

REPORT TO ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL – 17 MARCH 2021

COVID-19 UPDATE

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 This report is to provide the Council with an update on the Council's response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and work being done on the recovery.

2 Recommendations

The Council is recommended to:

- 2.1 **Note the ongoing response of the Council as a Category 1 Responder under the Civil Contingencies Act and work being done on the Recovery phase.**

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 This report is coming before the Council as a reflection of the significance of the ongoing response to the pandemic. It is an opportunity for elected members to discuss Aberdeenshire wide ramifications. It is a report for noting and any other necessary decision making in respect of the Council's current activity will follow the Council's agreed delegations in terms of the Scheme of Governance.
- 3.2 Since 30 April 2020, Council have been provided with an update on the COVID-19 pandemic at each of its meetings.
- 3.3 A timeline of key events and milestones in the UK and the Scottish Government response to the emergency since the last COVID-19 update to Council on 14 January 2021 is attached at **Appendix 1**

4 Discussion

- 4.1 A verbal report with the most up to date information will be provided at the meeting. Members will wish to note the highlights and focal points of the council efforts in the following key areas:
- 4.2 **COVID-19 IMPACT ON STAFF & SERVICES** – Staff wellbeing is a key concern as energy levels and personal resilience is severely challenged after such a sustained effort to deliver services under the most demanding of circumstances. This is coupled with, for many of our employees, the pressures of caring duties and supporting home learning. In response to this we have increased the focus on wellbeing, building on our annual Wellbeing Week in January with more specific and targeted engagement, resources and communication across all directorates.

Absence rates are closely monitored to support that wellbeing focus; identify any trends requiring to be addressed; and to ensure that we have adequate capacity to prioritise our critical activities and sustain key services. The table at fig 1 below provides details at time of writing. (considering appropriateness of info contained here

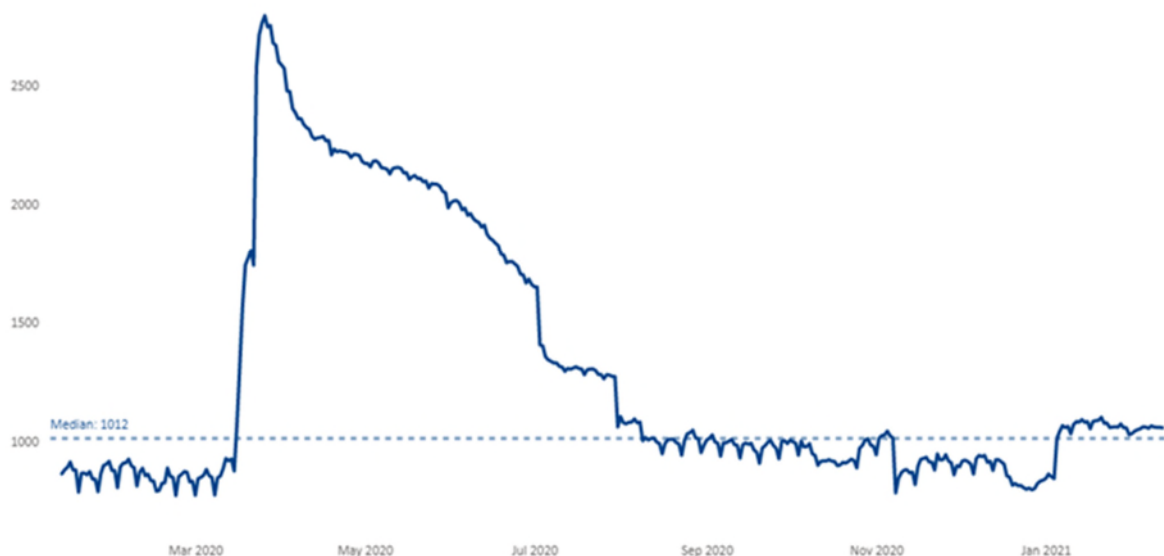
for public consumption) Paid Special Leave is the categorization of employees who are unable to perform their duties currently due to the pandemic. This can be due to them holding a post which is not able to operate due to national restrictions or through shielding or caring for dependents due to Covid19. Some of this number may be performing other tasks or able to work a proportion of their usual hours. The absence rate of 6.53% although higher than the same point last year (pre-pandemic) is not excessive and has not reached levels that per se prevent service delivery. The diagram at Fig 2 shows the rate of absence over the past 12 months. The high peak seen in March last year denotes the start of the first lockdown and high numbers categorized as "Paid Special Leave" (including school staff). The recent figures show far fewer in that category. Teaching staff for example are categorized as in attendance via home working presently rather than absent via Paid Special Leave as they were during the first lockdown.

