

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 16 September 2020

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors Councillor J Mudd (Chair), Councillor R Jeavons, P Cockeram, G Giles, D Harvey, D Mayer, Councillor R Truman, D Davies and M Rahman

In Attendance: Beverly Owen (Strategic Director (Place))

1 Apologies for Absence

No apologies received.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of Interest.

3 Draft Minutes from August Cabinet

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 August 2020 were confirmed as a true record

4 Revenue Budget Monitor July 2020

The Leader presented the report that provided an update on the revenue monitoring position as at July. The report showed a much improved position than that reported to the May Cabinet, with the reported overspend reducing from £5.4 million to £683,000, a quite considerable reduction. This reflected the changes resulting from confirmed funding from Welsh Government for Covid-19 related expenditure and loss of income, which includes additional financial support for:

- Loss of income for quarter 1 and confirmation that the full £78m of Welsh Government funding could be used for loss of income, improving forecasts considerably;
- Continued support for Adult Social Care and Homelessness into quarter 2;
- Announcement of £264m across Wales for the remainder of the financial year to cover covid-19 pandemic related lost income and increased costs.

The financial measures mentioned above have enabled the overspend forecast to be decreased substantially from that reported in May, however, the report noted that there is still further detail required on the application of the additional funding and what it can be used for. Therefore, there is still a level of uncertainty with the forecasts that will need reflecting as the detail is clarified.

The key areas contributing to the forecast overspend are:

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| (i) | Undelivered 2020/21 and prior year budget savings | £1,540k |
| (ii) | Increased demand for independent fostering agencies | £446k |
| (iii) | Impact of on-going school budget overspending | £305k |
| (iv) | Staffing and other service area underspends | (£1,608k) |

One of the main areas of overspending (see (i) above) relates to the non-delivery of savings across a number of service areas. This equates to £1.5 million for 2020/21 and prior year savings and is not unique to one particular service area.

The Leader confirmed the forecasted delivery of savings have been significantly impacted by the covid-19 pandemic, reducing the projected savings to 80% of the target. Whilst the current delay is unavoidable, services will need to deliver these savings by the end of the current financial year at the latest so that they do not carry forward as an issue into next year, alongside potentially further new savings that may be required.

The report asked Cabinet to note and approve this, which will require on-going focus by Heads of Service and their teams; certainly something for individual Cabinet Members to monitor in their meetings with Heads of Service.

Another area of overspending reported in previous forecasts are those in demand-led areas. Whilst this has seen an improvement since the May forecast, there are still overspends reported within the Children's service area, including overspends on independent fostering. Given the inherent nature of this budget risk, numbers in this area could change throughout the year as has been the case over the last 2-3 years and this therefore represents a risk. The report confirmed these areas will continue to be closely monitored.

As reported in May, the schools' forecast position continues to be an issue, with schools forecasting in-year overspends of £1.4m, which are above their available school reserves by £305,000. This is a significant concern for the Authority and officers are continuing to work closely with those schools to ensure that deficit recovery plans are in place and that action is taken to reduce spend.

The overspends on the non-delivery of savings, on demand led services, and schools' budgets have been offset by the use of contingency of £1.4m and underspends, largely due to staff savings across other service areas, leading to the overall position of £683,000 overspend.

The Leader confirmed the need to remain cautious about this position, as, whilst it is a significant improvement on May, it is still an overspend position, and there remains significant uncertainty on the future of the covid-19 pandemic and what actions the Council will need to put in place if there is a continued increase in cases. There is also uncertainty on the level of income that will be received from Council Tax and the impact on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as employees come off the furlough scheme and the impact of the economic downturn on this. These areas will continue to be closely monitored and updated in future forecast reports.

The Leader invited her Cabinet colleagues to comment and all agreed that these are unprecedented times, with lots of new challenges having been met but acknowledging more challenges lay ahead. All praised the hard work of officers during this time to ensure plans are in place to mitigate these challenges.

The Leader thanked all her cabinet colleagues, council officers, teachers and school governors who are supporting the authority during this pandemic to ensure that services continue to be provided to the people of Newport.

The Leader confirmed that in summary the report asked Cabinet to note:

- the overall budget forecast position and the significant overspending within service areas which is predominately resulting from undelivered MTFP savings impacted by the on-going pandemic, the risks associated with this and accept the recommendation that Heads of Service focus on and implement agreed savings as soon as is possible;
- the planning assumptions within the forecast position and in particular, the uncertainty around:

- (i) the on-going impact that Covid-19 will have upon service areas and;
- (ii) funding support available from Welsh Government for the remainder of the financial year.

- the forecast movements in reserves;

- the very significant financial challenges facing schools and the serious impact it will likely have on the Council's other revenue budgets and reserves. Note the action currently in progress and the Head of Finance comments on the seriousness of this position.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report.

5 Capital Programme Monitor July 2020

The Leader presented the report which confirmed an update on the 2020/21 capital monitoring and the changes to the capital programme since the last report.

As indicated in the previous capital report presented to Cabinet, a significant review and re-profile of the capital programme has been undertaken which has led to £27.5m being re-profiled ("slipped") from 2020/21 into future years, across various programmes including the 21st Century Schools' Band B Programme. This now reflects a more realistic timescale for the projects to be delivered and officers are asked to continuously review projects and update the project profile as the schemes progress.

In addition, a further £2.8m of projects have been added to the programme, including a number of grant-funded highway and infrastructure improvement schemes benefiting Newport. This takes the overall capital programme to £204.4 million, which highlights the extensive investment in a number of areas of Newport including schools, heritage assets, highways and regeneration and environmental schemes.

In terms of monitoring, following the re-profiling of budgets and additions to the programme, the 2020/21 capital budget is £39.5 million. The report noted that against this there is a very small underspend against the 2020/21 programme of £375,000. In-year expenditure against the budget is currently low, however, this can be attributed to Covid-19, and expenditure is expected to increase significantly in the following three quarters of the year. The Leader confirmed officers will continue to monitor this closely and reflect the impact in future reports to Cabinet.

The Leader was pleased to report that the schemes which have been approved and already started are progressing well, as highlighted in the report.

The reported capital headroom (budget for which there is currently no committed expenditure), is £23.3m. The demand for capital expenditure in Newport exceeds the level of resource and the Council needs to prioritise where it spends this capital resource accordingly. The Capital Strategy will be looked at in the coming months alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan and will need to be approved by Council with regard to the long-term funding of the Capital Programme and the impact on the revenue budget of the future programme. Within the headroom figure are capital receipts, the figure as at July is £5.2 million.

The Leader invited her Cabinet colleagues to comment:

Councillor Giles referred to the capital spend on schools and the limitations imposed on the authority with having to identify capital monies within the budget and only when that is identified will Welsh Government provide match funding; the aspirations for spend on schools are far in excess of that indicated in this report.

Councillor Cockeram referred to the three new children's homes being developed and confirmed that Newport is leading the way with this initiative which is enabling children to be brought back home from out of catchment areas. The Leader and Deputy Leader visited two of the homes recently with Councillor Cockeram both of whom are extremely proud of this strategy and delighted to visit these schemes from the perspective of the impact that this can have on children's lives by way of their personal development. The Leader also emphasised the moral obligation the authority has in respect of ensuring a better outcome for the lives of our looked after children. Both the Leader and Deputy Leader look forward to revisiting the homes on completion of the refurbishment.

In summary the report asked Cabinet to:

- approve the additions to the Capital Programme requested in the report (Appendix A);
- approve slippage of £27.5 million noting the re-profiling of the programme this gives rise to;
- note the available remaining capital resources ('headroom') until 2022/23;
- note the capital expenditure forecast position as at July 2020;
- note the balance of and approve the allocation of in-year capital receipts.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report.

6 Risk Report Quarter 4 (2019/20)

The Leader presented the report which provided an update of the Council's Corporate Risk Register for the end of Quarter 4 (31st March 2020). The Leader explained that due to Covid-19 the update from this report had to be postponed until now.

The Leader drew attention to the following updates contained in the report:

- At the end of quarter 4 the corporate risk register included 13 risks requiring monitoring from Cabinet and the Council's Corporate Management Team;
- The remaining risks will continue to be monitored through the Council's service areas and Corporate Management Team. Mechanisms are in place to escalate any new or existing risk to the Corporate Risk Register.

- At the end of Quarter 4 (1st January to 31st March 2020) the Council has 8 High risks (15 to 25) and 3 Medium Risks (5 to 14) and 2 Low Risks (13 to 1). In comparison to quarter 3 there was one new risk and no risks were closed. However, one risk has increased in Risk score and four decreased.

- o (NEW) Covid-19 Pandemic Outbreak

□ In quarter 4 the Council added the Covid-19 risk onto the risk register as a result of Covid-19 spreading across communities in Newport and impacting on the delivery of Council services. The Council implemented its Gold Command Business Continuity arrangements to manage operational and community risks and issues for Newport with direct communications to regional and national groups (also outlined in the Covid-19 report on this agenda). Further updates on the strategic risks impacting the Council during the Covid-19 outbreak will be reported in the 2020/21 Quarter 1 risk update.

The Leader paused here to highlight that when these reports were prepared we were not in the position we find ourselves in today and she couldn't emphasise enough how much covid-19 has impacted on our communities. She confirmed the situation is still very fluid and subject to daily change. Some of Newport's neighbours are back in lockdown and the situation in Newport is also very serious. Everyone needs to ensure they are doing

everything they can to reduce the risk and ensure they follow the guidelines to prevent the spread of the virus. The contact tracing service is fundamental to this and the Leader urged the people of Newport to ensure that they use this system when attending restaurants, pubs, etc., which is fundamental in tracking any virus outbreaks.

Going back to the content of the report:

- o Stability of Social Care Providers (Risk score increase from 20 to 25)
 - The capacity and ability for Social Care Providers (residential and domiciliary) to be able to provide the necessary care and support for service users was being affected by Covid-19 outbreaks in the community and in care settings across Newport at the end of Q4.
- o Balancing the Council's Medium Term Budget Plan (Risk score decrease from 20 to 15)
 - At the end of the financial year the Council had reduced the gap between its forecasted projections for the next 3 years.
- o In-Year Financial Management (Risk score decrease from 12 to 3)
 - At the end of the financial year the Council's Cabinet agreed a cash injection into the schools' budgets reducing the impact of deficits. However, there remains individual schools facing a deficit budget position and further action is required to reduce the impact of overspending in 2020/21.
- o Demand for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Special Educational Needs (SEN) support (Risk score decrease from 20 to 16)
 - The budget for 2020/21 includes the new Additional Learning Needs funding formula agreed with head teachers which reduces the immediate risk. During the lock down there has been an increase of requests for Formal Assessment for pupils who may require specialist placements or additional support.
- A further update on the strategic risks impacting the Council during the Covid-19 outbreak will be reported in the 2020/21 Quarter 1 risk update.

The Leader invited her Cabinet colleagues to comment and all agreed with the Leader's comments earlier in the meeting regarding the seriousness of the virus and urged everyone to be mindful to follow the rules to prevent further spread of the virus in order to help to prevent a second lockdown like two of our neighbouring authorities.

In summary the report asked Cabinet to:

- consider the contents of the report and note the changes to the risk register for the end of quarter 4.
 - note that the Council's Risk Management Policy and Corporate Risk Register enables the administration and officers to effectively identify, manage and monitor those risks which could prevent the authority from achieving its objectives in the Corporate Plan (2017-22) and its statutory duties.
 - note that the Quarter 4 risk report will also be presented to the Council's Audit Committee in September 2020 to review the Council's risk management process and governance arrangements.
- Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report.

The Leader presented the report which gave an overview on service areas' performance for 2019/20 against each of the service plans 2018/22 (for 2019/20); acknowledged the successes delivered during the last financial year; and addressed any areas of under-performance across the service areas.

The Leader confirmed that in 2017 the authority launched the Council's 5-year Corporate Plan which set out its vision and goals for delivering Council services and its Well-being objectives for the citizens of Newport. The Leader also confirmed this is the third year of delivering against the objectives.

The Leader asked Cabinet to note that the Council's Annual Report 2019/20 will be presented to Cabinet in October which will provide an overview of the activities undertaken by the Council during the last financial year; the report will first go to Scrutiny for review. The report confirmed that:

As reported in the last quarter (January to March 2020), the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in many service areas diverting their resources and activities towards ensuring essential frontline services were supported. In addition the benchmarking of national performance measures were suspended.

Additional reports will be presented to Cabinet outlining the work undertaken by the Council to date and the progress being made by service areas against the Strategic Recovery Aims at the mid-year reviews in the autumn.

The report provided an overview of progress made by each service area in 2019/20 against each of their objectives and highlighted further notable developments in the delivery of the Corporate Plan and how each service area had been impacted by Covid-19.

As outlined in the report, each service area reported that they are making good progress towards the delivery of their objectives with:

- o 58% (171 / 297) of actions completed by the service areas;
- o 25% (74 / 297) of actions 'In Progress' and will be carried forward into 2020/21 plans;
- o 15% (44 / 297 actions) where issues have been identified which could impact on delivering the action within the timescale;
- o 3% of actions (8 out of 297 actions) are off target.

The full detail of these developments are included in the report. The Leader highlighted some of the Council's successes from last year:

- o Baby & Me service provided in collaboration between the Council's Children's Services and Barnardos which has received positive outcomes for service users involved and recognition across the UK and media outlets;

- o The Council received Multi-agency inspection of Child Protection Services completed in 2019/20 a relatively new approach but which has had very positive feedback in the way services are being run and areas to strengthen our existing arrangements;

- o NCC telecare service (Adult Services) is now fully operational and delivered in partnership with Monmouthshire County Council and Caerphilly County Borough Council. This service utilises technology to enable people to continue to live independently at home;

- o Introduction of the Civil Parking Enforcement (City Services) which has seen improvements in road safety and improving the environment across Newport.

- o Implementation of new bins (City Services) resulted in a recycling rate improvement from 58% to 66.4% - exceeding the Council's statutory target;

- o School attendance (Education) has improved. With primary school attendance ranked 6th out of 22 Welsh local authorities – an improvement of 7 places on the previous year.

Secondary school attendance ranked 7th out of 22 Welsh local authorities – an improvement of 9 places on the previous year;

- o Significant progress of the regeneration of Newport City Centre (Regeneration Investment & Housing) has been made in the construction of projects such as the Chartist Hotel, Market Arcade and the former IAC building, Mill Street;

- o Redevelopment of the Ringland Hub (Regeneration Investment & Housing) and introduction of the Neighbourhood Hubs that are providing different Council services in one building for the community;

- o The Council's Regulatory Services continue to prevent and take action against those not complying with Trading Standards' regulation and removing dangerous products and goods from the shelves; this service area has been outstanding in its response to covid-19 and the Leader thanked the officers for their sterling work.

- o The Digital team have supported the new way of working during Covid-19 lockdown through technology and IT support with the roll-out of Microsoft Teams in a short timeframe. The report also highlighted the end of year performance measures that support the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

The Leader commented how encouraging it is to see at the end of the year, 61 of the 111 (55%) corporate performance measures reported had either achieved or exceeded their target for the year.

There were some performance measures that had been reported as being short of meeting their target or as being 'off target' from their target figures and these are identified in the report.

Included in the report was a summary from the service areas explaining the reason(s) for the performance and actions being taken to improve performance for Amber and Red performance measures. The report confirmed this information had also been provided to Scrutiny for information.

Under normal circumstances the end of year performance updates are also presented to the Place & Corporate and People Scrutiny Committees to review the progress and performance of the Council's service areas against their objectives. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Democratic process was suspended at the end of the financial year 2019/20; the reports were therefore provided to Scrutiny Committees for information. The Leader confirmed that Committees will have an opportunity to review the progress being made against the 2020/21 service plans at the mid-year point in the late autumn.

