of workforce deployment to provide critical and emergency service delivery
 - Oversight of technology resources to provide critical and emergency service delivery.
 - Communications

3.8.3 Membership typically comprised of the following officers:-

- Chief Executive
- Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisation Development)
- Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment & Finance)
- Moray Integration Joint Board representative
- Head of Environmental & Commercial Services
- Head of Education
- Head of Education Resources and Communities
- Head of Children's Services
- Chief Social Work Officer
- Head of HR, ICT & OD
- Head of Transformation
- Emergency Planning/Brexit Officer
- Communications representative
- Resilience and Asset Management Officer

3.8.4 The business of the IMT was allocated across three tiers.

3.8.5 A strategic team provided the strategic response to this major incident. It defined, prioritised and regularly reviewed in broad terms what needed to be done and why.

3.8.6 The key activities included:-

- Setting strategic direction for response and recovery;
- Determining response and recovery priorities; and
- To act as a contact point for the Grampian LRP.

3.8.7 Tactical teams provided a tactical response to this major incident. They decided how the strategies defined by the strategic team were to be implemented. It also supported the activities of the operational teams.

3.8.8 Key activities included:-

- Determining how to deliver the strategies defined by the strategic team by assessing the response required in terms of resources;
- Disseminated/escalated information between operational and strategic teams;
- Acting as contact point for external groups;
- Acting as a filter for information to the strategic team;
- Providing specialist skills/knowledge;
- Producing regular situation reports for the strategic team.

3.8.9 Operational teams were responsible for implementing the tactical arrangements defined by the tactical teams. Key activities included mobilising and controlling the deployment and movement of resources.

3.9 Response and Recovery Management Team (RRMT)

3.9.1 Moving from lockdown requires a decision making framework and critical systems to be in place and assured to move to relaxation of lockdown and into the recovery and renewal phase. On 15 May 2020, the IMT was reconstituted as a Response and Recovery Management Team (RRMT). Chaired by the Chief Executive, the responsibility of the team is both to continue to respond and to plan and co-ordinate the recovery and renewal in terms of:-

- The redeployment of staff across functions and services;
- The provision of offices and other accommodation ;
- The provision of ICT for critical functions;
- Coordinating measures to ensure staff are secure and safe.

3.9.2 Since 15 May there have been 4 meetings and these covered a range of issues such as:-

- The framework to be in place to move to the relaxation of lockdown
- Recovery framework and supporting structures
- Communications

3.10 Grampian Local Resilience Partnership (GLRP)

3.10.1 It is important that an appropriate structure exists to formulate and implement emergency responses at a regional level. Prior to 2013 this was carried out along Police force boundaries, but the creation of the single Police force for Scotland meant that this was no longer applicable.

3.10.2 Since November 2013 three Regional Resilience Partnerships (RRPs) provide the framework for managing resilience activities on a wide area basis. RRP's cover east, west and north of Scotland areas and these boundaries align with the territorial areas for both Police Scotland the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. Moray is part of the North RRP.

3.10.3 The RRP aims to protect the people, economy and environment of the north of Scotland by building resilience and having effective arrangements in place to deal with these emergencies.

3.10.4 Each RRP is comprised in turn of Local Resilience Partnerships (LRPs). The LRPs bring together the agencies which contribute to resilience in each area. Moray is part of the Grampian LRP. The LRP aims to maintain effective local liaison and co-ordination through developing and managing a local work programme. Members of GLRP are the Chief Executive and the Chief Executive or equivalent of public sector or equivalent organisations in the Grampian area. In terms of the emergency, GLRP's focus was on the following areas of activity:-

- Sustainability – maintaining critical services across the partnership and monitoring any requests for mutual support coming in from partners.
- Health response – supporting any mobilisation plan in place

- Care for People – co-ordinating the establishment of the Grampian Humanitarian Assistance Centre to support and assist the shielding of vulnerable people.
- Additional deaths – collaborating across all three local authorities to ensure plans are in place.
- Community impact – information sharing on community compliance with lockdown and considering any local issues of note.
- PPE – monitoring through the wider national partnership.

