

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 24 June 2020

Time: 10.00 am (Due to technical issues, the meeting commenced at 10.30 am)

Present: Cllrs Jane Mudd (Chair); P Cockeram, D Davies, G Giles, D Harvey, R Jeavons; D Mayer, M Rahman, R Truman

In attendance: Mrs B Owen; Mr G Price; Mr M Rushworth; Mr R Cornwall, Mrs T Brooks.

Part 1

The Leader opened the meeting by confirming that at the last Cabinet meeting on the 18th March, the Council had moved to emergency powers. Today's Cabinet meeting is the first to be held since that time and is being held virtually. The Leader asked for everyone to take a moment of quiet reflection for those who have lost their lives and to give thought to those families who have lost loved ones to this virus.

1 Apologies for Absence

No apologies received

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 Newport City Council's Strategic Recovery Aims in response to the Covid-19 Health Emergency

The Leader presented the report that set out the strategic recovery aims that will enable the Council's services to recover and operate whilst continuing to support the Council's strategic aims set in the Corporate Plan 2017/22.

The report confirmed the Covid-19 health emergency has posed significant and unprecedented challenges to the way the Council delivers its services and the impact on the way of life.

The Leader confirmed that:

- The Council's focus has been to preserve life, minimise the spread of the virus and support its communities and the vulnerable that have been impacted by this disease.
- During this difficult time, the Council has ensured that frontline services continue to be delivered to communities across Newport. At the very outset Cabinet said it would focus on:
 - Continuation of waste collection from households;
 - Over 700 food parcels distributed from the Council's Neighbourhood Hubs;
 - Schools supporting children of key workers and vulnerable children.
 - 10 Flying Start settings looking after 94 children and supporting 81 key workers;
 - Continued care and support provided by the Council's Children and Adult Social Services and ensuring front line staff had access to PPE;
 - Administered £30 million of business grants to 2,250 eligible businesses within Newport;

- With our partners providing safe and secure accommodation for the homeless in Newport;
- Council staff working from home through the IT support provided by the Shared Resource Service.
- Operating virtual contact centre; answering over 31,000 calls and over 2,400 emails.

The Leader and Cabinet extended their thanks to all members of staff, volunteers, partners and communities that have continued to deliver services and support vulnerable people throughout this difficult and challenging time. Working from home with excellent IT support has been a success and a virtual contact centre was established which has worked extremely well. This has been an unprecedented period and the citizens of Newport have been outstanding. Heads of Service and the senior leadership team have provided exceptional performance and service which is very much welcomed and appreciated.

The Leader reported that over the last few weeks, statistics from Public Health Wales have shown encouraging signs of Covid-19 cases slowing but that future peaks could still occur, therefore the City has to remain vigilant and adhere to the guidance provided by the Welsh Government and Public Health Wales.

There has been some easing of restrictions and the re-establishment of the Council's services such as the Household Waste Recycling Facility, establishment of a Track and Trace Centre and preparation for the safe reopening of schools.

The Leader confirmed that further Council services are recovering into a 'new normal' way of working and there is a renewed focus to ensure that this good work is not undone; the Council is supporting Newport's economy to rebuild and focus on those communities that have been impacted the most by Covid-19. To support the Council to do this, four Strategic Recovery Aims have been proposed that will provide a focus for members, staff, partners, and communities to understand what the priorities are for this next year.

The Leader invited Cabinet colleagues to make comments/observations on the Council's response to the crisis:

Cabinet Members commended staff for the way in which they have stepped up to the challenges brought about by Covid-19, particularly frontline staff who have continued to provide services in the public realm.

Cabinet noted that the Council was technically advanced to be able to deal with the crisis in terms of video conferencing, enabling staff to work from home and the Council's Hubs have been pivotal in providing help and support to the most vulnerable communities of Newport.

Thanks were expressed to the Council's housing team who have worked relentlessly to ensure the homeless were taken care of. Also the finance team for the work done on providing grants and rates relief to businesses as well as council tax relief to residents.

