

Minutes



Council

Date: 24 July 2018

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors M Al-Nuaimi, J Cleverly, P Cockeram, M Cornelious, K Critchley, D Davies, C Evans, M Evans, C Ferris, D Fouweather, G Giles, J Guy, D Harvey, R Jeavons, C Jenkins, M Kellaway, M Linton, D Mayer, R Mogford, J Richards, M Spencer, T Suller, H Thomas, K Thomas, C Townsend, R Truman, T Watkins, M Whitcutt, R White, D Wilcox, D Williams, G Berry, J Clarke, V Dudley, Y Forsey, R Hayat, T Holyoake, P Hourahine, J Hughes, J Jordan, L Lacey, S Marshall, W Routley, H Townsend and J Watkins

Apologies: Councillors I Hayat, A Morris, J Mudd, M Rahman and K Whitehead

1. Preliminaries

i) To receive any apologies for absence

The Monitoring Officer reported apologies for absence.

The Council wished to note its condolences to Councillor Mudd on her recent family bereavement.

ii) To receive any declarations of interest

None.

iii) To receive any announcements by the Mayor

Civic Service

The Mayor thanked all those who had helped celebrate the start of his year of office by attending the Civic Service at St Woolos Cathedral on Sunday 13 July.

GAVO 90th Anniversary

The Mayor led the Council in congratulating GAVO (Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations) on their 90th anniversary. He thanked GAVO for the honour of joining their celebrations on 2 July in the presence of HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall.

Merchant Navy Association

The Mayor thanked all who attended the recent unveiling of a plaque for the Merchant Navy.

2. Minutes

The following amendment was put forward to the minutes of the meeting on 24 April 2018:

- On Item 10 (Questions to the Leader of the Council) – to clarify that the Leader of the Council ruled out the introduction of three weekly bin collections while she was Leader.

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 April 2018 and 15 May 2018 were approved as a true record subject to the amendment above.

3. **Appointments**

It was

Resolved

- i) To approve the recommendation of Newport's Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education to appoint a Humanist representative to that group.
- ii) To approve the following nominations:

Internal Appointments

Committee	No. of Vacancies / Replacements	Nominations Received
Planning Committee	1 replacement	Cllr Christine Jenkins to replace Cllr Malcolm Linton
Democratic Services Committee	1 replacement	Cllr Laura Lacey to replace Cllr Jane Mudd
Performance Scrutiny Committee – People	1 replacement	Cllr Rehmaan Hayat to replace Cllr Laura Lacey
Performance Scrutiny Committee – Place and Corporate	1 replacement	Cllr Ibrahim Hayat to replace Cllr Laura Lacey
Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships	1 replacement	Cllr Jason Hughes to replace Cllr Graham Berry
Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee	1 replacement	Cllr Graham Berry to replace Jason Hughes
Standards Committee	1 vacancy	Dr Paul Worthington to be appointed as co-opted member
Welsh Language Champion	1 vacancy	Cllr Jason Hughes

Appointments to External Organisations

Organisation	No. of Vacancies	Nominations Received
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	/ Replacements	
EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee	1 replacement	Cllr Deb Davies to replace Cllr David Mayer

Governing Body Appointments

Governing Body	No. of Vacancies / Re-appointments	Nominations Received
Gaer Primary	2 reappointments	Cllr Debbie Wilcox and Cllr Mark Whitcutt
Kimberley Nursery	1 reappointment 1 vacancy	Anne Iles Cllr Paul Cockeram
Maesglas Primary	1 reappointment	Cllr Stephen Marshall
Jubilee Park Primary	1 vacancy	Cllr Rehmaan Hayat
Llanwern High	1 vacancy	Katy Rees
Rogerstone Primary	1 vacancy	Chris Lacey
St Mary's RC Primary	1 vacancy	TBC
Ysgol Bryn Derw	1 vacancy	Anne Drewett

4. Police Issues

Chief Inspector Richard Blakemore provided an update on current local policing priorities, before inviting questions from Members.