The Leader also confirmed a further mid-year report will be presented where Cabinet will be provided with updates on service plan delivery which will provide a clearer picture of how Covid-19 has impacted objectives and performance. Delivery of the 4 Strategic Recovery Aims is also reported in the September 2020 Cabinet report.

The Leader stated that the Cabinet, (both collectively and individually as Cabinet Members), have to acknowledge where service areas have achieved or exceeded their goals and the hard work that has been undertaken – particularly where Covid-19 has disrupted service delivery. Likewise, it must also ensure that where the Council is not meeting targets set that these are closely monitored, supported and challenged with service areas to ensure that the necessary action(s) are taken to improve performance and recover from the impacts of Covid-19.

The Leader invited her cabinet colleagues to comment:

Cabinet members praised staff who continue to work effectively and efficiently across all service areas during this particularly challenging time.

The Leader invited the Chief Executive to speak who said that the reports on performance, risk and finance are all interwoven and thanked the Cabinet for their support. She also gave personal thanks to the teams for their excellent work last year, focusing as a team on those areas that are challenging. She confirmed that work continues on the MTFP for this year and next year and officers are also focusing on the forward capital programme. In summary the report asked Cabinet to:

- Note the contents of the report;
 - Take action in conjunction with the Directors and Heads of Service to address areas of poor performance.
- Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report.

8 Welsh Language Annual Report

The report had been prepared in accordance with Welsh Language Standards 158, 164 and 170 which require that the Council reports annually on compliance with Welsh Language Standards, as well as publishing specific information, including the number of complaints received, the Welsh language skills of staff, the training offered through the medium of Welsh, and the level of Welsh required on all vacant and new posts advertised during the financial year.

The annual report is currently published on the Council's website in draft form in order to comply with the statutory publishing deadline of June 2020. The Welsh Language Commissioner has recognised that final reports may be delayed due to the impact of COVID-19 on council governance arrangements.

The Leader was pleased to present the report to Cabinet as it allowed her and her Cabinet Members to reflect on achievements over the past 12 months, as well as the opportunities that need to be further developed in the Council's commitment to growing the Welsh language in the city during the coming year.

The report confirmed that this year focus has been on developing relationships with community partners, welcoming the Welsh Language Commissioner to the Civic Centre as part of Gwyl Newydd, our local Welsh Language Festival, and recruiting a Welsh Language Promotion Officer to help engage local communities in the lead up to the opening of the city's fourth Welsh language medium primary school.

All Cabinet members have had the opportunity to attend Welsh language training this year, and the Leader thanked Cllr Jason Hughes, who, in his role as Welsh Language Champion, continues to promote Welsh language amongst elected members and across communities. The Leader also thanked officers for continuing to help promote this throughout the authority. Looking forward, the annual report also identifies a number of key priorities for the future, including:

- increasing the number of staff that take up Welsh language training;
- improving the data that we hold on Welsh speakers within the Council, and,
- working to establish the Welsh language as part of our diverse communities' sense of identity and belonging in the city.

The Leader moved the annual report for adoption. Diolch yn fawr.

The Leader introduced the Cabinet Member for Community and Resources to speak to the report

Cllr Mayer, as equalities lead, welcomed this year's Welsh Language Annual Report, being particularly pleased with the progress made over the last 12 months in developing stronger links with the Council's Welsh language and community partners. He confirmed the Council is working to embed Welsh language as an integral part of the city's cultural identity, and was delighted that local events and partnerships have been supported in order to take this

forward. As a Welsh language learner, the Cabinet Member is also encouraging, this year, the piloting of a number of new training opportunities for councillors and staff which he hopes will encourage more people to take up learning our national language.

In summary the report asked Cabinet to:

- approve the final monitoring report and publish it on the Council's website, in accordance with statutory deadlines.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report.

9 Sustainable Travel

The Leader introduced the report that provided Cabinet with an update on Sustainable Travel across Newport.

