

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 19 August 2020

Time: 3.00 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: Mrs B Owen (Chief Executive), Mr G Price (Head of Law and Regulation), and Mr M Rushworth (Head of Finance)

1 Apologies for Absence

No apologies received.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Congratulations and Welcome

The Leader welcomed Beverly Owen to the meeting in her capacity as the newly appointed Chief Executive of the Council and congratulated Mrs Owen on her appointment.

4 Draft Minutes from July Cabinet

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2020 were confirmed as a true record.

5 Business case for the Test, Trace Protect Service

The Leader presented the report, which provided an update on the Gwent Contact Tracing Service and sought Cabinet approval on the operational delivery structure, governance and finance arrangements for the service.

The Leader confirmed that in June, Cabinet received an interim report on the work that had been undertaken to establish a Local Contact Tracing Team in Newport and Cabinet endorsed the urgent action and approach taken by officers to develop and implement that temporary service.

The report endorsed by Cabinet in June recognised that the actions were just interim arrangements for the first few months, to get the service operational in an extremely short timescale. It was recognised that a future strategy would need to be agreed in conjunction with other partners, to develop a delivery model and governance structure for the longer-term. Welsh Government funding for the service was critical, as this could not be delivered within existing resources.

The Leader confirmed the report before Cabinet today provided an update on developments with the Gwent Contact Tracing Service and sought Cabinet approval of the proposed operational delivery structure, governance and finance arrangements for the Service.

The Leader also confirmed the Welsh Government's Test, Trace, Protect Strategy forms a central part of their Covid-19 recovery plan. Community contact tracing is a key element of the Strategy and Welsh Government have asked Local Authorities and Health Boards jointly to put in place contact tracing services based on health board footprints.

The Leader explained that contact tracing is carried out on receipt of a confirmed Covid-19 diagnosis, i.e., a positive test result. The purpose is to contact someone who has tested positive to confirm that they must isolate for seven days and that their household also needs to isolate for 14 days; the contact tracer will also ask the case to share information about their recent contacts. These contacts are traced and informed that they must isolate for 14 days; during this time daily contact will be established to monitor if they develop any symptoms. If they do they are asked to get tested and enter the system as a new case if positive, and so on.

The report confirmed that contact tracing has been undertaken in Gwent since the beginning of June by redeployed staff within the five Local Authorities and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB). All five local authorities have set up contact tracing services, which are operating in a coordinated way to ensure coverage across the region.

The service operates seven days a week and the Council's contact tracing team is supported by local authority Environmental Health Officers across the region and by Clinical Leads, Consultants in Health Protection, and Consultants in Communicable Disease from ABUHB and Public Health Wales.

The Leader was pleased to report that Welsh Government have now confirmed funding arrangements for contact tracing. The Cabinet Report sets out proposals for the next phase for the Gwent Contact Tracing Service moving from a redeployed workforce to a fully employed model to ensure that there is capacity for successful delivery. Total grant funding of up to £9.6 million has been allocated for the costs of the service up to 31st March 2021 and an additional £200k has been allocated for the capital costs of IT equipment.

A costed workforce model has been developed for Newport, submitted and agreed by the Welsh Government and should numbers of employees be recruited as set out in the model (circa 90 full time equivalents), the cost to Newport covered by the funding would be circa £1.7m by the end of March 2021. The available grant allocation also includes funding for an additional Environmental Health Officer, to bolster the Environmental Health resources to respond to Covid-19 incidents, clusters and outbreaks in accordance with existing statutory duties regarding contagious and infectious diseases.

The report proposes a partnership model to deliver the Gwent Contact Tracing Service. Each organisation will have clear roles and responsibilities as outlined in the Business Case, which forms the Appendix to the Cabinet Report, and will be formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding. The Business Case contains the Terms of Reference of the various tiers of the Service. The Strategic Board will be the G10 partners.