Cabinet was pleased to confirm there had been no demarcation of jobs with staff helping out in different service areas – all of whom have stepped up to the plate to ensure delivery of services.

Thanks were expressed to all partners and charities across the city and also thanks to the residents who provided charitable actions/donations throughout.

Cabinet expressed thanks to the Leader of the Council for her guidance and leadership during this.

The Leader thanked all members of the Council across all political groups who have worked closely together to ensure there has been a one-Newport response; thanks also to the Council's partners on the one-Newport partnership board.

The Leader thanked the Acting Chief Executive for her efforts and applauded her strong leadership which has been at the forefront of the Council's response.

The Acting Chief Executive gave thanks to colleagues in the senior team for their hard work but also huge thanks to the wider staff team across all service areas. She also thanked the Leader, Cabinet and all elected members for their support over the past few months in being able to make some important decisions in tackling the impact of this crisis.

The Leader emphasised the good work done by everyone to keep Newport safe and thanked all residents of Newport for their efforts in following Welsh Government/Council guidelines.

The Leader reported that the Strategic Recovery Aims do not replace the Council's existing Corporate Plan (2017-22) and Well-Being Objectives, but are intended to support them, and when services and partners are ready, the Plan will continue to be delivered.

- The four Strategic Recovery Aims have been developed with the Council's Wellbeing Objectives (Corporate Plan 2017-22) at the core of structuring focus for this year:
 1. Understand and respond to the additional challenges that Covid-19 has presented, including loss of employment, impact on businesses and on the progress, achievement and wellbeing of both mainstream and vulnerable learners.
 2. Understand and respond to the impact of Covid-19 on the city's economic and environmental goals to enable Newport to thrive again.
 3. Promote and protect the health and wellbeing of our people, safeguarding our most vulnerable, and building strong, resilient communities. And,
 4. Provide people with the resources and support that they need to move out of the crisis, considering in particular the impact that Covid-19 has had on our minority and marginalised communities.

The Leader confirmed the four Strategic Aims will be focusing on building on the positive work that has been undertaken across the Council but also acknowledging the further work required by the Council and its partners to address the areas that have been impacted the most in this crisis.

For example, the long term sustainability of the social care sector, emerging unemployment, the inequality and poverty that Covid-19 has highlighted across our community and which has impacted the most on the (BAME) communities across Newport.

To get to the 'new normal' way of working the Council is looking at:

- Phased re-opening of the Council's libraries;
- Supporting future re-opening of cultural and leisure facilities in Newport;
- Safe return of businesses including retail and construction to boost the City's economy; the Leader was pleased to report she had visited Debenhams on the re-opening of their store in Friars Walk and had seen at first hand the work being undertaken to re-open the store, as well as other retail businesses in Newport;
- Supporting people including the young that have lost their jobs to retrain, enter further education and support back into work;
- Supporting schools on their phased return.

The Leader confirmed that in order to support the delivery of the Strategic Aims, the Council is undertaking a Community Impact Assessment that will assess and address the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis across Newport's communities and will help inform future direction of the Council's priorities and actions.

The Strategic Aims set out the broad principles for recovery and will be implemented at a number of operational levels by more detailed service delivery actions and measures. Service areas will review and

revise their service plans for 2020/21 to support the delivery of the Strategic Aims and will be monitored/reported throughout the year.

The following actions will be taken to ensure delivery of the Strategic Aims, Council Services and Governance (The Leader confirmed that an infographic has been made available to illustrate these actions):

- The Council's Communications' Team will be supporting the promotion of the Strategic Recovery Aims to all stakeholders and Communities in Newport.
- The need to safely restore Council services, whilst maintaining a safe working environment for staff, councillors and service users. A programme of work is underway to address this.
- Restoring the governance and democratic process to ensure that there is accountability and transparency in the decisions made.
- The revision of the Local Government Meetings Regulations will enable the Council to undertake Council meetings remotely and work is underway to look at ways of reintroducing other Council meetings for the future.