Fig 1

Absence Type	Absences	% of Total Headcount
Sickness	454	2.84
Paid Special Leave	321	2.01
Maternity	232	1.45
Unpaid Special Leave	39	0.24
Total	1046	6.54

Fig 2

open absences by day (rolling 12 month period)



As reported previously, the new variant being more transmittable created a new operating environment leading to a review of our Safe Systems of works (SSoW) to ensure that they provide appropriate controls to deal with this additional risk. Providing covid-safe ways of working for all of our staff is more resource intensive and time-consuming and this needs to be factored into public expectations of what our workforce can reasonably deliver. It has been necessary to fully utilise all avenues to prioritise services and mobilise staff to the areas of most need to protect critical services.

4.3 SERVICE PRIORITISATION – Competing demands for council staff and resources has continued to be a particularly challenging feature. Covid-safe service delivery of itself is more resource intensive and calls for mutual aid and public sector collaboration particularly with health colleagues has created extraordinary demands on council staff. The closure of council operated facilities such as sports and leisure has provided availability of staff for mobilisation and helped eased the pressure that was being experienced prior to the current lockdown. As previously reported, the Ranked Activity Matrix – a document which categorises activity from red (critical), amber (business continuity), green (other activity) to blue (suspended) – compiled to enable the council to divert resources efficiently and swiftly to meet demand, has been updated since the “Stay at Home” regulations were brought into force in December and extended now until the end of February. This allows us to actively address new or shifting demands and to continue to prioritise effectively as the dynamic element of response to the pandemic continues. The return to face to face schooling has placed significant pressure on staff as has the work to support businesses with funding and grant administration. Some of the areas of unprecedented pressure are:

- Vaccination Programme
- Humanitarian Assistance Centre – call handlers and resource allocators
- Contact Centre – customer service advisors
- Vaccination Helpline – call handlers and admin support
- Care Home staffing
- Community Testing Programme
- Roads Winter Maintenance – including prioritisation of access routes to Testing and Vaccination centres
- Waste Collection and Disposal
- Support to Public Health lead IMTs
- Corporate Communications – internal and external messaging
- Cleaners
- Covid Track and Tracers

4.4 VIRUS SUPPRESSION –Working together with NHS and Public Health colleagues, intensive efforts have been focused on suppression of the virus in Aberdeenshire combining practical interventions, communications and messaging in order to address the rates of infection in our area. An officer Surge Coordination Group continues to meet weekly, to consider the latest data and trends explained by Public Health experts and focusses on what can be done to impact on those trends. Chaired by the Chief Executive, this involves cross sector and cross council representation. At time of writing, a steady reduction in cases in Aberdeenshire places it now amongst the lowest mainland areas for rates of infection per 100,000 per 7 days.

4.5 COVID 19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME – The Grampian Team have now delivered over 165,000 vaccinations.

The Vaccination Programme have offered and delivered vaccines to over 70s as well as 89% of the 65 – 69 age group. There is a reduction in booked clinic activity, due to vaccine supply, which has allowed efforts to focus on providing second doses to Care Home residents and staff, and also to frontline health and social care staff.

From beginning of March the team have began vaccinating 16-64 year olds who are considered clinically at high risk. This is a very large group and will take a few weeks

to complete. The programme will also soon be calling forward those unpaid carers identified through GP records and relevant social security benefits.

The continued effort and dedication of the various strands and groups forming part of the wider programme ensures this great progress. Support continues for the team.