It is proposed that Torfaen County Borough Council become the host and lead organisation for the Programme Management Office (PMO) which will support and ensure the effective delivery of the Service across the organisations involved in the partnership. The role of the PMO is set out in full in the Cabinet Report. ABUHB will act as the financial lead and will discharge the "banker" role as the recipients of the grant money, and they will distribute the funding to each local authority to reimburse them for the costs of the local teams, similar to the current ICF arrangements.

The Leader confirmed that a great deal has been achieved to establish the Gwent Contact Tracing Service in a short period of time. The Cabinet Report sets out proposals for the next phase of the service and demonstrates the central role local authorities have in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. As we move out of lockdown, contact tracing is integral to managing and providing intelligence and data on cases and outbreaks within our communities.

It is essential that Newport City Council plays its part in delivering the Gwent Service, as that will assist Newport, the Gwent region and Wales to stay out of 'lockdown' and in time recover from the impact of the pandemic. The G10 agreed to the proposals at their meeting on 29 June 2020 and those Gwent local authorities that have decided that a formal decision is required have now given their approval; Newport City Council's Cabinet is now asked to formally agree the proposals.

The Leader strongly emphasised the importance of having this system in place going forward which will help protect all residents, not only in Newport but across the Gwent-wide area. If Cabinet are minded to agree to the principles set out in the draft Business Case, then the report recommends that the final sign-off of the MoU should be delegated to officers, together with any minor changes to the final Business Case, provided that this is in accordance with the terms approved today by Cabinet.

The Leader invited the Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation to comment:

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the interim Contact Tracing Service had been agreed by Cabinet in June following which staff were redeployed and together with volunteers ensured the system was operational very quickly. He gave thanks to all staff involved in the project with special thanks in particular to Trading Standards' and Environmental Health Officers who have gone above and beyond their normal day jobs to ensure the system was successful and fully operational at an early stage. He confirmed that local authorities now need to scale up to employ and train new staff to take forward the next phase for the Gwent Contact Tracing Service, moving from a redeployed workforce to a fully employed model to ensure there is capacity for its successful delivery. Good communications are vital for the continuing success of this system and a protocol has been developed in liaison with networks in the community which utilises local knowledge, for example, in providing translation services for those residents whose first language is not English. The Cabinet Member commended the report.

The Leader fully supported the Cabinet Member in his comments and thanked him for his diligence and leadership on this issue.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure reiterated the comments made and thanked all staff for a job well done; she also confirmed that it is essential for this service to continue and go forward as a fully employed model.

The Cabinet Member for Assets gave his thanks to the Cabinet Member and Leader for their leadership on this project and for supporting not only Newport and its residents but all Welsh citizens; he confirmed that in Wales 90% of COVID contacts have been reached.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills commended the Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation and officers for the sterling work done in getting this service up and running so quickly and efficiently which has been a very intense time and is ongoing. She stressed the importance of test, trace and contact in identifying and controlling early outbreaks is vital and agreed that good communication is key for early identification of local COVID-19 related issues particularly as it can be asymptomatic as well as symptomatic.

The Cabinet Member for Community and Resources echoed the comments from his Cabinet Member colleagues and also confirmed the work being undertaken in respect of geo-mapping and data sharing.

The Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member for City Services commended the Leader, Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation and staff for their hard work in ensuring the initial phase of this service worked well from the beginning and reiterated the importance of the council maintaining control over communications going forward which will assist in avoiding as much as possible any future local lockdowns. He asked who would be responsible for the training of the new workforce; Mr Price, Head of Law and Regulation, confirmed that each local authority will be responsible for its own training which will be consistent across all Gwent local authorities and the Health Board (with a joint working arrangement in place to support this). Mr Price confirmed that over 300 applications had been received for the new posts advertised and the Council is also liaising with partners in order to utilise any staff that may still be furloughed.

The Leader thanked everyone for their comments and asked Cabinet to vote on the report.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed unanimously to endorse the report.

6 Cabinet Work Programme

The Leader presented the Cabinet Work Programme.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the updated programme.

7 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 16 September 2020 at 4pm.

The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified