

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 16 June 2021

Time: 4.00 pm

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

Apologies: Councillor D Davies

1 Apologies for Absence

None received.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Rahman in relation to Item 7.

3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting dated 5 May were accepted as a true and accurate record.

4 School Reorganisation Proposal to Expand Bassaleg School

The Leader introduced the Chief Education Officer who presented the report.

The Chief Education Officer informed Cabinet that Bassaleg School was the most subscribed secondary school across Newport and served a large catchment area that continued to grow through new housing developments, regeneration and investment in the local area.

The proposal was undertaken in accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code. As a result of this, a six week period of formal consultation was undertaken between October and November 2020. As expected, there was a large volume of correspondence, all of which was referenced in a Consultation Report, published on the Council website and shared with stakeholders in January of this year.

Following consideration of the Consultation Report, the Cabinet Member was of the view that the proposal should progress and thus a statutory notice was published in March of this year for the required period of 28 days. This statutory notice period was the point at which stakeholders were able to lodge legal objections to the proposal. Where no objections were lodged, the legislation enabled the Cabinet Member to take the final decision on the proposal. However where objections were received, the legislation required a Local Determination Panel to consider all available evidence in taking the final decision. In this case, two formal objections and two further concerns were lodged and thus Cabinet, acting as the Local Determination Panel, was required to consider the final decision.

The various reasons for objection were summarised in the report but also referred to in detail in the accompanying Objection Report. I have noted that the majority of reasons for objection were also raised during the formal consultation period, and were referenced and appropriately responded to within the Consultation Report.

The planned investment at Bassaleg School was possible through Band B of the Council's 21st Century Schools Programme and was therefore jointly funded by the Council and Welsh Government. At present, an amount of £28m was allocated to this project, although it was noted that whilst the tender process was not complete, the latest cost plan suggested that investment of approximately £31m would be required in total. It was entirely possible therefore that the overall Band B programme might need to be reviewed in the coming months when there was more certainty on costs in relation to specific projects.

The proposal and the investment would jointly provide a wonderful opportunity to increase and improve facilities for learners in one of our most successful secondary schools, and make this a truly 21st Century learning environment.

Decision:

Cabinet approved the school reorganisation proposal "to increase the overall capacity of Bassaleg School from 1747 to 2050 with effect from September 2023".

5 **Corporate Risk Register Update (Q4)**

The Leader presented the report, which was an update of the Council's Corporate Risk Register for the end of Quarter Four (31 March 2021).

Members were asked to consider the contents of the report and note the changes to the Council's Corporate Risks.

The Council's Risk Management Policy and Corporate Risk Register enabled this administration and officers to effectively identify, manage and monitor those risks, which could prevent the Council from achieving its objectives in the Corporate Plan (2017-22) and undertake its statutory duties as a local authority.

The Quarter four risk report was also presented to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee on 27 May to review the Council's risk management process and governance arrangements.

At the end of quarter four, the Council had 46 risks recorded across the Council's eight service areas.

Those risks that were deemed to pose the most significant risk in the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and services were escalated to the Council's Corporate Risk Register for monitoring.

At the end of quarter four, 18 risks were recorded in the Corporate Risk Register.

- Eleven Severe Risks (15 to 25);
- Four Major Risks (7 to 14);
- Two Moderate Risks (4 to 6); and
- One Low Risk (1 to 3).

In quarter four, the Corporate Risk Register had also seen two risk scores increase, three decrease and 13 risks remain at the same score in quarter three.

Brexit related issues and mitigating actions were reported monthly to Cabinet currently.

The risk score reduced from 12 to 18, as the Council's services had not identified direct impacts since the trade agreement was in place on its suppliers and finances.

However, as is reported also in the Brexit report, EU Settled Status remained an area of concern for the City's communities due to the 30 June deadline.

There was uncertainty over the numbers of EU nationals that might have missed the deadline to apply to the scheme and/or unsuccessful in their application.

This could have an impact on Council as residents may not be able to access public services and additional support may be required.

In Year Financial Management decreased from six to three, due to the Council's anticipated outturn for the last financial year, which indicated a significant surplus position.

