

Implementation of Business Continuity Plan – Coronavirus Pandemic**Committee** Chairs Committee**Date of meeting** 1 May 2020**Date of report** 21 April 2020**Report by Assistant Chief Executive****1. Object of report**

To advise members on the implementation of SPT's business continuity plan, and subsequent actions as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and outline the key impacts on SPT services and staffing matters.

2. Background

- 2.1 During the early part of February 2020, SPT closely monitored the developing situation relating to the Coronavirus outbreak across China and parts of Europe, assessing the possible implications for public transport and SPT specifically should the virus spread to the UK.
- 2.2 This included the Strategy Group implementing preventative measures during the week of 24 February 2020. These measures including increased cleaning regimes in all public and staff areas and utilising hand sanitiser in all SPT locations together with the issue of protective gloves where this was required.
- 2.3 In preparation for the possibility of the issue escalating, SPT commenced plans and arrangements during the first week of March 2020 to arrange for home working wherever practical. For office based staff, this included an assessment of digital kit and plans for getting kit to home locations. All actions were in line with the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) which was formally implemented in full on 16 March 2020. The BCP team, which includes all senior staff and representatives of all front line services, have since met on a daily basis via conference call and then subsequently the secure Skype for Business facility to assess the continued operations of SPT and SPT supported services.
- 2.4 The Prime Minister announced new measures to stop the spread of the Coronavirus to protect the NHS and save lives. The UK moved to lockdown on 23 March 2020 urging people to stay at home with only food outlets, key workplaces and medical facilities remaining open.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 The key objective throughout this period has been to ensure that SPT, as a public service, continues to be as operational as possible, recognising that public transport for large parts of the communities is the only mode of transport. This is balanced against the Government's advice of ensuring only essential travel is undertaken.

Paramount to our continued transport operations has been the need to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of our staff and customers is at the forefront of all decisions.

- 3.2 In addition to the BCP resilience meetings, SPT patronage figures have been supplied to Transport Scotland daily, and a weekly resilience call is held with Transport Scotland to ensure that the Government are being kept apprised of matters across all SPT services including Subway, bus operations, bus stations, contact centre and travel card unit as well other related matters, including staffing and financial implications.

Subway

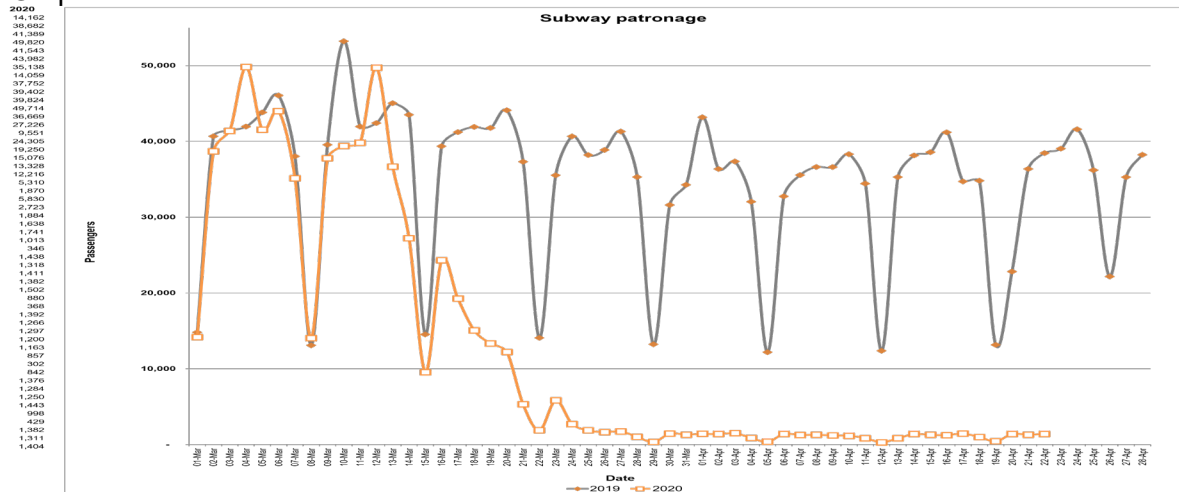
- 3.3 The Subway Senior Management Team have been holding daily resilience meetings to ensure key messages and actions are fed from and into the wider SPT Business Continuity daily resilience meetings. SPT continues to deliver a Subway service, albeit on a much reduced basis This reduction reflects the reduced patronage while maintaining social distancing on all trains. The reduction was implemented gradually which included:

- An initial reduction on the service intervals to an 8-minute service;
- Subsequently amending the closing time of the Subway to 9pm;
- Followed by a further reduction to the operation of only one Circle; and
- Given the reduction in Park & Ride, Shields Road Car Park was closed with all users being redirected to Bridge Street.