- 4.6 COMMUNITY TESTING - A community testing programme will begin in Peterhead on 26th February 2021. The aim of a community testing programme is to identify those individuals who may have the virus but do not show any symptoms to enable the individual and close contacts to isolate and reduce community transmission. Peterhead was identified for the first community testing site in Aberdeenshire because data and knowledge confirm the town is more vulnerable to covid than other settlements. Anyone who lives, works or studies in the town is being encouraged to routinely take a test and if the test is positive, support is available to isolate via the test and protect programme which is coordinated through the Grampian Coronavirus Assistance Hub. The council is leading the delivery of the testing programme, with implementation support from NHS Grampian and a Military Liaison Officer. This involves:
- Provision of a suitable testing site and support from Live Life Aberdeenshire colleagues to ensure the site can be accessed 7 days a week, up to 12 hours a day for 12 weeks
 - Provision of team leaders to support an externally recruited team of test site operatives
 - Communications, ICT, administrative and driver support
 - Support from Roads and Housing colleagues to ensure there is appropriate site access
 - Environmental Health and Public Health support to ensure full covid compliance
- 4.7 STAY AT HOME RESTRICTIONS/IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES – regulations requiring that the public stay at home, unless it is necessary to travel for a variety of exceptional reasons – essential work that cannot be done from home; essential shopping and healthcare; caring for the vulnerable etc. has been extended until the end of February. Key challenges:
- Education – early years, P1-3 and some Senior Phase pupils return from 22 February onward
 - Asymptomatic Testing in schools is now live.
 - Shielding increases reliance on public services
 - Loneliness & Mental Health & Wellbeing
 - Business Support – administration of multiple grant support schemes
 - Protecting critical services especially during NHS winter pressures
 - Demand on the assistance centre and the capacity and resilience of our volunteer network to continue to provide critical support in our communities
- 4.8 RECOVERY – “Living with COVID-19” continues to be the focus of activity, centering around Incident Recovery (bringing back services; supporting businesses; encouraging community resilience; controlling finances). The time has still not arrived for longer term transformative recovery work, indeed, the balance between Response and Recovery has tipped and continues to lie more toward Response as suppression of the virus in the second wave has preoccupied quite properly the council and health colleagues. A new Route Map for emerging out of the current lockdown has been published by the Scottish Government and we will continue to work to help business and communities

live and operate in the most effective way within the regulatory framework. As attention turns to transformative “recovery” from the pandemic, it is worth noting that this will likely be about adapting to a new future rather than recovering back to where we were prior to the outbreak of the virus.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 All six of the Council’s priorities are engaged in this report as the response to the pandemic reaches all parts of society and all parts of the Council’s activities.
- 5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation is agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial			X
Staffing			X
Equalities			X
Fairer Scotland Duty			X
Town Centre First			X
Sustainability			X
Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing			X

- 5.3 An equality impact assessment is not required because Full Council is being asked to consider and note the update on the Council’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report will not therefore have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics. Any future reports requiring substantive decisions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic will be subject to equality impact assessments where required.
- 5.4 There are no staffing or financial implications directly arising from the recommendations in this report. The staffing impacts of the pandemic are reflected in the body of the report and the financial impact of actions taken to date in response to the COVID-19 pandemic will be reported to Full Council in due course as part of the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy. In addition to this, significant financial resources were distributed from the Scottish Government to the Council in order to support local businesses, the self-employed and residents. The Council’s response requires resources and appropriate governance in order to manage these public funds appropriately whilst issuing them promptly. In order to ensure that the Council’s overall financial position is supported through this pandemic, dialogue continues with the Scottish Government to secure not only resources but also the assurance that additional expenditure will be covered. All expenditure and lost income related to the COVID-19 pandemic is being captured and collated to establish the direct financial implications. This information will be shared with Council and will also be included in a regular return to the Scottish Government.

- 5.5 There is no direct impact on sustainability arising from the recommendations in this report. However, there has been a positive impact on sustainability through the increase in Council officers working from home and the move to remote Committee meetings, the outcome of which has been a subsequent reduction in business travel across the local authority area. Reduced access to Council buildings has also resulted in increased use of electronic documents where it has not been possible to obtain a paper copy.
- 5.6 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:
- **ACORP001 – Budget Pressures**
 - **ACORP002– Changes in government policy, legislation and regulation**
 - **ACORP003 – Workforce**
 - **ACORP004 – Business and Organisational Transformation**
 - **ACORP005 – Working with other organisations**
 - **ACORP006 – Reputation Management**
 - **ACORP007 – Social Risk**
 - **ACORP009 – Operational Risk Management (including Health and Safety)**
 - **ACORP010 – Environmental Challenges**

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and The Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 Full Council is able to consider this item in terms of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as the response to the pandemic applies to all of the Council's activities and the matter under consideration is not therefore delegated to any of the Council's appointed Committees. Where substantive decisions are required as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic these will be reported to the relevant Committee, or to Full Council where appropriate.
- 6.3 In terms of Section C.2.4 of the List of Officer Powers in Part 2B of the Scheme of Governance the Chief Executive has the delegated power to implement the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Contingency Planning (Scotland) Regulations 2005.