The report noted that good local transport connections have many benefits to people, businesses, the environment, and the overall economy. They are crucial to improving and sustaining the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being of Newport. Some of the main benefits are:

- connecting people and communities;
- supporting economic growth by encouraging businesses to invest in the area;
- helping tackle poverty by enabling people to access education and employment;
- improving our environment and health by reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality and enabling people to travel more actively.

The report also set out the national context of transport, the impacts and opportunities of the Covid-19 pandemic and gave an update on recent improvements and future opportunities in Newport.

The Leader was pleased to see the continuing improvements to the Council's fleet, public transport, infrastructure and active travel networks at this challenging time. She was also pleased to see the strong partnership working across Gwent on the Sustainable Travel Charter, which will be launched in October.

The Leader was delighted to see the fleet of electric vehicles delivered to Newport Transport and thanked Cllr Harvey, as Chair of Newport Transport Board and the management of Newport Transport for their hard work in bringing this vision to fruition.

The Leader invited the Deputy Leader (as Cabinet Member for City Services) and the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development to speak to the report.

The Cabinet Member for City Services confirmed the report sets out some of the work that is underway to improve the transport options and network across the city, as identified in the bullet points below in this report. He was particularly pleased to see that the Council will be receiving delivery of its first ultra-low emission refuse vehicle in March 2021 which will further support the work underway to reduce the Council's carbon emissions.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development thanked officers for the information collated within the report. The Cabinet Member reported that sustainable travel networks are essential for improving and sustaining the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being of Newport. They are key to connecting people and communities, supporting

economic growth, tackling poverty and improving the environment and health. She also emphasised the need to reduce carbon emissions and welcome the work being done to support the Future Generation Act.

The Leader invited comments from other cabinet member colleagues:

Councillor Giles encouraged parents who can walk their children to school to please do so rather than take the car which will enhance all the fantastic work mentioned in this report.

Councillor Rahman confirmed that the health and wellbeing of residents is a top priority for this Administration whilst also investing in the future with many of these initiatives.

The Leader particularly thanked the officers for their diligence and hard work in the work done on

Ensuring grant funding was accessed in order to deliver some of these initiatives. She also thanked

Newport's cyclists who offer a whole raft of information and ideas to contribute to the work of the council.

She also thanked Newport's members of the Senedd, John Griffiths and Jayne Bryant for their

collaboration in this and gave thanks to the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, Lee Waters, for his involvement in this work.

The following main points were identified in the report:

National Context

- Wales Transport Strategy under development.
- Local Government & Elections Bill proposes the delivery of local transport functions to Corporate Joint Committees.
- National Infrastructure Commission for Wales in place to provide advice on the economic and environmental infrastructure needs of Wales over 5-30 years.
- South East Wales Transport Commission in place to consider a range of issues in relation to congestion on the M4 along the south-western corridor, and to provide recommendations on possible interventions to mitigate the impact by December 2020.

Impacts & Opportunities of the Covid-19 pandemic

- Public transport demand significantly reduced with bus and rail operations reporting a 95% reduction on pre-covid-19 levels. A support package is maintaining a core public transport network (albeit at reduced frequency).
- Car parking patronage reduced by 95.4% in April and May. Usage is increasing as shops and businesses are starting to re-open.
- Since March, an estimated 1,200 staff have been working from home on a part or full time basis contributing to the reduction in carbon emissions in South Wales. The council is exploring some of the benefits of working differently.
- £600k of additional funding awarded for seven schemes to facilitate social distancing and to mitigate potential increases in car use by encouraging active travel.

Recent Improvements & Future Opportunities

- Replacing and upgrading bus stops across Newport with real time information for passengers.
- 15 ultra-low emission buses expected to enter service at Newport Bus in the autumn.
- 21 ultra-low emission and hybrid vehicles are now part of the council fleet and an ultra-low emission refuse vehicle will be delivered in March 2021, the first in Wales.
- Car park electric charging points are being installed which will take the total points to 51 across the city.
- Since 2014, 20km of additional active travel routes have been added to the network.
- An on-street cycle hire feasibility study was undertaken in 2019.