Each of these steps were necessary as the impact of the virus and Government guidance relating to self-isolation and shielding had an impact on the availability of staff, and vastly reduced numbers of passengers. Enhanced cleaning arrangements were also implemented in stations and on trains.

Service delivered mirrored the patronage levels as best as possible. The following table below shows patronage for the period of early March 2020 to 23 April 2020:

Graph 1



As can be seen over this period, patronage has reduced by approximately 97% when compared with the same period in 2019. This level of reduction is consistent with other modes of travel and reflect the strong guidance from the Government that people should not use public transport unless absolutely necessary. The financial implications of this are highlighted further in the report.

To ensure this level of service, and that SPT fulfils its safety case obligations, (including maintenance of the Inner Circle which is out of passenger service at the moment), it is still

essential to ensure that the maintenance of trains and ancillary equipment continues. Again, staffing levels have been affected, but it was possible to maintain trains to the required level. It should also be noted that significant efforts and changes have been made to ensure adequate social distancing of staff in all operational departments is routinely maintained.

It should be noted that Govan has been the busiest station throughout the lockdown period, which is not typical, and this is likely due to the station serving the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital. With this in mind, a bus shuttle service has been provided to replace a small section of the out of service Inner Circle from Partick to Govan.

Work relating to the Subway Modernisation project has continued where possible within government guidance, including installation work on the wheel lathe, system design and review of essential documentation. More details will be provided in the regular update to the Partnership in June 2020.

Bus operations

As the Government's guidance to avoid using public transport took effect, it quickly had an impact on the numbers of passengers on bus services across the region, with many operators quickly reassessing their commercial delivered services. This saw a staged reduction in services by all key operators. As a result, the services supported financially by SPT have been more important to ensure that those who needed to travel could travel by bus if that was required.

SPT has endeavoured to maintain all bus and MyBus services during the initial public health crisis. Recognising the importance that users place on these services MyBus continued with restricted patterns until 23 March 2020. Prior to this, no MyBus group bookings were taken and transport to supermarkets and pharmacies was prioritised. However, following the Government's lockdown decision, a key decision was taken and in adherence with the Government's guidance of who should not be travelling, SPT suspended MyBus services aimed at elderly and those who cannot use mainstream public transport. However, in doing so, all customers who had pre-existing bookings were personally contacted by telephone to explain the need to suspend the service and ensure that as a result passengers were not left without support.

The suspension of MyBus services means that a small capability is available across the region to support councils in their endeavours to deliver local services and this offer was made to each council. A MyBus service has also been utilised between Partick and Govan Subway stations following the changes to the Subway service, recognising the demand for transport to the QUEH.

With regard to mainstream bus services, the situation has been much more complex and variable. Commercial operators, faced with declining patronage, gradually submitted registration changes and continue to do so. The registration change process determined by the Traffic Commissioner was amended from the norm of 28-day consultation and 42 days to change to 24 hours for consultation and 48 hours' notice of change. As a result, SPT processed nine months' worth of registration changes (circa 850) in a matter of weeks.

As the lockdown has continued, it has also been necessary to reflect on and review the SPT supported services. These contracts are subsidy based and expect a level of revenue through the farebox. Obviously as the farebox revenue has diminished to virtually nil, operators are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain services unless significant additional payments are made. As a result, it has been necessary to suspend some SPT supported services but this has been done on the basis of passenger use and prioritising those journeys and routes which maintain links to strategic sites, i.e. hospitals. These decisions

have been made in consultation with the operators and critically from information obtained via weekly resilience calls with the three health boards in the SPT area which SPT has facilitated to understand transport needs of key workers.

In addition, SPT has undertaken to keep the request for travel closely monitored where a service has been suspended and will utilise the suspended MyBus facility where necessary.