The Leader confirmed a report is being prepared for July Cabinet setting out how the Council can get back to full council meetings, etc. Training for all members will be arranged for them to participate fully in these meetings.

The Leader invited Cabinet Member comments on the Strategic Aims:

Councillor Giles confirmed the opening of schools is the next major stage for education services with work ongoing to prepare children for return to school in September. Wellbeing will remain a major priority for ensuring a safe return to schools for all. The Cabinet Member confirmed the Council had provided the highest number of support hubs in the region, and provided IT equipment for children to continue to be educated.

Councillor Davies confirmed that one of the benefits arising from the pandemic was the reduction in traffic which has led to an improvement in air quality. The Council continues to work towards being carbon neutral by 2030 and there is a need to ensure that we take advantage of the situation and build on these improvements. . Also the reduction in grass cutting has enabled the wildlife to flourish and as a bee friendly city this has been welcomed. However, there is also a need to understand the impact on those most vulnerable in our society and there is much work to be done to help and assist people going forward.

Councillor Harvey confirmed that the Council's parks are now open full time albeit with restriction on play equipment; looking at plans to reopen the central library, the mobile library has been working; plans are also being progressed to reopen the transporter bridge.

Councillor Jeavons confirmed that in respect of air quality and active travel, the Council has been successful in its bids to Welsh Government. Waste and recycling services service continued throughout with the council working in partnership with Newport Wastesavers on recycling. The booking system for visitors to the HWRC is working extremely well and staff are keen for the system to continue. Staff were retrained in order to redeploy people to cemeteries to cope with excess death funerals. Councillor Jeavons

concluded by commending all staff who had assisted Debenhams with their request for rate relief which has resulted in the store reopening.

Councillor Cockeram confirmed that there had been 600K childcare sessions with food parcels, enormous pressure on children's services, and safeguarding and mental health issues have risen by a third. The crisis has made the service look at different ways of working with some staff going out to homes with PPE and doing respite in the children's own homes; the Council is now doing its own domiciliary care with disabled and vulnerable children. With regard to PPE, the Council's own care homes had stock of this equipment and the Council was also able to supply PPE to independent care homes. There have been no Covid-19 deaths recorded in the Council's care homes. Going forward there will be significant pressure in relation to safeguarding. The Cabinet Member thanked all social services staff for their tremendous hard work. Councillor Cockeram also paid tribute to the community connectors who have been supporting carers during this time.

Councillor Rahman commended the Council for the work done in partnership with the Salvation Army, the Wallich, Pobl, and other organisations to provide accommodation, meals and health checks to the homeless within the city, these people being amongst the most vulnerable. He also gave thanks to everyone for the help given to the BAME community who have been badly affected by this virus and also gave thanks to staff for the support with the BLM campaign and community cohesion issues.

The Leader shared with colleagues that she is due to have a roundtable discussion with the organiser of the BLM march in Newport in order to continue this dialogue and to keep any actions at the forefront of the agenda.

Councillor Giles reported that in line with Councillor Cockeram's comments regarding supporting vulnerable children, a system is in place with Gwent Police who work very closely with schools in regard to vulnerable children who may be at risk. Newly reported vulnerable children have been identified by education to social services. Councillor Giles also confirmed the free school meal voucher scheme has been very successful and provision will continue throughout August.

Councillor Harvey applauded the work done to get food parcels out to those that required them, all Newport's Flying Start facilities remained open. She gave special thanks to the Headteacher of Llanwern High who had delivered papers to children at home who didn't have IT access to enable them to continue with their education.

Councillor Davies confirmed that through the community hubs over 600 food parcels had been delivered to support those most vulnerable in the community, and an extra £30K funding has been given to the hubs to ensure food parcels can continue to be delivered. She thanked Newport City Homes for providing logistical support to make this happen.

Councillor Jeavons confirmed that parks, cemeteries, the HWRC have been able to reopen following thorough rigorous risk assessments, these assessments have contributed to the success within the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board area as it was the worst affected area at the outset of the pandemic.