- Responding to questions regarding drugs and associated crime, it was confirmed that all issues relating to drugs were taken very seriously, and Gwent Police was working closely with the local authority and other partners in taking a multi-agency approach to these complex issues. Recent progress in confronting serious organised crime and the supply of drugs was reported, with the engagement of a new Serious Organised Crime Officer.
- Responding to a number of questions about off road motorbikes, the officer outlined the current operations and tactics being deployed to address this problem.
- Cllr Jeavons thanked officers for their recent efforts in Lliswerry, particularly around Black Ash Park.
- Cllr Hourahine thanked the local officer for recent attendance and actions following the St Julian's ward meeting.
- Responding to Cllr Holyoake's question, the officer outlined the work being done to tackle prostitution and associated crimes in the Pillgwenlly area.

- Cllr T Watkins asked for a local perspective on the recent national statistics showing a rise in violent crime, and subsequent media reports that this was down to fewer officers “on the beat”. The Chief Inspector responded that he did not see correlation between those two factors in Newport, citing the ongoing recruitment for front line officers, the factors that can impact on statistics, and the robust plans in place to maximise available resources e.g. in the city centre.
- Cllr Cleverly thanked officers for their work in Bettws in responding to recent fires.
- Responding to Cllr M Evans’ question about gypsy and traveller encampments, the officer outlined the memorandum of understanding in place between the police and the local authority to ensure a proportionate response in each case.
- Responding to concerns that officers attending ward meetings were not always sufficiently senior or with the right knowledge to be able to respond properly to residents’ questions, the Chief Inspector agreed to take this back to the neighbourhood teams.
- Responding to Cllr Suller’s question, the officer outlined the work being done to prevent and address the involvement of very young people in the selling of drugs.
- Responding to Cllr Al-Nuaimi’s question, the officer outlined the work being done in partnership with the Council’s licensing department following the incident in Cambrian Road to ensure a vibrant and safe city centre.

The Mayor thanked Chief Inspector Blakemore for attending.

5. **Notice of Motion: Caerleon Public Toilets**

The Council considered a motion for which the necessary notice had been provided. The motion was moved by Councillor Joan Watkins and seconded by Councillor David Williams:

This council notes the public outcry against the closure of the public toilets in Caerleon and urges the Cabinet to re instate them as a matter of urgency.

In moving the motion, Councillor Joan Watkins cited the public reaction to the closure, and the need for such facilities to encourage increasing visitors as well as serving local people’s needs.

In seconding the motion, Councillor David Williams cited the example of Bridgend County Borough Council who engaged local businesses to provide alternative facilities before closing any public conveniences.

Councillor Debbie Wilcox moved the following amendment to the motion:

After “This Council notes”:

- 1. The improved public toilet facilities in Caerleon Town Hall, which included increasing opening hours and the availability of a caretaker.**
- 2. That a very successful joint agreement with the National Roman Legion Museum has enabled the Broadway toilets to be open daily during the time the Cricket Pavilion is being leased. These toilets will remain open until 2019, paving the way for further discussions with future interested parties. This is also the case for other public toilets in Newport.**

Furthermore, this Council acknowledges the improved toilet facilities available in Caerleon and supports the ongoing efforts to secure a means of providing permanent availability of the Broadway toilets. It further calls upon the UK Government to reverse its austerity agenda and provide an increase in funding to local government budgets throughout the UK above the rate of inflation, to allow them to provide improved public services which includes public toilets.

In moving and seconding the amendment, the Leader and Deputy Leader both highlighted the continuing pressure of austerity facing the Council, and the difficult decisions and challenges this presented.

The following points were raised against the amendment:

- the relatively small saving made through closing the facility
- the need to prioritise spending and listen to public concerns
- the alternative ideas put forward by scrutiny during the budget process
- the impact on tourism

The following points were raised in support of the amendment:

- the improvement of facilities at the town hall to ensure adequate alternative provision
- the impact of austerity on local government budgets, making difficult decisions necessary
- alternative solutions e.g. The community group re-opening a facility as café with a public toilet in Maindee

Speaking in reply to the amendment, Councillor Joan Watkins questioned the success of arrangements with the Town Hall, and highlighted the impact of the closure on elderly and vulnerable people.

The required number of elected members sought a recorded vote.