Jim Savege
Chief Executive
March 2021

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Timeline and Key Milestones of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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7 May – Scottish Government extend the lockdown in Scotland for another 3 weeks

18 May – First Minister of Scotland sets out plans to begin easing Scotland’s lockdown restrictions from 28 May

21 May – First Minister of Scotland outlines a four-phase “route map” for easing lockdown restrictions in Scotland that will include allowing people to meet up outside with people from one other household in the first phase. The lockdown will be eased from 28 May subject to the number of new cases of COVID-19 continuing to fall. Schools in Scotland will reopen on 11 August when students would receive a “blended model” of part-time study at school combined with some learning at home.

26 May – The Scottish Government announces plans for Test and Protect, a track and trace system.

28 May – Contact tracing systems go live in Scotland – Test and Protect.

29 May – Lockdown measures are eased in Scotland.

18 June – Scottish Government announces the next phase of easing the lockdown restrictions in Scotland. People living alone or single parents with children can form an “extended group” with one other household from 19 Jun, enabling them to stay overnight, while up to three households can meet up outdoors. Face coverings will become compulsory on public transport from 22 June and most shops were being allowed to reopen from 29 June.

22 June – The wearing of face coverings becomes compulsory on public transport in Scotland with exemptions made for children under five and people with certain medical conditions.

23 June – Scottish Education Minister confirms that schools in Scotland will return full time in August providing the coronavirus continues to be suppressed.

24 June – Scottish Government announces changes to the lockdown restrictions in Scotland including allowing people to meet indoors with two other households from 10 July, and reopening pubs and restaurants, holiday accommodation and hairdressers from 15 July. The two metre social distancing rule stays in place for Scotland.

29 June – Non essential retailers reopen in Scotland.

2 July – Scottish Government announce that the wearing of face coverings will become mandatory in shops in Scotland from 10 July.

3 July – Scotland lifts its five-mile travel restriction.

6 July – Beer gardens and pavement cafes are allowed to reopen in Scotland

9 July – Scottish Government announce that people in Scotland will be able to meet up indoors with two other households from 10 July and also in extended groups outside of up to fifteen from the same day (moved into Phase 3 of the Route Map). Indoor areas of cars & restaurants were to open from 15 July.

15 July – Hairdressers and barbers, pubs and restaurants, cinemas, tourist attractions, places of worship and childcare facilities reopen in Scotland.

16 July – Scottish Government announce changes to lockdown rules from those who are shielding from 17 July. From 17 July they could visit holiday accommodation, as well as outdoor markets and gardens.

30 July – Scottish Government gives schools the go ahead to reopen on 11 August with all pupils expected to be in class full time from 18 August. A provisional date for gyms, swimming pools and indoor sports venues to reopen on 14 September. Also confirmed the shielding programme will be paused on 1 August.

1 August – Shielding programme is paused for Scotland but would continue for the areas where extra precautions have been introduced.

5 August – Lockdown restrictions are reimposed on Aberdeen after a cluster of COVID-19 cases.

10 August – Staff returned to Aberdeenshire schools for in-service training.

12 August – Pupils in Aberdeenshire return to school for the first time since March. Scottish Government announces that lockdown measures will remain in place in Aberdeen.

19 August – Lockdown measures in Aberdeen are extended for a further week.

20 August – Scottish Government announces that gyms, swimming pools and indoor sports courts can reopen from 31 August.

23 August – Lockdown restrictions in Aberdeen are partially lifted with restrictions on travel and a ban on indoor gatherings lifted from 24 August and bars and restaurants allowed to reopen from 26 August.

25 August – Scottish Government announces that school pupils will be required to wear face coverings in school corridors, communal areas and on school buses from Monday 31 August.

28 August - A new law comes into force giving police the power to break up house parties involving more than 15 people.

31 August – face coverings become mandatory for Scottish secondary schools. Gyms, swimming pools and indoor sports courts are permitted to reopen.