- £1.72M of funding awarded for 2020-21 to fund nine schemes across the city to provide improvements to highways, active travel, road safety, drainage, bus infrastructure.
- Gwent Sustainable Travel Charter to be launched in October to support and encourage public sector staff to reduce travel when possible and also to use healthy modes of transport for commuting and business miles.
- Sustainable Travel Supplementary Planning Guidance now in place to support developers and place-makers consider sustainable travel in new community design and how developments link with the wider community.
- 47 organisations across Newport have taken part in the ECO stars fuel economy scheme to reduce fleet emissions.

In summary the report asked Cabinet to note the information contained in the report.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report.

10 **COVID-19 Recovery - Update**

The Leader presented the report that gave an update on the progress made to date by the Council and its partners to recover services and supporting Newport's communities as part of the Council's Strategic Recovery Aims.

The Leader stated that we have all experienced in some way the impact that Covid- 19 and the lockdown has had on the City's communities, businesses and economy and the delivery of Council services.

Since March, the Council's primary focus has been to preserve life, minimise the spread of the virus across communities; sustain the Council's front line and supporting services; and supporting the vulnerable that have either been impacted directly by covid-19 or the lockdown measures.

The report confirmed that in June, Cabinet endorsed the four Strategic Recovery Aims that support the delivery of the Council's Wellbeing Objectives but also ensure the Council's services can return safely and manage future outbreaks.

A summary of the Council's response since March following the introduction of lockdown measures by the Welsh and UK Governments is contained in the report.

Throughout this period the Council's emergency response team (Covid Gold) has been overseeing the delivery of operational and strategic activities in response to community outbreaks and lockdown measures.

At this point in time, covid-19 remains prevalent across South East Wales and it is for this reason that the Council remains vigilant but also flexible to support any necessary measures and to also support the communities across the city.

The report highlighted the Council's response across its service areas including the collaborative work with the Council's partners in the Public Services Board, community groups and third sector partners.

Full details of the Council's activities are included in the report, some examples are:

- o Through collaboration between the Council's Digital Services and Shared Resource Service (SRS) the Council's staff were mobilised to work remotely from home using Microsoft Teams, laptops and other services.
- o Significant pressures were encountered by the Council's Adult & Community Services to ensure all staff had access to the necessary personal protective equipment and ensure service users continued to receive care. Throughout, the Council's Adult teams have supported adults in residential homes, occupational therapy and domiciliary care settings.

- o The Council's Children's Services utilised social media and technology to maintain contact with families and children, with necessary support provided to foster carers, respite and care settings.

- o With the closure of schools, pupils had to be educated at home using technology such as Google Classroom and video conferencing. With the hard work of the Council's schools, Education services and SRS support was provided to children identified as digitally excluded and the Council provide the equipment and access they needed.

- o Whilst the schools were closed for educational purposes, many schools and the Council's Neighbourhood Hubs provided childcare support for children of key workers and 60 vulnerable learners.

- o The Council's City Services and Wastesavers continued to collect waste from households and businesses.

- o Many public areas (parks, cemeteries, attractions) and leisure services had to close to ensure social distancing measures were in place, but as restrictions have eased these areas have been re-opened to the public.

- o The Council's Finance services supported local businesses by administering over 2,100 grant claims totalling £27m as well as over £19m business rates relief for nearly 1,000 businesses. This work has really helped to keep Newport's businesses afloat.

- o The city's economy has been impacted by the lockdown measures and as restrictions have eased, the Council's Regulatory services, Regeneration team and City Services have been supporting businesses to ensure safe environments are in place for customers and staff.

- o Involvement with community leaders across the City's BAME and marginalised communities ensuring they have access to the necessary services, sharing advice and guidance and raising incidents of hate related crime.

- With the easing of restrictions, the Council has been working towards restoring and delivering services in Newport. The Leader wanted to be absolutely clear that we are at a point where increased restrictions may be introduced with the situation of the virus at the moment. The situation remains fluid and ever-changing. There is a potential that we may have to move back to operating on an emergency footing should the situation change.