As members are aware, SPT also manages the school transport arrangements on behalf of 11 councils. The decision to suspend schools (20 March 2020) has had a significant impact on the school transport market and SPT has assisted and facilitated the discussions between operators and the respective councils. Each council has taken a local decision with regard to the payments to be maintained, what information is to be sought to support maintenance of payments etc. SPT continues to facilitate this on behalf of those councils, whilst remaining focused on the need to ensure arrangements are in place for schools returning.

Bus Stations

SPT Bus stations remain operational and safe environments for bus movements and passengers. However, as the number of bus services has been reduced, it has been necessary to review the rostering of staff and hours of operation. Buchanan Bus Station remains to be regulated to ensure a safe operational area, although regulation ceases at 9pm (as opposed to 11pm), reflecting the reduction in scheduled services operating after 9pm. Various people working in hospitals or those who need to attend hospitals such as the Royal, Crosshouse, RAH and Inverclyde continue to utilise services using BBS. This decision was taken following a full health and safety assessment.

Obviously as a result of the government lockdown all retail premises at bus stations have been closed throughout.

Contact Centre / Travel Card Unit / Ticketing

Both the Travel Card Unit (TCU) and the Contact Centre were relocated to home working. The Contact centre, who deal mainly with MyBus services and scheduling, were actively involved in the process of contacting all MyBus users by telephone and remain taking a small number of daily calls.

The TCU, who process National Entitlement Cards however did not see the same level of reduction of calls and applications, and at the time of writing the trending level is approximately 40% of the normal activity, principally for replacement and renewal of cards. The card issuing bureau in Hull is also closed, so no new cards can be physically produced and staff are advising users of this. Bus companies have been advised to accept cards that are outwith their period of validity.

The opportunity with these teams has been taken to advance training on dual working which had been planned for later in the year.

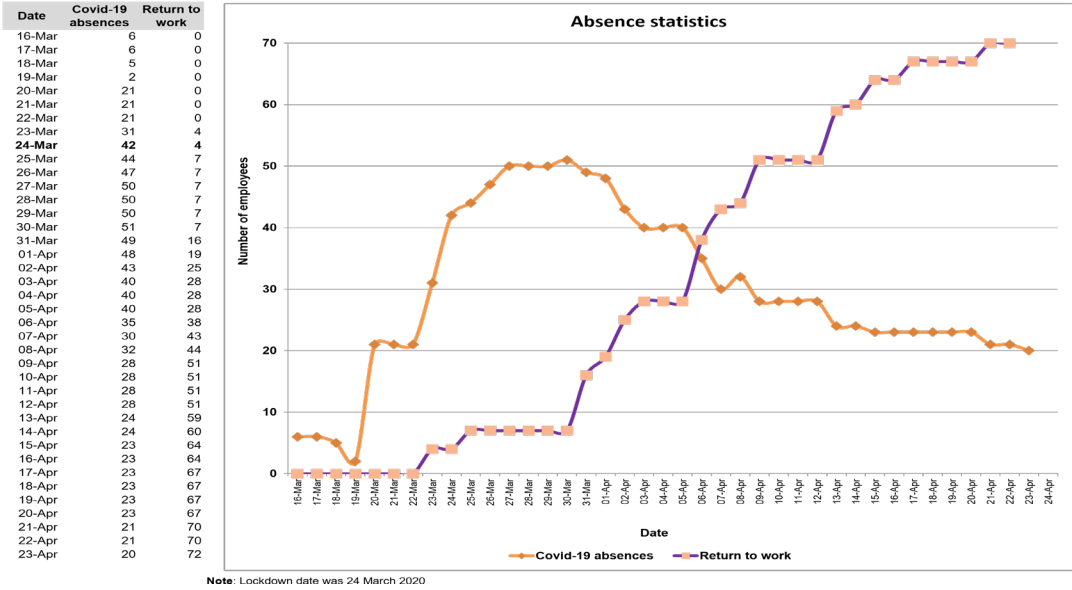
With regard to ticketing - both smart ticketing and Zonecard ticketing - the lockdown resulted in a significant number of refund requests. Clearly as customers were being advised not to use public transport weekly, monthly and annual season tickets were of limited value to them. At the time of writing, refunds of more than £55,000 have been made on tickets and refund requests continue to come in via the Enquiry mailbox on a daily basis.