1 September – Scottish Government announce that following an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in Glasgow, East Renfrewshire and West Dumbartonshire, additional restrictions will be introduced for people living in these areas for an initial 2-week period.

3 September – Scottish Government announce the resumption of health and wellbeing visits to care homes from 7 September.

10 September – Indoor visits to hospitals and care homes will be limited to essential visits. The NHS Protect Scotland app is launched. The Scottish Government publish an updated route map, limiting indoor and outdoor gatherings to six people from two households, as Scotland remains in Phase 3.

16 September – Data published by the Chief Statistician shows the Scottish Economy contracted by 19.4% during the second quarter of 2020, covering the period April to June. The Scottish Government published a research report exploring the costs of extending the UK Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on a temporary basis.

20 September – Scottish Government announce £4.25 million extra funding for charities and projects tackling violence against women and girls.

22 September – Scottish Government announce new restrictions on household visits and a national curfew for pubs, bars and restaurant (10pm curfew) that go into effect on Friday 25 September.

24 September – Scottish Government published the Autumn Budget Revision for 2020-21 outlining further funding allocations.

25 September – UK Government publish the Winter Economy Plan, outlining additional support to businesses and workers across the UK.

29 September – Scottish Government publish the State of the Economy Report, summarising recent developments in the global, UK and Scottish economies and providing an analysis of the performance of, and outlook for, the Scottish economy.

30 September – The Scottish Government announce a new grant to support people on low incomes if they are asked to self-isolate.

2 October – Scottish Government announce a nationwide survey for education staff in schools or early learning centres to help identify the proportion of people working in an education setting who have had COVID-19. The Scottish Government publish the Coronavirus (COVID-19) mental health needs of hospitalised patients report.

7 October – The Scottish Government announce new temporary measures, including restricting hospitality opening times to 6am – 6pm indoors, with no sales of alcohol. The new restrictions will be backed by a £40 million support fund for business and the existing UK Job Retention Scheme and will be in place nationwide for 16 days.

The Scottish Government announce plans for Higher and Advance Higher exams to go ahead in 2021, while National 5 exams will be replaced by a system where grades are awarded based on coursework and teacher judgement.

8 October – Scottish Government and COSLA agree additional spending powers and funding for councils to address the financial pressures caused by the coronavirus pandemic over the next 2 years. The Scottish Government publish the Mental Health – Transition and Recovery Plan, outlining the Government's response to the mental health impacts of COVID-19.

15 October – First Minister announces that the wearing of face coverings is to become mandatory in workplace canteens from 16 October, and in communal workplace areas, such as corridors and social spaces from 19 October.

20 October – Scottish Government announce further funding for councils to provide free school meals through the winter breaks and additional flexibility to use £20 million, previously held in reserve for the Scottish Welfare Fund, to support people in their communities.

21 October – Scottish Government announce the extension of temporary restrictions until 2 November and additional funding for businesses.

22 October – Scottish Government announce a £2 million support package for residential outdoor education centres. The UK Government announce increased financial support through the job support and self-employed schemes.

23 October – Scottish Government publish the Five Level Strategic Framework, which indicates different levels of protection that might be needed based on different levels of transmission for the virus. The levels to come into force on 2 November. The

Scottish Tourism Recovery Taskforce publish its recommendations for supporting the tourism sector's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

28 October – Scottish Government announce an NHS Winter Preparedness Plan to support health and care services over the Winter. An Adult Social Care Winter Plan will also be published in early November. Public Health Scotland publish its report on discharged from NHS hospitals to care homes in Scotland.

29 October – Scottish Government announce the new local authority protection measures in force from 2 November (Aberdeenshire falling within Level 2). Face Covering Exemption Cards are launched for people who are unable to wear coverings due to health conditions, disabilities or other special circumstances.

2 November – Pupils in the senior phase of Scottish education (S4-S6) must wear face masks in classrooms in addition to communal areas if the school is in Level 3 of 4.

9 November – First review of the local authority protection measures by the Scottish Government.

16 November – Scottish General Election (Coronavirus) Bill introduced to Scottish Parliament which would allow arrangements to be put in place for the Scottish general election in response to Covid-19. The bill will (amongst other things) change the deadline for postal vote applications to give more time to process an expected high level of requests to vote by post; give the Scottish Ministers power to hold an all-postal election and to hold polling over multiple days, if appropriate; and give a reserve power to the Presiding Officer to postpone the 2021 election by up to 6 months in certain circumstances.

19 November – Statement given by the Health Secretary to Scottish Parliament regarding COVID Vaccine delivery. The priorities for the first wave of vaccine distribution, from December 2020 to February 2021, are front-line health and social care staff; older residents in care homes; care home staff; all those aged 80 and over; unpaid carers and personal assistants; and those delivering the vaccination programme.

20 November – 11 local authority areas move to level 4 and cross-border nonessential travel between Scotland and England is made illegal.

24 November – The 4 United Kingdom nations announce a coordinated plan for Christmas. Three households would be allowed to meet indoors, at a place of worship and outdoor for a space of 5 days (23-27 December) and travel restrictions would be eased.

19 December – Following an outbreak of a new strain of COVID-19 in Wales and South East England, along with seventeen cases of the new strain in Scotland, the coordinated plan for Christmas is cancelled across the United Kingdom. A sole exception is provided for Christmas Day, scrapping the previously planned 5 day relief from travel restrictions. Three weeks of level four restrictions were planned and return to schools postponed to 11 January 2021.

26 December – All of mainland Scotland has Level 4 restrictions applied, including the closure of non-essential retail and hospitality.

4 January 2021 – Statement given by the First Minister to the Scottish Parliament to confirm that the Cabinet decided to introduce from midnight a legal requirement to stay at home except for essential purposes for the duration of January. Scottish Government announce the roll-out of the Astrazeneca vaccine.

5 January – All of mainland Scotland moves from Level 4 to temporary Lockdown, with new guidance published.

7 January – Scottish Government announce a temporary ban on eviction orders will be extended until the end of March. Travel restrictions are updated so that from 0400 on 9 January people arriving in Scotland from Botswana, Israel, Jerusalem, Mauritius or Seychelles need to self-isolate. The current restrictions in relation to South Africa remain in place. The UK Government announces that NHS patients across the UK will receive life-saving COVID-19 treatments that could cut hospital time by 10 days, as REMAP-CAP clinical trial shows that when tocilizumab and sarilumab are administered to patients within the first 24 hours of being admitted to intensive care their relative risk of death is reduced by 24%.

8 January – Scottish Government announce passengers travelling to Scotland from abroad will be required to have proof of a negative test taken a maximum of 72 hours before travel. It is also announced that university students will be taught online throughout January and February, with the vast majority not expected to be back on campuses until the start of March.

10 January – Scottish Government announce the rollout of the Oxford / Astrazeneca Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine in GP practices and community vaccination centres from 11 January.

11 January – Scottish Courts & Tribunal's Service announce changes to the criminal court practice to reduce the transmission of coronavirus, reducing the number of criminal trials taking place during lockdown by up to 75%.

12 January – Scottish Government announce that from 0400 on 15 January 2021, passengers travelling to Scotland from outside the Common Travel Area must have a valid negative COVID-19 test result, taken no more than three days before the scheduled time of departure.

13 January – Scottish Government announce the strengthening of lockdown restrictions from 0001 on 16 January. Non-essential click and collect retail services will be prohibited in Level 4 areas, with changes in five other key areas including restrictions on the consumption of alcohol in public places.

14 January – Following the identification of a new variant of coronavirus in Brazil, the Scottish Government announce additional restrictions imposed on all arrivals from South America, Portugal, Panama, Cape Verde and the Falkland Islands. Travelers who have been in any of these countries or territories within 10 days prior to their arrival in Scotland must isolate, along with all members of their household. No exemptions from isolation apply.

15 January – Scottish Government announce the suspension of all travel corridors.

16 January – Scottish Government announce funding of £986,702 to help vulnerable young people into work.

18 January – Scottish Government announce additional funding for taxi and private hire car drivers as well as £750,000 investment in local carer centres, to support unpaid carers.

19 January – Five independent hospitals will support NHS Scotland with elective care this includes the Albyn Hospital in Aberdeen for NHS Grampian. Taxi grant criteria updated to include taxi drivers in receipt of state benefits. It is announced that lockdown measures will stay in place across mainland Scotland and some island communities until at least the middle of February. Barra and Vatersay move into lockdown from 0001 on 20 January following a sharp increase in cases.

