These are unprecedented times.

As the situation with Coronavirus unfolds across the world, we face a crisis of unparalleled proportions and one that we all hope we will never have to overcome again as a global community.

And while we keep a concerned eye on the worldwide situation, it is beholden on us to look more local in our response.

Stanley is a town that has had to prove its resilience time and time again. Our communities are adept at coming together to support each other. Offering kindness, care and working together to pull us through. It is these values, that we live by, that will help us in this uncertain time, emerging stronger and closer-knit than we’ve ever been.

Stanley Town Council must now show leadership and offer a calm, measured and assured response. We have to ensure our response is swift, decisive and helps those that we serve – our residents – as best as we possibly can during what is a fast-changing situation.

We need to innovate and find new ways of delivering support to people and organisations who need it most in and around Stanley. And I hope that tonight, we will come together as a council and agree clear priorities and an immediate course of action.

Tonight, I hope we can approve a £63,000 emergency support package to ensure our community facilites can keep their doors open and continue to to delviver the vital services they help provide.

In total, 23 buildngs and organisations will be assisted with this fund, helping people across Stanley and the surrounding areas.

The Stanley Town Council workforce has also agreed to help the voluntary groups effected by COVID 19. I’m immensley proud and grateful that our employees are volunteering to assist these groups. To them, I say thank you on behalf of myself and the Town Council. We will not forget your dedication.

**The health and wellbeing of our residents is paramount.**

We must support our friends at PACT House to deliver food, support and resources to our most vulnerable residents and also those who have been hit with a drop-off in work due to quarantine procedures. We must prioritise funding for our community buildings, so they can stay open and help the people who rely on them. We must use our own human resources and utilise our workforce to help those who can’t help themselves.

We are a caring Council and it is incumbent upon us to act immediately.

We will protect our most vulnerable and at-risk families. We will support them through this worrying time.

We will disseminate Government and health professionals’ advice – wash your hands, cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and please, follow guidance on self-isolation.

**We will work with partners to deliver the best care we can in Stanley.**

Our town has a small army of amazing volunteers and groups that have already mobilised. As I said, we must support them as a council. Our partners do fantastic work year-round, but during times like this, their dedication and endeavour really does shine through and we owe them a huge debt of gratitude for all they are doing.

As such, we will be porposing enhanced, emergency support for them.

**For many businesses, this is a worrying and uncertain time too.**

The Government has promised support for companies that may be under strain as a result of this pandemic. We must press them to act, and lend our voice to that of Durham County Council calling for support to be delivered as quickly and effectively as possible.

**Frontline services are showing incredible resilience and pulling together to ensure that things continue to run as smoothly as possible during this time.**

We must look at new ways of dispersing our team to ensure that they deliver help it’s needed most.

Crises like this highlight the real heroes in our community – health and hospital staff, care workers, shop workers, who carry on delivering warm, empathetic support when I am sure their instinct is to stay close to their family. On behalf of Stanley Town Council, I extend our thanks to everyone pulling together to support our residents.

Everyone is worried. Be assured that will do everything we possibly can to keep our residents safe, to keep them informed, and to minimise disruption to services.

I also call on this Government to help sole traders and the self employed as a priority, and increase statutory sick pay to an acceptable level.

We face a challenge like never before. But we’ll get through this by working together, supporting each other and stepping up to all challenges that lie ahead – as a council we will do everything we possibly can to ensure Stanley and our communities come through this in the strongest possible position.

Stay inside, stay safe, stay well and look after each other.