- The report presented to Cabinet provided an overview of the current ongoing work being undertaken and planned across services:

- o Welcome the return of schools and the effort that they have undertaken to ensure establishments are safe environments for pupils and staff. This has been a very difficult time for pupils and schools and education staff will remain vigilant throughout this period to support both mainstream and vulnerable pupils.

- o Recommencing Adult Learning and supporting adults to access training and new skills.

- o Neighbourhood Hubs offering online and 'phone support to people looking for work and supporting the Cardiff Capital Region in the promotion of a virtual jobs fair across South East Wales.

- o The commitment to encourage and open up opportunities for young BAME people to access apprenticeship schemes in the Council and across the city.
 - o Regeneration work has recommenced on key projects such as Market Arcade, the IAC building.
 - o Purchasing new electric refuse vehicles as part of the Council's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint.
 - o Supporting residential and domiciliary settings/providers across Newport with their recovery planning and long term financial stability.
 - o Received additional funding from Welsh Government to deliver active travel projects including Monkey Island and City Centre schemes.
 - o Reopening of cultural sites such as the Transporter Bridge and Fourteen Locks.
 - o Supporting the establishment of a Test, Trace and Protect service across the Gwent authorities and ABUHB.
 - o Supporting Council staff to work more flexibly from home and across Council sites and opening up new ways for communities to engage with the Council.
 - o The Council has secured funding of over £4.8m to build over 200 new affordable homes.
 - o Supporting homeless and rough sleepers (alongside our partners) to secure permanent accommodation and support.
 - o The Council is undertaking a Community Impact Assessment to understand, learn and support communities that have been impacted by Covid 19.
 - o Reopening of Neighbourhood Hubs (on an appointment basis) to provide childcare and support for the communities.
- The Leader invited her Cabinet colleagues to comment:

Cllr Rahman thanked the Leader for her unfailing support and leadership throughout this pandemic. The Leader thanked Cllr Rahman for his kind comments.

Cllr Truman gave a massive thanks to staff who have stepped up and who are doing other work over and above their day jobs to ensure services are maintained during this pandemic.

Cllr Giles wanted to give a message to stop the misinformation about council staff not working – teaching staff and staff across the authority have worked tirelessly throughout this time. She commended the Health and Safety Team for the advice and support provided to schools. She made a plea to parents to ensure they comply with social distancing when dropping off and collecting children from school.

Cllr Jeavons thanked City Services' Refuse Collectors and Wastesavers who have all continued doing their day jobs throughout this pandemic, even during lockdown; he also thanked staff throughout the authority who have all stepped up to the plate.

Cllr Harvey reiterated her colleagues' comments and stated that no other council has better or more dedicated staff than Newport – all of whom have been phenomenal.

Cllr Cockeram applauded Social Workers who face some harrowing situations and acknowledged the working from home is very hard for these people not being able to offload on their emotions to colleagues which is very challenging so we need to be mindful of everyone's mental health and wellbeing.

The Leader invited the Chief Executive to speak who confirmed the purpose of the report is to keep this issue in people's minds and to reflect on the actions being taken by officers on a daily basis as this is a moving feast. Newport is seeing an increase in cases and the only way to address the issue we are now facing is for everyone to take personal responsibility for their actions.

In concluding the Leader thanked all staff, partners and councillors for supporting communities and services and confirmed that further updates on the Council's progress will be provided at the Cabinet meeting in October.

In summary Cabinet was asked to consider the contents of the report and note the progress being made to date, and the risks that are still being faced by the Council.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report

11 Cabinet Work Programme

The Leader presented the Cabinet Work Programme.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the updated programme.

12 PSB Summary Document (for information/awareness

This document was for information only but the Leader encouraged everyone to view the website to see the work that's being undertaken.

To conclude the meeting Leader thanked officers for their continued hard work, confirmed we are all one-Newport and encouraged everyone to continue working together and supporting each other.

The meeting concluded at 1759 hours.

13 Live Event

The meeting terminated at 5.59 pm