The following members voted in favour of the amendment:

Councillors Al-Nuaimi, Berry, Clarke, Cockeram, Critchley, Davies, C Evans, Forsey, Giles, Guy, Harvey, R Hayat, Holyoake, Hourahine, Hughes, Jeavons, Jenkins, Lacey, Linton, Marshall, Mayer, Richards, Spencer, H Thomas, K Thomas, Truman, T Watkins, Whitcutt, and Wilcox - A total of 29 votes

The following members voted against the amendment:

Councillors Cornelious, Dudley, M Evans, Ferris, Fouweather, Jordan, Kellaway, Mogford, Routley, Suller, J Watkins, White and Williams - A total of 13 votes

Abstained from voting: Councillors Cleverly, C Townsend and H Townsend.

The amendment was therefore carried.

It was therefore

Resolved

To adopt the amended motion as set out in full above.

6. Notice of Motion: Reducing Use of Plastic in Newport

The Council considered a motion for which the necessary notice had been provided. The motion was moved by Councillor Debbie Wilcox and seconded by Councillor Mark Whitcutt:

This Council resolves to start the process of reducing the use of plastics across the City of Newport by:

- **Supporting Plastic Free Coastlines, committing to plastic free alternatives and supporting plastic free initiatives within the City**
- **Reducing the use of single-use plastics on Council premises and promoting the removal of single-use plastics elsewhere**
- **Encouraging local businesses and retailers to stop using, and selling, single-use plastic items, replacing them with sustainable alternatives**
- **Working with stakeholders to reduce the use of plastic in schools, colleges and libraries, community and leisure centres**
- **Promoting or organising community events to remove plastic waste from our coastline, and elsewhere across the City**

Some key examples of where we will target our efforts to reduce single use plastics and their alternatives are:

- **Recyclable or reusable cups**
- **Metal, compostable or other materials instead of plastic cutlery**
- **Compostable or reusable stirrers**
- **Paper bags or wrapping instead of plastic**
- **Reusable bottles instead of throwaway plastic**

In moving the motion, Councillor Wilcox highlighted the pervasive impact of plastic on the environment, and the sustainable alternatives available.

Councillor Whitcutt spoke to second the motion, providing some additional statistics on the extent of plastic pollution.

A number of Members spoke in support of the motion, sharing personal experiences as well as examples of the different ways individuals, businesses and public bodies can help cut down on plastic waste.

In conclusion, Cllr Wilcox thanked Members for their contributions and suggestions in this important area.

It was unanimously

Resolved

To adopt the motion as set out in full above.

7. Notice of Motion: DWP Office Relocation

The Council considered a motion for which the necessary notice had been provided. The motion was moved by Councillor Debbie Wilcox and seconded by Councillor Mark Whitcutt:

The Department of Work and Pensions have announced that five of its offices across South Wales will close, with a total of 1,700 staff centralised at a new site on the Treforest Industrial Estate. In addition to the Newport Benefit Centre with 365 staff present there is the Caerphilly Benefits Centre with 225 staff and office closures include the Merthyr Benefit Centre with 262 staff, the Cwmbran Pension Centre with 171 staff and the Gabalfa Cardiff Centre with 714 staff.

Although it is recognised that the DWP like local government are seeking to make changes to their operations in response to the ever increasing pressures placed on them from austerity measures, we are concerned with the decision to relocate jobs out of Newport City Centre and the implications the move will have on future sustainability. It will also have a negative impact on current Newport-based staff who will be unable to travel for a variety of reasons to the new fairly distant location with unconnected public transport routes thus putting job security at real risk.

This Council therefore resolves to write to:

- (i) The UK Government to request a reconsideration of the relocation of the Newport DWP Offices and that the UK Government be urged to enter into meaningful discussions with the PCS Trade Union on this matter.**
- (ii) The Welsh Government to request that they add their support to the PCS's position and ask that they write to the UK Government indicating their support for this reconsideration.**

In moving the motion, Councillor Wilcox highlighted the impact of the proposals, including 300 affected staff in Newport, and the discrepancies between the projected impact set out by DWP, and the contradictory evidence put forward by the PCS union.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Whitcutt.

The Leader of the Opposition also spoke in favour of the motion, drawing parallels to the campaign to keep the Passport Office in the city centre.

It was unanimously

Resolved

To adopt the motion as set out in full above.

8. Public Space Protection Order: Maesglas

The Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation presented the report asking Council to approve a Public Spaces Protection Order for Maesglas. The Cabinet Member explained the background to the order, prompted by the high level of complaints relating to the area around the local shops.