This risk would be monitored closely in quarters one and two to see if there were any emerging areas of concern / pressures as the city eases out of the restrictions.

The risk score for the Covid-19 Pandemic Outbreak decreased from 25 to 20 due to the successful roll out of the vaccination programme and easing of lock down restrictions which made it possible to reopen services such as face to face contact.

Front line Council services continued to operate normally. However, there remained small clusters across the community, which were being managed through the Test Trace and Protect teams.

The Council's Covid Recovery Group (Gold) continued to regularly meet and monitor the situation. Monthly Cabinet reports continued to be presented, providing an overview of the Council's Covid response.

Newport Council's Property Estate risk score increased from 12 to 16 to reflect the recent issues identified with St Andrew's Junior School in Q4 of 2020/21.

However, the risk was currently being mitigated and managed utilising the Capital Maintenance Programme as well as regular monitoring.

The Council alongside Newport Norse (continued to undertake condition surveys across the remainder of the estate and these surveys were used to inform the allocation and priority of capital spend.

The Council continued to work closely with other service areas, including Education to identify and secure all available sources of funding, including Welsh Government funding, for ongoing maintenance and improvements especially identifying ways of making our operational estates more energy efficient to help reach the authority's priority to be Carbon Neutral by 2030.

The risk score for Education out of area placements has increased from nine to 12 due to the increase in the number of children and young people with complex needs that required additional support.

The Council's special schools (Maes Ebbw and Ysgol Bryn Derw) were full, which increased the risk of Out of County placements being required.

Through the commissioning of local providers such as Newport Live, Catch 22 and Sporting Chance, the Council was able to access local specialist provisions, which reduced the need for specialist out of County provisions.

Extension options were also being considered to ensure there were more spaces available for pupils with complex needs. Mastodon C had also been commissioned to create data projections for future specialist provision needs.

The Leader thanked the Chief Education Officer for her presentation and invited questions from Cabinet.

Cabinet Member Comments:

Councillor Cockeram raised the issue of concern relating to raising of funding due to the impact of Covid. Secondly, with regard to education, the behaviour of children returning to school was recently debated at the Regional Partnership Board. A bid would be submitted to Welsh Government for funding to provide counselling and understanding the effects and that the impact of the pandemic had on children.

Councillor Mayer made reference to the recent Prime Minister's announcement regarding the Australian deal to import food and encouraged Newport residents to buy locally.

Councillor Rahman referred to the Council's property, echoing the Leader's comments in relation to St Andrew's Junior School and advised Cabinet that the risk was being mitigated with regular monitoring of estates within Newport, considered a priority for capital spend. In addition, these estates would be made more energy efficient for residents, this would include the proposed new leisure centre.

Councillor Jeavons mentioned that the felling of trees due to Ash die back disease was being carried out purely under safety guidance to protect residents and that Newport City Council were re-planting two trees for every one felled and reiterated that the worked carried out was to stop the airborne disease in its tracks.

Decision:

Cabinet noted the contents of the quarter three update of the Corporate Risk Register.

6 Welsh Language Annual Report

The Leader to present the report, informing Cabinet that the council was required to report annually on its progress in complying with the Welsh Language Standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The report covered the fifth year of implementation, following the imposition of the majority of the council's Welsh language standards in March 2016.

The report provided an overview of the Council's progress in meeting the Welsh Language Standards, this included information required by law to be published on an annual basis, a summary of key achievements during the year and priority areas for future work

The Leader went through the highlights of the year, which included:

- Positive work undertaken by the council's Welsh Language Promotion Officer, focussed on engagement with key community stakeholders and the provision of support to schools and partners during the pandemic.
- Promotion of key dates throughout the year, both internally and across communities, and sponsorship of the virtual Gŵyl Newydd Festival.
- Establishment of a Representative Workforce group and action plan which included a focus on increasing the number of Welsh speakers across the organisation.
- Establishment of a Welsh Language sub-group of the Right Skills Board, focussed on promoting a consistent approach to Welsh language skills development across the city and with key PSB partners.