Councillor Truman praised the Council's staff for stepping up to the plate, to some degree at their own personal risk, to ensure services were maintained.

The Leader thanked her cabinet colleagues for their comments and proposed that Cabinet endorse the Strategic Recovery Aims that will enable the Council's services to recover and operate whilst continuing to support the Council's Strategic Aims set out in the Corporate Plan 2017/22.

Decision:

Cabinet voted unanimously to endorse the report and the Strategic Recovery Aims, which will enable the Council to provide a strategic way forward for its Members, staff, service users and partners as the Council responds to the Covid-19 health emergency.

4 Covid-19: Economic Impact and Recovery

The Leader presented the report that set out the Economic Impact and Recovery Strategy to support and facilitate Newport's businesses to recover and to continue operating.

The Leader confirmed:

- The Newport Economic Growth Strategy was adopted in 2015; and updated and approved by Cabinet in February 2020. At that time it was recognised that Newport had become a more competitive city with a growing influence in high value sectors and a rapidly expanding tourism sector.
- Following the announcement of lockdown on 23rd March 2020, the UK and Welsh Governments announced unprecedented intervention packages to help mitigate the worst of the economic damage a prolonged lockdown would bring. Over 2000 Newport businesses have received more than £26m in grant support. There has been a huge effort by the finance team to support businesses at this time and a number of very positive letters and feedback have been received from the business community in Newport.
- Economically, Newport is now in a different place. Unemployment in Wales is expected to rise from 3.2% to over 7.3% and it has been confirmed the UK economy shrank by 20.4% in April. Further reports predict the UK to be on the brink of the worst recession for three centuries.
- In order to recover and reposition itself, Newport needs to identify what areas of its economy will require support, where there are new opportunities and how the Council can shape the 'new normal' with businesses and investors; and to work collaboratively towards Newport's recovery.
- The strategy contained in the report will form an addendum to the adopted Economic Growth Strategy; the strategy proposed three key areas of focus: Recovery, Repositioning and Renewal:
 - Short term **RECOVERY**. Supporting businesses to ensure they claim all the grants and financial support available, supporting new opportunities and making sure interventions are appropriate, efficient and most of all timely.
 - Medium term **REPOSITIONING**. Continuing to attract inward investment and being clear about what the City has to offer in terms of quality of life and employment opportunities. Accelerating improvements to the digital infrastructure to support increased levels of home working, and growing the education and skills offer for the workforce to be able to adapt to a 'new normal'; not just across the Council but across the whole of Newport.
 - Longer term **RENEWAL**. Repositioning Newport in a new world where there will be opportunities to rebalance the economy with the environment and society to give greater resilience and improved well-being for residents, now and in the future.

The Leader confirmed this is a partnership approach and the Council will work with all partners, including the Cardiff Capital Region and the Western Gateway, to ensure that Newport emerges in a stronger and more resilient position.

The Leader had no hesitation in presenting the Strategy to Cabinet with the recommendation that Cabinet endorse it and start Newport's journey to economic recovery.

The Leader invited Cabinet Member comments on the report:

All Cabinet Members agreed that these are unprecedented times but that the Council will step up to the extremely challenging times ahead. This crisis provides an opportunity to look at different ways of working to support in particular the most vulnerable; the Council also needs to provide support and guidance to those who find themselves unemployed within the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors. Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETS) will be severely affected as their opportunities for employment will be massively reduced. Through the past 10 years of austerity, Newport has found ways in which to well serve the city and its residents and will continue to strive to enable people to get back into work and to re-start Newport's economy. The Council has to ensure there are no wasted opportunities and that interventions are timely and well managed to ensure a good recovery. The Council's good financial planning will be important in achieving these goals.

The Leader invited the Acting Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing to comment: Mrs Brooks reinforced the comments already made, and confirmed this is definitely an opportunity for Newport to reposition itself and shape and influence its 'new normal'.