3.10.5 In the period between 12 March and 28 May there were 12 meetings of GLRP.

3.10.6 Since 4 June 2020 the focus of GLRP has moved to supporting and assisting the Trace and Protect Programme.

3.11 **Sounding Board**

3.11.1 In respect of emergency items from Incident Management Team for which the CE has delegated powers, a Sounding Board was convened. All non-urgent items have been submitted to Emergency Cabinet meetings. The Sounding Board consisted of 7 Councillor and since March 2020 there have been 10 meetings of the Board and several items discussed.

3.12 **Emergency Cabinet**

3.12.1 In agreeing to suspend on a temporary basis all delegations to Committee, the Council at a Special Meeting on 25 March 2020 agreed to form a temporary Emergency Cabinet of 7 Councillors reflecting the political balance and allowing substitutes.

3.12.2 Since 25 March 2020, there have been 3 meetings, the Agendas and Minutes of which have all been published and made public.

3.12.3 In addition to the Sounding Board and the Emergency Cabinet, Members have a facility to raise questions with the Chief Executive and CMT which have all been logged in the question and answer document available electronically. To date this document runs to 14 pages with a range of 46 questions.

3.13 **Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) Leaders**

3.13.1 COSLA Leaders are meeting fortnightly and Policy Boards are also meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic to consider ongoing COVID-19 issues and also set and agree COSLA's post lockdown recovery strategies including the early establishment of a dedicated recovery group within COSLA.

3.13.2 Since March 2020 there have been 5 Leaders Meetings.

3.14 **Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)**

3.14.1 Since 27 March 2020 weekly meetings have been held to provide updates on issues such as:-

- Resilience
- Shielding and Test and Protect
- Health & Social Care
- Finance
- Economic Development
- Public Protection
- Recovery
- Elections

3.15 **Scottish Government**

3.15.1 In a national emergency such as this guidance, oversight and decision making is vested in a Scottish Government Cabinet Sub-Committee known as the Scottish Government Resilience Room (SGoRR). SGoRR is the equivalent, in Scotland, to the UK Government's Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBRA).

3.15.2 SGoRR is supported by a National Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) whose role is to:-

- i) Maintain resilience partnership awareness
- ii) Issue daily situation reports to all first responders. First responders also have to submit a variety of situation reports to the SCG covering the following areas:-
 - Education
 - Adult and Child Protection
 - Business Support Grants
- iii) Plan for increased mortality rates – this is feature of the work of the GLRP and IMT
- iv) Plan for maintenance of critical services – this is another feature of the work of the GLRP under the heading Resilience.
- v) Learn and adapt for early recovery – a national recovery group has been formed made up of representatives of the three regional partnerships, north, west and east of Scotland, the Scottish Government, Health & Social Care and the voluntary sector and is co-chaired by the Chief Executive of Glasgow City Council and Police Scotland ACC.

3.15.3 Nearly 100 sets of Guidance covering the following 7 topics were issued by Scottish Government:-

- 1. Looking after Yourself and Others (12)
- 2. Business and Employer (18)
- 3. Education and Children (12)
- 4. Health Care and Social Work (26)
- 5. Funerals, burial and cremation (5)
- 6. Housing (6)
- 7. Other (13)

3.15.4 In addition, the Chief Executive has been in receipt of correspondence from the following about COVID-19 issues relative to their respective portfolios:-

- Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

- Cabinet Secretary, Health & Sports
- Cabinet Secretary for Finance
- Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture
- Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity
- Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People
- Minister for Local Government Housing and Planning
- Minister for Mental Health

3.15.5 In addition there has also been correspondence from a number of MSPs and Moray's MP respectively.

3.16 Other Activities

- **Moray Chief Officers Group for Public Protection:** chaired by the Chief Executive and which normally meets every second month has been meeting fortnightly
- **North East Group for Public Protection:** chaired by Chief Superintendent Thomson has also met twice.
- **HIE:** the Chief Executive participated in a webinar chaired by the Chair of HIE to discuss the response to the national Advisory Group on Economic Recovery.
- **Lord Lieutenant of Moray:** Moray Emergency Relief Fund – provided admin and technical support to this Fund which has raised in excess of £150,000 and of which the Chief Executive is also a Trustee.
- **North East Scotland Transformation Working Group:** there have been weekly meetings of this Group which consists of the Chief Executives of NHS Grampian, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Moray Council meeting with the three Chief Officers of the Moray, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire IJBs.
- **NHS Grampian Briefings:** attendance at briefings.
- **Staff Messages:** issuing a variety of staff messages of support and encouragement.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

There are no direct implications arising from this report. All action taken is consistent with the corporate plan and LOIP.