21 January – The vaccination information campaign ‘Roll Your Sleeves Up’ is launched. It is announced that £1 million in funding is to be made available to childminders who have been financially impacted by the pandemic.

24 January – Scottish Government announce that invitations to vaccine appointments for people aged 70 – 79 are to commence from 25 January.

28 January – UK Government announce commercial manufacturing of the Valneva COVID-19 vaccine candidate has begun in Livingston, West Lothian. The Scottish Government announce additional restrictions on travelers arriving in Scotland from the U.A.E., Rwanda and Burundi, the limited exemptions to isolation will not apply for

these countries, everyone in the household of arriving passengers must also isolate. Aircraft from the U.A.E into Scotland is banned from 1300 on 29 January.

29 January – Scottish Government announce mass vaccinations centres will open in Edinburgh and Aberdeen on 1 February. The Event Complex Aberdeen ('TECA') is to be used for this purpose in Aberdeen. The Western Isles are moved to Level 4 due to a rise in cases.

2 February – Scottish Government announce supervised quarantine and expansion of testing. Current restrictions, including the 'stay at home' requirement, are set to remain in place until the end of February and schools will continue to be closed to most children for the rest of the month. Children in early learning, child-care and in primaries 1-3 are scheduled to make a full return to nurseries and schools from 22 February. The criteria for the Self-Isolation Support Grant is extended.

3 February – Scottish Government announce £7.75 million funding package for the seafood sector.

5 February – UK Government announce mandatory hotel quarantine will be introduced from 15 February for anyone travelling to the UK from a country on the UK's travel ban list.

9 February – Scottish Government announce all arrivals to Scotland from outside the Common Travel Area must book and pay for managed isolation in quarantine hotels from 15 February 2021. All arrivals must quarantine for at least ten days and will be tested twice for the virus – once on day two and once on day eight after arrival.

10 February – Scottish Government announce the number of first dose vaccinations in Scotland reaches the 1 million milestone.

11 February – UK Government announce a further 353 Armed Forces personnel to be deployed to locations across Scotland to support the testing and vaccine delivery programmes.

16 February – Scottish Government announce children in early learning and childcare (ELC) and primaries 1 to 3 to return full-time to classrooms from 22 February. Scottish Government announce non-domestic rates relief extended for the 2021-22 period.

17 February – Scottish Government announce an expansion of testing to include anyone who is identified as a close contact of somebody who has tested positive for COVID-19, from 18 February.

20 February – Scottish Government announce routine indoor visiting of care home residents will resume from early March with care providers supporting residents to have up to two designated visitors each and one visit a week for each visitor.

22 February – Scottish Government announce people with underlying health conditions and unpaid carers are beginning to receive vaccinations. Scottish Government launch the £7 million Equality and Human Rights Fund.

23 February – Scottish Government publish the updated Strategic Framework, setting out the broad order of priority for re-opening and the conditions that need to be met to start lifting restrictions.

24 February – Scottish Government announce the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership's Regional Food Fund has reopened for applications. Scottish Government announce the launch of the £15 million Scottish Community Leaders Fund to support affordable lending services.

25 February – Scottish Government announce Scotland's vaccination programme has delivered first doses of vaccine to a third (33.4%) of those eligible totalling more than 1.5 million people. The UK Chief Medical Officers issue a joint statement that the UK COVID-19 alert level move from Level 5 to Level 4.

26 February – Scottish Government launch the Workforce Specialist Service, a new specialist service offering confidential mental health assessment and treatment to health and social care professionals. Scottish Government announce access to testing is now available from 21 fire stations across the Highlands and Argyll & Bute. Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) issues interim advice on Phase 2 of vaccination programme rollout. Evidence suggests an age-based approach remains the most effective way of reducing death and hospitalisation from COVID-19.

28 February – Scottish Government announce 3 cases of a COVID-19 variant of concern first identified in Manaus, Brazil, have been identified in Scotland.

2 March – Scottish Government announce Phase 2 of schools return. All remaining primary school children are set to return to school full-time from 15 March, with all secondary pupils returning on a part-time bases from that date.

3 March – UK Government announce the Furlough Scheme and Universal Credit uplift will be extended until the end of September.

4 March – Medical and Health Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) announce modified COVID-19 vaccines for variants will be fast-tracked.