

Please see below an update on SLDC's current work in response to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak from **SLDC Leader Giles Archibald** and **Chief Executive Lawrence Conway**.

Further updates will be sent as and when we receive further information.

Overview

The role of local government in this developing situation is to support our vulnerable residents and businesses (including those who are self-isolating or confirmed cases) to maintain key services and help maintain community cohesion.

As this is a declared major incident, a Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) has also been established, and is being chaired by the Director of Public Health for Cumbria. The SCG has a number of strategic objectives:

Overall Aim:

To protect life; to minimise the impact of the outbreak on health, society and the economy; and to maintain public trust and confidence.

Strategic approach:

1. To protect the most vulnerable groups through efforts to prevent them being exposed to the virus in the first place.
2. To enable the NHS to treat those who become seriously ill by:
 - * slowing the spread of the virus in Cumbria, flattening the epidemic curve by a range of measures to promote social distancing;
 - * supporting the NHS to have the capacity it needs to respond by enabling rapid hospital discharge and good support in the community.
3. Recognising that the majority of people exposed will experience relatively mild symptoms, to take a pragmatic and proportionate response to control and mitigation measures in order to reduce the impact on society and the local economy.
4. To maintain trust and confidence among the organisations and people who provide key public services, and those who use them, by responding promptly to challenging situations and being transparent and honest about what is happening and why.

The SCG consists of all relevant organisations and agencies (for example emergency services, local authorities, utilities, health agencies, military and voluntary agencies) involved with emergency response in our communities. It was formed in 2005 following the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, which required organisations across specific areas to work together to prepare, respond and recover from different emergencies, as it did in Storm Desmond.

The SCG is coordinating the response and is taking a number of actions, including setting up the 'Sub-Groups' to support key areas of work such as health and social care, business continuity and community resilience.

Community Resilience

A Community Resilience Sub-Group has been set up under the SCG, Chaired by Carolyn Otley from CVS to start to develop/co-ordinate on the ground support for communities.

There will be a sub-group for each district. This will be chaired by the relevant CCC Area Manager for that district (in South Lakeland's case this is Karen Johnson, supported by Claire Gould from SLDC and Richard Machin from SLDC communications) and our Portfolio holder Suzie Pye is linking in to this group.

This will be where offers of help and support from the community will be co-ordinated. SLDC is keen to keep in close contact with charities to understand the demand on their services and to ensure that they can continue to deliver their invaluable help to the community. Parishes will be kept informed as this group develops so that they can feed in to its work in their communities.

SLDC meetings

In line with national guidance, a number of meetings have been cancelled or postponed. This includes Full Council scheduled for 24 March, and the AGM scheduled for 20 May 2020.

The next scheduled regulatory meetings for Planning and Licensing have also been cancelled but these are being kept under review, as clarification is being sought from Government on the provision to allow these meetings and their business, to continue 'virtually'.

Cabinet meetings will go ahead as planned to maintain progress on essential council business, but the meeting scheduled for 24 March has been moved to 25 March. These meetings will take account of best practice on social distancing.

SLDC has also established a cross party oversight group that will meet virtually, as often as needed, but at least once a week, to review activity and respond to the changing needs of businesses, the third sector and the community.

A number of scheduled drop-in events for the Local Plan Review have been postponed, as have the remaining two Climate Conversation events and a planned community fun day at Millerground.

SLDC Buildings

Residents are being strongly encouraged to contact the council by calling 01539 733333 or emailing customerservices@southlakeland.gov.uk rather than visiting the reception areas of buildings.

These reception areas will remain open in order to continue to offer support to our more vulnerable customers, but we are looking to minimise direct contact in line with social distancing guidance. SLDC has a particular concern to ensure that we remain accessible to homelessness enquiries and those most in need.

Members are being advised to avoid attending face-to-face meetings with officers wherever possible and to call or email instead, or use video conferencing.

Business Support

The SLDC Economy and Culture (E&C) team are working closely with colleagues in Business Rates to keep our local businesses informed of any central government support packages that will be made available due to the ongoing Covid-19, particularly around business rates relief and small hardship grants.

We expect to have more information following the Chancellor's announcement today, and will be working through this information to disseminate clearly with our business community.

E&C are preparing a webpage that will signpost businesses to local, regional and national resources and toolkits that will provide critical advice at this time. E&C are also preparing to send out an e-newsletter to our business database (over 3,500 businesses) with up-to-date information.

Already we are feeding in to the collation of data that shows how businesses are being impacted as the situation develops. This includes our cultural attractions, small businesses, larger manufacturers and high streets.

The Business Economic Response Group (BERG, coordinated by Cumbria LEP) has been convened, and teleconferences are being held every other day with E&C attendance and input. This may increase if deemed appropriate. We are working with Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Cumbria LEP to ensure that business operations remain stable and local manufacturing businesses have been contacted by E&C about contributing towards the national effort for the manufacturing of respiratory equipment, components and skills that relate to this.

We are in regular contact with Cumbria Tourism, who are in turn liaising regularly with Visit Britain to ensure tourism businesses are kept well informed, and CT have set up a survey that tourism businesses can input their business data in to.

Once more information is received from central government on business support packages, this information will be shared widely.