(b) Policy and Legal

In responding to the current emergency, the Council has been operating in accordance with its statutory obligations and related council policy and practice and other relevant obligations such as:-

- Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Coronavirus Acts 2020
- Moray Council Emergency Planning Policy and Procedures

(c) Financial implications

Financial implications have been considered as part of the development of the responses to the COVID pandemic and are reported by the Chief Financial Officer in regular monitoring reports. In particular there has been a requirement to fund additional ICT equipment to expand homeworking, the extension of the EAP provision, for food support which has been funded through the government Food Fund and for the Scottish Government business support grants.

(d) Risk Implications

None from report. A number of the measures described in the report have been put in place to address risk. There ongoing risks as the Council continues its emergency response, moves into recovery and begins to re-instate services. These will be considered and addressed as planning for the whole programme of work and individual service issues progresses.

(e) Staffing Implications

Working Patterns

Responding to the emergency and working in teams internally and across a range of partnership arrangements has resulted in staff adopting a range of different working patterns, in addition to working extended hours in many instances. Typical examples are outlined below.

Deployed Staff

Employees from the following services have been deployed to alternative work to support the emergency response. All employees have been deployed on a voluntary basis and their flexibility has been greatly appreciated:

- Libraries - redeployed to support (virtually) the Grampian Covid-19 Assistance Hub;
- Active School Coordinators volunteered to work in the Childcare Hubs
- Sports and Leisure redeployed to the Community Pharmacy Scheme; collecting medicines from local pharmacies and delivering them to vulnerable and shielded individuals across Moray;
- Audit – support for the welfare benefits team

Homeworking

Many council employees are now working from home and this is continuing to expand. Including teaching staff, over 1500 employees are now actively working at home with many others making use of personal devices for more limited homeworking pending the extension of council provision beyond critical services. While homeworking has been established in Moray since the Council was created in 1996 and was expanded during the Designing Better Service programme, the scale and

extent (100% of time for many) during COVID is new and has brought challenges for employees and managers.

Supervision and Support

Managers and supervisors, including head teachers have been maintaining contact with employees to ensure that they are engaging and supporting individuals and groups of staff. Remote supervision and contact with colleagues can be isolating and new approaches are being developed to deal with this such as planned informal team chats. There is no doubt that this experience will influence the design of work and provide flexibility and resilience for the future.

The employee assistance provision Time for Talking has been extended to ensure that there is independent advice and support available for employees to access.

(f) Property

None directly arising from this report. However, a number of council properties are being used differently from normal to support the council and community response to the emergency.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

None directly arising from this report, although a number of the measures put in place in response to the COVID pandemic have been to respond to socio economic and equalities issues.

(h) Consultations

The Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) and Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) have been consulted on the terms of the report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The COVID pandemic has resulted in unprecedented change to society. Immediate changes were required locally, regionally and nationally to enable as much as possible to be done to respond. There will be many lessons to be learned from this and as the Council and its partners move towards recovery, planning and review has commenced to ensure that these lessons are taken forward into future public service delivery and resilience models.**
- 5.2 It has also been necessary to work in partnership locally, regionally and nationally to design and deliver solutions at pace. There has also been a transformational shift in ways of working which will be influential in future public service design.**
- 5.3 It is likely to be some time before a new normal prevails. A number of the services established in the emergency response will have to continue for some time. Meanwhile, the Council and its partner services are evolving to deliver services in new ways as society adjusts to living with COVID, and other services will be re-activating to resume their**

normal roles. This will prove challenging to deliver in tandem and planning is underway to ensure a measured programme of work with a clear vision that builds in flexibility and resilience as this COVID pandemic continues to unfold.

Author of Report: Roddy Burns
Background Papers: None