- Review of the council's Welsh language performance management framework, to enable more effective monitoring of Welsh language compliance at service area and organisational level.
- Commissioning a number of animated Welsh language training videos to be mandated for all staff which would be ready this summer.

The report also identified priorities for the next reporting period, this included:

- Working with our refugee, migrant and minority ethnic communities to better embed Welsh language as part of a shared sense of identity across the city, particularly in the context of the development of our fourth Welsh medium school.
- Improving and developing our Welsh Language Skills Policy, inclusive of our recording and monitoring of Welsh language skills in the workplace, and better using this data to inform strategic planning.
- Undertaking engagement and consultation with key stakeholders and communities to inform the development of our new 5 year Welsh Language Strategy.
- Adopting a number of Clear Cymraeg principles to better encourage staff to use Welsh in the workplace

The Leader invited the Cabinet Member for Communities and Resources and lead for Equalities and Welsh Language say a few words.

The Cabinet Member was pleased to see that the council still managed to make positive progress against our Welsh language commitments, despite a challenging year. Looking forward to this year, the Cabinet Member was confident that the development of our fourth Welsh language medium primary school would continue to strengthen work in this area and bring new opportunities to the city to embrace the Welsh language across all of our communities.

The Leader invited Councillor Hughes, the Welsh Language Champion also expressed his thanks in Welsh and English:

Hoffwn ddechrau trwy gydnabod yn heriau unhogoel a wynebodd ein staff yn ddiwddar.

Rwyf am ddiolch i'r aelodau mewn timau Heather Powell, Rhys Cornwall ac hefyd Deborah Weston ac hefyd am yr arweiniaeth y maen nhw wedi dangos.

Hefyd hoffwn cammol a diolch i'n holl staff sydd wedi ymuno a chysiau amrywiol I ddysgu neu wella eu sgiliau cymraeg-yn aml o'r dechrau.

Tra bod llawer o'n gwaith yn y cymuned wedi cael ei ddal yn ol, rwy'n filch o hysbysur arweinydd ein bod wedi cael cyfaffod cadernhaol iawn ddoe a gynhawlyd gan Dafydd Henry o Menter Iaith Casnewydd gyda tim dwyieithog Dinas Caerdydd.

Rhai o bethau sydd yn egluro a ddangos y cynnydd sy'n cael ei wneud yng ngasnewydd yw'r faith bod yr ddinas yn agor i pedweryd ysgol cyfrwng cymraeg ac cylch meithryn yng nagaerleon ac gefyd bod Casnewydd yn dathlu gwyl Cymraeg-ac heddiw mae aelod y cabinet ac pencampwr y cymraeg y ddinasyn cyflwyno i'r cabinet yn yr iaith Cymraeg.

Rwyn ddiolchgar i'r arweinydd am y cyfle ac ei hymdrechion ei hun I hyrwyddo'r iaith yng Nhasnewydd.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the unprecedented challenges our staff have faced of late.

I would like to thank especially Heather Powell, Rhys Cornwall and Deborah Weston for their personal efforts and that of their team members who have supported myself and this

administration in furthering and promoting the welsh language within our Council and throughout the city.

I would also like to thank all of our staff who have signed up for welsh language courses this year.

While much of our work has been held back this year because of covid restrictions within our communities there has been progress for sure.

I am happy to report to the cabinet and the leader that we had an immensely positive meeting yesterday hosted by Dafydd Henry at Menter Iaith Casnewydd with the Cardiff City Local Authority Bilingual Team.

Few things have however shown the progress more within our city than the opening of our fourth welsh language medium school in September in Caerleon and the opening of a Cylch Meithrin in the same ward-something I could never have imagined when I moved here 27 years ago. The fact that the city has a welsh champion who is presenting his report in Welsh to cabinet is clear evidence of the progress being made under this administration-some would even say historic.

I am thankful to the leader for the opportunity and also for her own efforts and that of this administration in promoting the welsh language, culture and heritage and this is evident throughout this report.

Decision:

Cabinet approved the final monitoring report to be published on the Council's website, in accordance with statutory deadlines.

7 Community Renewals Fund

The Leader to presented the report to Cabinet colleagues, highlighting the Council's progress on shortlisting of projects for the UK Community Renewal Fund that would be submitted to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government by 18 June.

In March, the Conservative government announced in their budget they would be launching the UK Community Renewal Fund, which was the precursor to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2022 and would replace the EU Structural Funding, which Newport and South East Wales benefited from in the past.

This was all part of the UK Government's 'Levelling Up' agenda which included the Levelling Up Fund that was also presented at Cabinet.

The purpose of the Renewal Fund was to support local communities and the economy focusing on four themes:

1. Investment in Skills;
2. Investment for local business
3. Investment in communities and place
4. Supporting people into employment

Additionally there was also emphasis for applicants to demonstrate how their projects would support decarbonisation and climate change agendas.

The UK Government announced that 100 places (local authorities) across the UK would have priority in accessing the Fund based upon their index of economic resilience.

Unfortunately, Newport had not been identified as a priority area but was still able to submit a shortlist applications to the Fund.

Each local authority could submit any number of applications up to the combined value of £3 million.

Organisations from the private, public including local authorities, charities, not for profit and education establishments were able to apply for the funding through an open invitation.

In April, Newport Council launched its invitation to organisations to submit their application by the 21 May through its website.

Applicants were asked not only to demonstrate how they would support the four themes identified in the UK Government prospectus but how they would also support Newport's priorities which were included in its Public Services Board (One Newport) Wellbeing Plan, the Council's Corporate Plan, the Council's Covid Recovery Aims and other key strategic priorities such as climate change.

Despite the short timescales imposed by the UK Government for local authorities to set up and invite organisations to apply, and organisations to submit their applications, we received 11 applications totalling £3.4million.

The range of applications received from organisations were of high quality and all could have easily supported the strategic priorities for the City of Newport.

Myself as Chair of the Public Service Board, alongside Councillor Hughes (Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development), Beverly Owen (Chief Executive) and partner representatives from the Public Services Board have assessed the applications. The scores for shortlisting were based upon their criteria of meeting national and local strategic priorities, the social value and outcomes that would benefit Newport's communities and economy, and ensuring the projects were inclusive of the communities and groups across Newport.

The Leader was pleased to confirm that that Assessment Panel have determined that the following shortlisted applications were successful and should be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government:

- Business in Focus
- Ffilm Wales Cymru
- Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP)
- Pobl
- Maindee Unlimited
- Newport Now
- University of South Wales (USW)
- Volunteering Matters

Councillor Rahman declared an interest as a Trustee of Maindee Unlimited at this juncture and therefore took not part in the decision.

On behalf of the Panel, all of the organisations had provided applications that could have been submitted to the UK Government and it was a very challenging and thorough examination to shortlist the applications that would be submitted.

Unfortunately, this would not guarantee that the applications submitted by the Council would be successful in obtaining the funding from the UK Government and we would all have to wait until July to find out the outcomes of the evaluation process.

Whether the organisations were successful or not and also for those organisations that were not shortlisted, the Leader took the opportunity to thank everyone for taking out their time to submit their applications. The Leader also wanted to encourage all the organisations to

consider continuing to deliver their proposals for Newport as they would all have an impact on improving people's lives.

The Leader also encouraged them to seek other opportunities to access grant funding that was offered by the Welsh Government and other Welsh bodies, which could help them achieve their goals.

In conclusion, a further update would be provided to Cabinet and the Public Service Board on the outcome of the evaluation process by UK Government and when the Shared Prosperity Fund was launched next year, Newport would once again look to support organisations to access the funding.

Cabinet Member Comments:

With reference to Volunteering Matters, Councillor Mayer stressed the importance of helping the most vulnerable and referred to the shared community hub's advertisement asking for support as well as helping the most vulnerable in their search for jobs.

Councillor Hughes also mentioned the positive impact the funding would have on the city if the bidding submission was successful.

Councillor Harvey echoed Councillor Mayer's comments and wanted to assure residents that Newport City Council would be supporting the most vulnerable.

Councillor Cockeram also echoed the comments of his Cabinet Member colleagues.

Decision:

Cabinet endorsed the progress of work undertaken by Newport Council and recommended the shortlisted applications, which would be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

8 Levelling Up Fund

The Leader presented the report, advising that Cabinet colleagues would be aware that the UK Government launched a £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund which was aimed at levelling up communities across the UK. This was a competitive bidding process and up to £20m of capital funding was available for regeneration and cultural projects. Higher funding limits could apply to transport schemes but during the current bidding round we were focussing on a regeneration scheme.

Newport was identified as a Priority 1 area and whilst this provided an advantage in terms of hierarchy of need, this was a competitive process and funding would be awarded on the basis of the quality of the bid and not priority status.

Bids must have the support of the constituent MP and all funding must be spent by 2025. There would be a number of bidding rounds but the deadline for the submission of bids in the first round was 18 June. Cabinet were therefore being asked to support the submission of a bid for funding for an area identified as the Northern Gateway in the City Centre Master Plan.

The report contained an extract plan from the adopted Master Plan and the Northern Gateway encompassed the area around the Newport Central train station and extends to High Street, Bridge Street, parts of Upper Dock Street and the former Sainsbury's site.

There were a number of significant regeneration projects underway or planned in the Northern Gateway area. This included the refurbishment of the Indoor Market and Market Arcade, the exciting plans for the incubation hub at the Information Station, the brand new

office accommodation at the former IAC site on Mill Street and the new active travel footbridge which will connect Devon Place and Queensway.

As a mainline station providing direct access to Cardiff, Bristol, London and beyond, Newport Central station is a key gateway into our City Centre.

However investment opportunities and the public realm in this area were not reflective of what you would expect to see when you arrive in the City. It did not give residents and visitors a sense of arrival and does not clearly direct people into the core of the City Centre where they could access our businesses, leisure and hospitality facilities. We wanted people to feel positive and energised by the local environment in this area and we wanted investors to see the opportunities that Newport had to offer.

The Artist's impressions within the report indicated what is possible, introducing some much needed green infrastructure into the area which was currently dominated by hard surfacing. This was also an opportunity to complement active travel initiatives and deliver upon our commitment to the vision set out in the Newport Offer, which formed part of the Well-being Plan and also the Placemaking Wales Charter.

The Leader concluded, as already mentioned, this was a competitive process and there was no guarantee of success. We were able to submit further bids in other rounds. The Leader was sure that Cabinet would agree that there was a need to pursue all grant funding opportunities in the quest to continue with our ambitious regeneration plans for the City Centre. The gateway into the City Centre from the train station should be fit for purpose and reflective of the quality of place we were trying to achieve for all of our visitors and residents. The Leader therefore asked Cabinet colleagues to support the submission of this first round bid.

Cabinet Member comments:

Councillor Jeavons mentioned that over 20km of active travel routes had been improved over the city, such as Devon Place and stretches of the canal. This was a fantastic opportunity for the council, which was fully supported by the Deputy Leader.

Councillor Harvey, also echoed the comments of Councillor Jeavons.

Councillor Truman added this this would be a good opportunity for Newport and felt it was a big piece in the jigsaw to help improve the City.

Councillor Cockeram observed that Newport was the gateway to Wales and that this was a wonderful opportunity help promote the City.

Decision:

Cabinet approved the submission of a Levelling Up Funding bid for the Northern Gateway area of the City Centre.

9 **Covid-19 Recovery Update Report**

The Leader presented the report, giving an update on the Council's and its partner's response to the Covid-19 crisis supporting the City (Residents and Businesses) to comply with the current restrictions and progress in the Council's Strategic Recovery Aims and Corporate Plan.

Since this Cabinet last met in May, Wales continued to see further reductions in the Covid-19 case rate that has enabled further lockdown restrictions to be eased enabling Newport's hospitality and indoor venues to reopen.

The Welsh Government also started indoor and outdoor test events across Wales. In Newport, Newport County fans were able to watch their League two play-off fixture while the Celtic Manor Resort held an indoor business event for 100 invited attendees.

While this was welcomed, progress for society to return back to normal, there still remained the case for Newport's residents to remain vigilant and cautious.

In the last few weeks, cases of the Indian variant of Covid-19 increased across the UK and Newport had seen small clusters of cases emerge. While the case rate remained far lower than those earlier this year, we would all have to learn to live with this virus and that while restrictions remained in place we must ensure that we kept to the social distancing guidelines.

Newport's residents who thought that they may have Covid-19 symptoms to get tested and self-isolate in line with the Public Health Wales guidelines.

The vaccination programme in Newport and across Wales continued to be successful and over 2 million people had received their first vaccination with over 900,000 receiving their second dose.

The work of Aneurin Bevan Health Board, Newport Live, this Council and others had to be commended by this Cabinet for all of their hard work to protect us all across Newport and there was no doubt that this was having an impact on the spread of the virus.

The vaccination programme was now reaching the 18 to 30 year old population of Newport and it was just as important that this age group and our black and ethnic minority groups took up the vaccination.

If anyone had any doubts or concerns about the vaccination they should speak to their local GP or visit the Public Health Wales website where advice could be provided.

Last month Newport's Muslim community celebrated the end of Ramadan and celebrate Eid al-Fitr. It was pleasing to see the community safely celebrate Eid with their family and friends.

Council services and staff were continuing to deliver services to residents and businesses across Newport whether this was out on the front line in residential homes, visiting clients, collecting waste, teaching or working from home and in the office.

Council officers and strategic partners had been considering carefully how staff and services could safely return and operate in a more flexible way so that we could build upon the changes brought in during the crisis.

Next month this Cabinet would receive a report that would outline the Council's future approach and take the opportunities to continue to improve our services.

In the last month the following key areas were delivered by the Council:

- Continuing digital support and training being provided to children and adults that were impacted by the crisis.
- The Council has commenced development of a new Digital Strategy for Newport's communities and the Council
- Community Renewal Fund applications were being submitted to support new employment and training opportunities for communities.
- Grants totalling £1.64m assisted 820 businesses and self-employed people in Newport.
- Continuing work to develop a Local Area Energy Plan for Newport that would support the decarbonisation of Newport's power, heat and transport needs for the future.

- Adult services were looking at modifying service arrangements to resume day services.
- Newport Live recommenced Leisure Services and delivered outdoor physical activities.
- Newport Council would be undertaking further engagement work through the Citizens Panel and bus wifi.

That concluded the report, further updates on the Council's progress would be provided next month.

Cabinet Member Comments:

Councillor Cockeram advised that funding for Care Homes in the private sector could run out which was cause for concern. The Leader agreed that it was an important issue and also praised the Council's Social Services team who ensured that the elderly were not negatively impacted.

Councillor Truman reiterated the Leader's comments and paid tribute to the Welsh Government on its vaccine programme.

Councillor Harvey thanked all the staff for their hard work as well as the hard work of Newport Live staff.

Councillor Hughes also thanked staff and volunteers who were helping the vulnerable.

The Chief Executive thanked everyone within the council for their support, and gave a mention to Environmental Health and the Track and Trace team. The Chief Executive stressed that we were far from being out of woods, and urged residents to help manage and contain issues that the virus had continued to cause across the globe.

In addition to this, the Chief Executive mentioned that the Levelling Up report was a reflection on the effort of work from teams across the council.

Decision:

Cabinet considered the contents of the report and noted the progress being made to date and the risks that were still faced by the Council.

10 **Brexit Update Report**

The Leader presented the report, updating Cabinet colleagues on the progress in the post Brexit / trade arrangements since 31 December 2020.

Since the last report to this Cabinet in May Newport Council continued to provide support, advice and guidance to Newport's businesses and EU residents.

Newport Council and its partners were continuing to support residents living in Newport with the EU Settled Scheme before the 30 June deadline.

Newport Council launched a new campaign that was directed to our EU communities in the City signposting people to all of the necessary help and support provided by the Council and its partners.

Anyone who had not applied should do so and encourage their friends and family members to do so as well.

Advice and guidance was offered by the Council to those, which had concerns and/or require further assistance in applying.

Decision:

Cabinet considered the contents of the report and noted the Council's Brexit response.

11 **Work Programme**

The Leader highlighted the regular monthly report on the work programme and asked for Cabinet to move acceptance of the updated programme.