Staffing Related issues

SPT staff remain at the forefront of delivering essential travel arrangements for those who require it. Guidance and instruction was issued to all front line staff at the outset concerning social distancing, and PPE. Any activities that can be undertaken via home working were implemented in advance of the official lockdown. Staff continue to be based at home with all the necessary kit to maximise their output during this disruptive period.

SPT continues to monitor the impact on staff – collating and reporting daily on the numbers of staff showing symptoms, self-isolating due to household issues or shielding for long term health reasons. The graph below aims to demonstrate the staffing statistics.

GRAPH 2



SPT has employee support arrangements in place and continues to highlight these to staff. Daily bulletins have also been issued to all staff to ensure they receive consistent messages on both service issues and decisions taken that affect them. This includes decisions that were taken relating to annual leave, cyber security arrangements and health and safety when working from home. These communications have been supplemented with weekly messages from the Chief Executive and a direct communication from the SPT Chair.

The daily staff emails reiterate the responsibility of individual managers to keep in touch with their teams and the need for this to happen across the whole organisation, and for the normal HR sickness reporting procedures to be adhered to.

Financial Implications

Clearly and consistently with all public services SPT continues to deliver public services wherever possible. However, members’ attention is drawn to the significant reduction in income of approximately £1.5m per month mainly through farebox, and other ancillary revenue generating activities such as advertising and rents.

SPT has taken the opportunity of delaying some expenditure, but given the relative regulatory nature of the SPT business activities this is small in comparison to the costs. The Government’s own guidance intimates that public services are not entitled to benefit from any of the government business schemes that have been put in place to ease financial pressures.

SPT is also facing additional costs arising from increased cleaning, PPE, and increased costs to maintain socially necessary bus services.

Following Government guidance and assuming this continues for a 12-week period, the implications of this on SPT revenue finances is significant – with a forecast out-turn position of £5.6m in deficit. It is difficult to forecast at this stage how quickly passenger income and other income will start to recover until such time as the governments exit strategy is announced. However, it is likely given the ongoing advice not to use public transport that the deficit will continue beyond that currently forecast.

Although additional funds have been announced for commercial transport operations, no additional support has been announced in Scotland for public sector transport operators. This matter has been raised at the highest level with Transport Scotland and discussions have commenced with a submission made for additional support. Additional support has been made available to public sector transport operators in England, including TfL, Nexus metro, Merseyrail and Manchester trams.

In terms of Capital plans clearly the current lockdown will have an impact on the ability of all stakeholders including SPT teams to deliver the approved capital projects within the original plan. This issue is being assessed and more information will be presented to members in due course.

4. Conclusions

SPT as a public service, during this pandemic and period of lockdown, has aimed to continue a level of public service. This is despite the challenges of the pandemic itself on staff wellbeing and the unique nature of what is being dealt with on a global basis.

SPT has sought to safeguard the wellbeing of its staff and customers in all decisions but needs to maintain services for those who rely on them most. This undoubtedly has significant implications for staff, the financial wellbeing of the organisation, and the working arrangements for all.

SPTs BCP arrangements are regularly tested, however until BCPs are tested in anger it is difficult to fully assess these. The implementation of the BCP in the current circumstances has proven to be very effective with the business continuing. SPT will continue to regularly review, test and monitor the effectiveness of the business continuity plan to ensure that any recommendations through lessons learned are implemented. We will also ensure that our business continuity plan is reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with legislation and best practice.

As members would anticipate, the SPT Business Continuity team have already commenced the strategic thinking and planning for a restart and recovery plan– this is being considered having consideration to both the immediate short term and the longer term. As these plans are more fully formed these will be shared with members and other stakeholders. More details of the Government’s exit strategy are required to inform these.

5. Committee action

The committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

6. Consequences

Policy consequences *None directly.*

Legal consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>Without government support SPT is currently forecasting a significant deficit in its revenue position.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>SPT staff have been significantly affected by the change to working arrangements.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>SPT has endeavoured to maintain services wherever needed.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>The immediate implementation of Business Continuity plans has enabled SPT to continue to deliver public services during the pandemic, whilst maintaining a safe work environment for employees.</i>

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