

**Meeting with Representative Group of Councillors
Tuesday, 24th March 2020 at 10.30 a.m. in Council Chamber**

**PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR
Councillors/Comhairleoirí**

Niall Kelleher (Cathaoirleach)

Norma Moriarty (Leas Cathaoirleach)

Robert Beasley

Brendan Cronin

Jim Finucane

Michael Gleeson

Maura Healy-Rae

Terry O'Brien

Michael O'Shea

IN ATTENDANCE/I LÁTHAIR

Ms. M. Murrell, Chief Executive

Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Dir. of Rds, Transp'n & Marine

Mr. J. Breen, Director Water Services

Mr. M. O'Donoghue, Director Housing

Mr. M. Scannell, Dir. Job Cr/Sust. ED

Mr. C. O'Connor, Director Corp. Servs.

Ms. A. McAllen, Head of Finance

Mr. P. Corkery, Meetings Administrator

Ms. D. Griffin, SO Corporate

Mr. O. O'Shea, Press Officer

Ms. C. Fitzgerald, SO Corporate

Circulated update on Coronavirus and Business Continuity Planning by KCC dated 24th March 2020. The Chief Executive gave an overview of the business continuity planning process currently underway in the Council and the actions being taken in conjunction with same. In this regard SMT are meeting on a very regular basis and with staff across the organisation in relation to the response required. The Council is in regular contact with the HSE through the Inter Agency Major Emergency Group and is providing support as required.

A specific project team has been established to manage the response under Charlie O'Sullivan Director of Services, with Mr. Frank Hartnett, Senior Engineer, as project leader and involving key senior personnel to plan for potential impacts on our services. The team includes Ms. Niamh O'Sullivan, SEO Community Department as project leader on a community project team.

It was also pointed out that a number of staff had been nominated as contact persons for Councillors in relation to issues regarding COVID 19 as follows: -

Pádraig Corkery, Meetings Administrator	0873488733
Ciara Fitzgerald, SO Corporate Services	0874059506
Davina Griffin, SO Corporate Services	0874052125

The Chief Executive referred to the role of the Regional Emergency Co-ordination Group with the HSE as Lead Partner and which also comprises the Gardaí and Kerry County Council, Cork County Council and Cork City Council. The Council is actively participating in the work of this group together with supporting the HSE in the promotion of critical messaging around social distancing and good hygiene practices, as well as putting measures in place in all our workplaces. Kerry County Council will provide additional support as required when requested. Each of the Councils have been asked by the HSE to assess its capacity to redeploy staff to support the HSE, e.g. technical and administrative staff. Redeployment of staff in such instance would be by way of a formal application process via the Public Appointments Service, but the Council would make every effort to respond to such a request at the earliest stage as part of the overall public sector response to the pandemic.

As part of Business Continuity Planning, Kerry County Council has been identifying the critical services, which need to be maintained, in the event of a significant reduction in staffing levels. A Finance Project team, led by Ms. Kathleen Moriarty, SEO Finance, has also been put in place to assess the financial impact on the organisation during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community fatalities as outlined in the national plan will be the responsibility of the Local Authority and Gardaí which requires an assessment by the Council of mortuary capacity in the county.

Taking account of the level of activity on beaches at the weekend, Public Health signage is being enhanced at all beaches and public spaces regarding physical distancing requirements. Kerry County Council playgrounds will remain closed. The Council will take account of any additional measures announced by Government later today and arrange for immediate implementation. Reference was made to other areas of activity which were not meeting the strict physical distancing requirements and it was agreed that details of any such activities raised would be brought to the attention of the HSE. In response to queries regarding the arrangements for testing for COVID-19 it was pointed out that a facility was now operational in Tralee.

Following queries in relation to the Roads Programme, it was pointed out that staff are currently focussing on grants funded works. It is proposed that such work will continue unless there is a national direction in relation to same arising from the Government meeting today or future requirements set out in this regard.

In relation to a query regarding the provision of self-isolation facilities for Council tenants if required in the case of a positive COVID-19 result, it was pointed out that similar to most families such a process would have to be managed by the family group themselves. A process was being put in place to cater for vulnerable groups such as homeless persons in conjunction with the two NGO homeless centres in the county.

In relation to council tenants who were experiencing reduced income/loss of employment, it was pointed out that direct contact by phone should be made with the Housing Department with the matters being examined on a case by case basis by the staff in that department. It was also pointed out that the arrangement that applies for commercial mortgages are to be applied for Local Authority mortgages. Guidance for Local Authorities is expected during the week and would be forwarded to the members at that stage. Again, any person with a council loan experiencing reduced income/loss of employment should contact the Housing Department.

Inspections for housing grants will continue where it is possible to do so without entering the private house, with everything possible being done to facilitate any critical cases.

In relation to rates, Kerry County Council will have to minimise its financial exposure, while supporting businesses. Emphasis will be on sectors which are not impacted significantly by the current crisis. Members referred to the need for additional financial support at a national level to support the business and tourism sector and it was pointed out that this was an area for direct Government action to ensure the long-term viability of the business and tourism sectors particularly for a county like Kerry. Following a query, it was noted that the Valuation Office is continuing its work on the revaluation process for Kerry.

An update was given to the members in relation to on-going work daily with Irish Water to provide for continuation of the essential water and wastewater services in the county. An extensive Business Continuity Plan regarding water supply, water quality and water treatment is in place. While only essential water connections are being undertaken at present, arrangements are in place to cater for breaks, with Council crews together with private contractors from Irish Water in place to respond as required.

Responding to queries in relation to waste disposal and bin collection it was pointed out that the five Civic Amenity sites are open and operational, with physical distancing arrangements in place. Co-ordination of the business continuity planning for waste collection is on-going at a national level to provide for the continuation of this essential service. Reference was made to the need for all householders to provide for the presentation of bins in a clean manner with notices having been issued to waste collection customers in relation to the importance of same. It was pointed out that direct contact had been made with the waiver customers of the Killarney Waste Collection service regarding the options in relation to the ongoing service.

Mr M Scannell gave an overview of actions being taken to support the community response in the county. He pointed out that a Community Advisory Group has been established to assist with meeting the social needs of vulnerable groups in the community sector. This group was chaired by himself and along with the Council includes the HSE, Gardaí, Kerry Volunteer Centre, Red Cross, Civil Defence, GAA and Kerry PPN. The Community Advisory Group will:

- Circulate information and clarification to voluntary groups.
- Put protocols and advice in place, e.g. ensure that people being supported get a telephone call before a volunteer calls to them.
- Circulate information that is in accordance with national guidelines.

The Community Advisory Group is putting infrastructure in place for the provision of a support line which will be operated by trained voluntary groups.

People who want to volunteer should, in the first place, register with the Kerry Volunteering Bureau, tel. 066 7117966 or www.volunteerkerry.ie

Further information will be circulated to Elected Members when it is available.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the meetings with the Representative Group of Councillors would be held on a weekly basis, (subject to review at each meeting) and that the possibility of including the Chairpersons of the Municipal Districts and the Mayor of Tralee MD would also be examined. This may be facilitated through the utilisation of remote connections to ensure physical distancing requirements are met. In relation to Council / MD meetings, the position would be considered on an on-going basis by the group so as to facilitate statutory or urgent business with the possibility of a minimum attendance to meet the quorum an option to meet such a requirement.

This concluded the meeting.