In seconding the report, Cllr Wilcox confirmed that the proposals were supported by the local ward members, and were aimed at restricting the behaviours of a minority of people acting in an intimidatory manner.

In discussing the report, the following points were raised:

- the need to tackle anti social behaviour and its negative impact on local communities
- concerns that closing off an area will just displace the problem to another location
- points for and against PSPOs being the right tool for this problem

It was unanimously

Resolved

To approve the Maesglas Public Spaces Protection Order, as detailed in Appendix D of the report

9. **Public Space Protection Order: City Centre**

The Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation presented the report asking Council to approve a revised Public Spaces Protection Order for the City Centre. He confirmed that the original order was due for review, and thanked scrutiny Members for their thorough consideration in this process.

Councillor Matthew Evans proposed the following amendment to the order:

Referring to Appendix B – Proposed Revised Newport City Centre Public Space Protection Order 2018 – to replace point 5 with:

- Any person on a street in the restricted area is prohibited from, at any time, placing themselves in a position to beg or solicit money.

Speaking to the amendment, Councillor Matthew Evans put forward that the current ban on aggressive begging was unenforceable, and the proposal to introduce an exclusion zone around cash points would create the same problem.

In seconding the amendment, Cllr Fouweather supported Cllr Evans' suggestion that the exclusion zone would be difficult to enforce.

The following points were raised in discussions on the amendment:

- that this issue had already been consulted upon and discussed by the scrutiny committee, and the recommendations were supported by the police
- the low number of responses to the consultation
- that a blanket ban on begging would criminalise some of the most vulnerable members of society
- details of the new diverted giving scheme

Following a vote the amendment was lost.

Discussions on the substantive proposals included the following points:

- the views expressed against the proposed begging restrictions by agencies consulted as part of the review.
- the thorough discussions held in scrutiny on these proposals
- the different reasons people turn to begging
- the focus of the debate on begging, when a number of measures are covered by the order
- the need to achieve a proportionate and fair response to these issues

It was

Resolved

To approve the extended and revised Public Spaces Protection Order for the City Centre, as detailed in Appendix B of the report.

10. **High Street Rate Relief Scheme 2018-19**

The Leader of the Council presented the report asking Council to adopt a High Street Rate Relief Scheme for 2018-19.

The Welsh Government had again made available grant funding for billing authorities to deliver in 2018-19 the High Street Rate Relief Scheme to reduce the rate burden on qualifying high street retail properties. The funding for 2018-19 amounted to a maximum of £139,250 and a number of businesses were expected to benefit from reduced rates by way of this Relief.

The scheme more or less replicated the scheme that was introduced in 2017-18; the only difference being that the amount of relief available to businesses was lower.

Qualifying ratepayers would fall into two categories, tier 1 would receive up to £250, and tier 2 where up to £750 would be awarded per qualifying property.

It was estimated that around 350 ratepayers across the city could potentially benefit from reduced rate bills under this scheme.

It was unanimously

Resolved

To adopt the Welsh Government's Wales Retail Relief Scheme for 2018-19 by making the appropriate determination and decision, as required by Sections 47(1)(a) and 47(3) respectively of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, and set out in the Appendix to the report.

11. Member Officer Protocol

Representing the Standards Committee, Councillor Herbie Thomas presented the report proposing an update to the Member / Officer Protocol in the Council's constitution.

The original Protocol was agreed by Standards Committee over 15 years ago, prior to the introduction of the Model Code of Conduct in Wales. The Protocol had been updated periodically over the years on a piecemeal basis, but had never been comprehensively reviewed. Standards Committee did recommend a wholesale review some years ago but the proposal was never approved by full council, due to a misunderstanding about the nature and effect of the Protocol.

At its meeting in January, the Standards Committee agreed that there was a continuing need for the Protocol, to supplement the regulatory codes. Committee also considered that the existing Protocol, as set out in the Council's Constitution, was in need of revision and updating, in line with the alternative document, which was drafted as part of the new Model Welsh Constitution.

The revised protocol had been thoroughly reviewed by the Committee, and updated to reflect the Committee's comments on the original draft. The revised protocol had therefore been endorsed by the Standards Committee and was recommended for adoption.

It was unanimously

Resolved

To adopt the revised protocol on Member / Officer relations.

12. Questions to the Leader of the Council

Leader's Announcements

In answer to the first question from the Mayor, the Leader made the following announcements:

- The in-principle decision this month to back a £12 million redevelopment proposal to regenerate and revitalise the historic Newport Market
- £1.1 million of National Lottery funding secured to restore the Market Arcade to its former glory.
- Planning approval obtained to progress the redevelopment of Chartist Tower, to include a new hotel with gym, conference space, offices, a coffee shop and restaurant.
- Financial support agreed with Welsh Government for the initial stages of the project to develop a new footbridge to replace the Devon Place subway.
- The progress in securing funding to carry out essential repairs to the Transporter Bridge and enhance it as a visitor attraction.
- Recent Cabinet agreement to develop new Neighbourhood hubs
- Green Flag awards confirmed for Beechwood Park, Belle Vue Park and Gwent Crematorium.
- Major events being held in the city, with the Newport Marathon, Velothon Wales and Big Splash taking place recently, and the Tour of Britain and Food Festival planned for the Autumn.

University Provision

Referring to the Labour manifesto commitments to support university education in the city, Councillor Matthew Evans asked about the number of university students currently studying in Newport, speculating that it must be less than the 9,000 students studying here in 2012.

The Leader assured Council that a lot of work was being done behind the scenes with the university as a key partner in the city, however it was also noted that the University of South Wales (USW) was an independent institution working to its own business plan. The Leader had also recently issued a statement supporting the reaccreditation of USW's teacher training course which represented 30% of USW's business. The university and its students were highly valued in the city but also respected as a private enterprise.

Councillor Evans asked a supplementary question about the relationship with the university, referencing the previously vibrant student scene in the city, with only a fraction of USW's 20,000 students now coming to Newport. The Leader noted and understood Councillor Evans' concerns, welcomed working together on this issue, and agreed to take any ideas forward to future meetings with the Vice Chancellor.

Affordable Housing

Referencing the need for affordable housing and the impact of the "Bristol effect", Councillor Cleverly asked whether the Council would take action by setting up a local house building company.

The Leader recognised the need for more affordable homes, and while the end of the bridge tolls was welcomed, the changing demographic caused by the "Bristol effect" did bring with it concerns about the availability of affordable housing. It was noted that the Council's housing stock was transferred to Newport City Homes in 2009, however the Leader agreed to look into the idea.

University Provision

Following up on Councillor Evans' question, Councillor Townsend asked whether we could work with other local universities. The Leader confirmed that there was no exclusivity in the relationship with USW, and the Council was open to all offers and opportunities to move things forward.

Equalities

Responding to Councillor Stephen Marshall's question, the Leader underlined the authority's commitment to equalities, as demonstrated through the strategic equality plan and Welsh language plan. Update on both of these plans were received by Cabinet in July and would be presented to Council in September. In concluding, the Leader offered a place on the Strategic Equalities Group to the Leader of the Opposition.

13. Questions to the Cabinet Members

The following questions were submitted and answered.

Cabinet Member for Social Services / Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Councillor Joan Watkins asked:

A recent question at any time on the cost issue of the Out of area placements for children in Newport revealed that the figure involved now stands at £4,683,192. Would the Cabinet Member agree that this is an enormous figure giving rise to serious concern. I understand children are being placed as far afield as Scotland, such distances will increase the cost to the Authority in terms of social workers time and travel etc. Additionally placing a child so far away from family and friends may have a detrimental effect on that child. What measures does he have in place to address this issue and as a matter of urgency?

What is the time scale for providing the SEBD Special school which has been mentioned and what other measures are in place to reduce this cost by making provision in Newport?

The Cabinet Member for Social Services responded:

The Cabinet Member expressed surprise that this question had been submitted when details had already been shared at the last two scrutiny meetings, at the Corporate Parenting Forum, and at Cabinet, however the question was welcomed to record what was being done to tackle this issue.

It was confirmed that Children's Services recognise the need to maintain our most vulnerable children close to Newport and have dedicated an 'invest to save' project to reduce the number of Out of County placements.

Children's services currently have 10 residential children's beds across Cambridge House and Forest Lodge. These homes have been at full capacity for the majority of this year. In addition, Oaklands home offers respite to children with disabilities which has proved to support many families in caring for their children at home and reduce possible admissions to local authority care.

At present, 27 children were accommodated in Out of County residential placements. Most placement decisions were made through the courts, and therefore had to be followed – and this was a pressure faced by Councils nation-wide.

Of the 27 children accommodated Out of County:

- 4 would turn 18 this year and therefore would move on from residential care or will transfer to an adult service.

- 5 have disabilities and are placed in a specialist residential setting, within 20 minutes' drive of Newport.

£1.5 million has been agreed for the development of 3 new children's homes which will increase capacity by 12 beds.

The first home, Rose Cottage, is due to open at the end of this year and will allow for 4 children to return to Newport.

The project team have identified ideal criteria for homes and continue to search for further, suitable properties from which we can offer quality residential provision to the children of Newport.

In conclusion, there is a body of work taking place nationally and regionally to address the dearth of suitable placements for children in care. In Newport as well as playing a full role in the wider work we are also focussing on developing Newport solutions for Newport children. As well as the work to grow our residential options we are also exploring wider support for children in foster care and increased recruitment of foster placements.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills responded:

I have asked officers to complete a scoping exercise to establish a SEBD school in our City so that we can provide local pupils with a local provision. We are also working with other local authorities which have successful SEBD schools so that we can share best practice at this early stage. I believe that establishing a SEBD school in Newport will provide improved value for money.

I am unable to provide you with an exact timeframe of when we can establish a SEBD school but I can assure you that we are assessing our capital assets to find a suitable venue. I would expect this exercise to conclude by October 2018.

I should point out that we have a previous track record of success in establishing local provision for complex needs. Ysgol Bryn Derw was the first ASD School to open in the region in September 2017. This local provision allowed us to bring back Out of County pupils in to a local Special School and prevent further pupils having to access Out of County provision.

The Out of Area spend for Newport is large, however only a few weeks ago I answered a Question at Any Time from Cllr Watkins which responded in saying that there is no national data collected across Wales to be able to benchmark this figure and provide a meaningful comparison with other local authorities. The Leader and I have raised our concerns to the Cabinet Secretary through the WLGA. There is strong agreement on the need for a national review of Out of County Educational places so that we can collectively understand and address the issue.

When I consider Newport's Out of County spend, I am on one hand glad that pupils who have identified complex needs have been provided with the right learning provision. This is vitally important I am sure you will agree, but as Cabinet Member for Education and Skills I am concerned about the high costs of Out of County places which private, independent providers charge local authorities. An example of such cost is £85,000 for one pupil place in a SEBD School (Social Emotional Behaviour Disorder).

Nonetheless, when a child requires an 'educational' Out of County placement, we are able to work within a relatively small radius. Pupils are largely placed in Cardiff, Caerphilly and Monmouthshire (all neighbouring local authorities).

Finally I will add that it would be very unlikely that any local authority would have all pupils with complex needs educated within their locality. Some pupils with the highest level of complex needs require such specialist support (frequent medical attention) that their needs can only be met by a specialist provider. This is right and just.

Supplementary question:

In response to Councillor Watkins supplementary question to Councillor Cockeram, some additional details were provided around the purchase of Rose Cottage.

Cabinet Member for Community and Resources

Councillor Tom Suller asked:

Between January – July 2017 the council received a total of 170,371 calls, however 39,254 callers hung up the phone because of lengthy call wait times.

I am still hearing reports from the public of waiting times of over 20 minutes at certain times through the week.

Do the council think it was acceptable to make a cut to services of £20,00k in the current budget, when there is an argument the service should be improved? It is also true that the council are looking to see up to 80% of all public queries completed on-line over the next 2-3 years

The Cabinet Member responded:

The savings referred to are part of the Council's effort to address the reduction in funding from the Government under the MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan). The savings were agreed by full Council as part of the overall budget in February 2018.

The City Contact Centre answered 243,886 calls in 2017/2018 and the average speed of answer was under 5 minutes however there may be times such as Monday morning or after a bank holiday when the lines are busier than usual and wait times can be longer. Calls about Social Services were, on average, answered within 79 seconds. Customers are informed of the wait time when they ring so they can either choose to wait to speak to someone or call at a quieter time.

Over 60% of transactions are already carried out online by customers and it is anticipated that this will increase over time as increasingly residents expect to carry out transactions quickly and easily 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Office for National Statistics recently published a report on internet use in the UK which found that 88.9% of residents in Wales had used the internet in the last 3 months. Under the Council's Digital Strategy Customer Services aim is to deliver better online services and continue to support those who may be digitally excluded.

Supplementary question:

In response to Councillor Suller's supplementary question about digital exclusion, the Cabinet Member cited the courses being offered in numerous community venues to help people get online.

Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation

Councillor Joan Watkins asked:

“The key issue raised through the Consultation process is that it is inappropriate to progress with the SPG until Air Quality Action Plans for each Air Quality Management Areas {AQMA’s} have been produced and adopted by the Council, or the Review of the Planning Policy has been undertaken. It is felt that without the action plans it will be challenging for a Developer to produce a mitigation plan and the mitigation proposed would be piecemeal and inconsistent.”

Further to the above

Caerleon has one of the worst areas of air pollution in Wales and has an AQMA in place along its high Street. Can the council please give an update on why the Air Quality Action Plans are taking so long to be finalised? and stemming from the plans will the council give a guarantee that future updates to the LDP will include guidance for housing Developers that they should avoid areas where Air Quality Management Zones are in place?

The Cabinet Member responded:

The Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance for air quality was adopted in February 2018 and provides clear guidance on developments within or near Air Quality Management Areas. No other Welsh Authority has such strict planning guidance on air quality. The SPG prevents any development proposals which are expected to have an unacceptable impact on human health because of air pollution.

This policy is already included in the current LDP, and the controls will be updated to reflect any changes in national policies and guidance.

During consultation on the Air Quality SPG, a comment was made that it would be challenging for a developer to produce air quality mitigation measures without an AQMA Action Plan for Caerleon. However, the purpose of the SPG was not to solve the existing air quality problems, but to deal with the impact of future developments.

An Action Plan for air quality is much more than just dealing with the levels of air pollution; it is in fact a sustainable travel plan that will impact every mode of transport across the city. From buses, electric vehicles, charging points, active travel - cycling and walking. The Action Plan will be a significant policy for the city that will have implications for all of us. Due to this reason it has taken time to formulate our approach. Now that the revised AQMAs are in place (as of 1st July 2018), full public consultation on the draft Action Plan will begin shortly.

I would also point out that, whilst the draft Action Plan is being prepared, work has already begun on a number of other environmental initiatives, for example, funding for a fuel economy scheme for fleet operators, funding for the integrated cycle network, a bid for electric buses to run through Caerleon, and a number of detailed studies on traffic flows and emissions monitoring in Caerleon. In addition, the Public Service Board is actively progressing with the development of a Sustainable Travel Plan.

Therefore, this Administration is committed to improving air quality in Newport and the Council’s performance is comparable with other large urban areas in Wales.

Councillor David Fouweather asked:

The cabinet member will be aware that there is a problem with dog fouling throughout the city. In 2017 just five fixed penalties were issued. Is he confident that this issue is being dealt with properly by his department and what plans does he have in place to ensure that residents who allow their dogs to foul are given fixed penalty notices?

The Cabinet Member responded:

Due to austerity measures and the reduction of resources over recent years, the size of the Community Safety Warden team has been reduced by a third since 2010. The team has also taken on additional statutory duties in order to ensure that regulatory functions continue to be delivered following reductions in resources elsewhere in the Licensing & Regulation portfolio, such as noise complaints and stray dog collection. It is also true that this is a challenging area of enforcement, as offenders are well aware of the law and often ensure that their dogs do not foul when Council officers are in the vicinity. Therefore, the numbers of fixed penalty notices for dog fouling has always been low, compared with other offences such as littering, because it is extremely difficult to catch offenders. However, we would encourage members of the public to report offenders, where they witness dog fouling taking place.

The Community Safety Warden Service will continue to deliver enforcement activity in this area, balanced with their other statutory regulatory duties such as noise nuisance and anti-social behaviour, both of which are high priorities for the Council and partner organisations.

Supplementary question:

In response to Councillor Fouweather's supplementary question about the need to tackle this issue, the Cabinet Member explained the need to evidence offences in order to successfully tackle the problem, but urged the public to continue reporting these issues so that staff can respond.

14. Questions to the Chairs of Committees

There were no questions for the Committee Chairs.

15. Standards Committee Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting of the Standards Committee were noted.