The Acting Chief Executive thanked the team for their hard work in pulling this important document together. Mrs Owen confirmed that a task and finish group had been set up with partners and this work has been a corporate team effort to look at ways to support and sustain the economy.

The Leader confirmed that at the July Cabinet meeting a report on the Western Gateway will be on the agenda which will aid further discussion on Newport's economic recovery.

The Leader thanked colleagues for their comments and proposed that Cabinet agreed to adopt the Covid-19 Economic Impact and Recovery Strategy as an addendum to the Economic Growth Strategy (as updated in February 2020) to ensure that the Council continues to support Newport's economy and identify where new opportunities may be found in order to shape the 'new normal' and continue to capitalise on opportunities for growth and investment until 2025.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed and endorsed the Strategy.

5 Financial Management and Costs – Covid-19

The Leader presented the report that outlined to Cabinet the key issues and risks to the Council's finances resulting from Covid-19, the estimated additional costs and funding for the Council's response to the crisis and progress in administering financial support given to local businesses and taxpayers during the Covid-19 lockdown period.

The Leader confirmed that Local Authority Leaders, Welsh Local Government Association, Welsh Government Ministers have been meeting regularly and commended the Minister for Local Government and Housing for the work she has done in partnership with local authorities.

The Leader reported the three key financial issues resulting from the Covid-19 situation:

- What has the Council done to support businesses and vulnerable households/individuals?
- What is all this forecast to cost and how is it being funded?

- What does this mean for the financial outlook this year – what impact will it have on the Council's finances?

The Leader confirmed the situation is very dynamic, with the response to the crisis at an all-Wales level and locally, changing daily. In that respect, the impact on the Council's finances is subject to change and the report highlights the current areas of potential risk and the costs the Council is incurring (mainly up to June). The situation remains fluid and is dependent on further responses to the situation.

Welsh Government have responded to the crisis with over £2.4 billion of initiatives and local government has been at the frontline in delivering the various support schemes that are in place; the Leader applauded their support.

The Leader confirmed the report detailed where the funding has been spent with most going to support businesses through the 'Economic Resilience Fund' and providing rates relief for eligible businesses. In addition, health service capacity is being supported, and local government is being funded to provide specific support for free school meal pupils, the homeless and care providers.

The Leader reported that locally the Council is providing financial support to businesses and vulnerable households/individuals, and highlighted the following:

- actioned rate relief of a considerable amount of money to those eligible businesses meaning they will not need to pay business rates for this year;
- paid out over £28m of non-repayable grants to approximately 2,300 businesses to provide short term financial support whilst closed over the period. The Council has been complemented on the speed in which they addressed this, in fact the Council borrowed money in order to get this cash out to them as fast as possible and by doing so, paid about £16m by the end of the first week of April;
- the Council has also worked with many households and deferred payments of Council Tax to those suffering some financial loss or uncertainty over this initial period.

The Leader further confirmed the Council is forecasting spend of approximately £6m in specific initiatives to support:

- those children eligible for free school meals whilst schools are shut – to the end of August.
- increasing its stock of short-term accommodation provision to support the homeless in this period.
- supporting care providers with additional financial support to cover their increased costs.

The leader highlighted the statistics and facts behind some of these figures:

- Over 60,000 food vouchers distributed to eligible families;
- 75 rough sleepers offered temporary accommodation and specific support;
- 232 families offered emergency and temporary housing;

- Over £900k financial support given to care homes to help them meet the increased costs of supporting the City's older and vulnerable population.

The Leader confirmed that whilst much of this is being funded by Welsh Government, the Council is facing significant financial uncertainty itself through this period and the Leader highlighted some of the key issues in the report:

- costs will continue to be incurred beyond June whereas funding commitment from Welsh Government is only available until June (this is the current understanding);
- a significant reduction in the Council's income from fees and charges; some support has been announced to help with this but going forward that support will not completely cover all the Council's losses;
- losses on collection of Council Tax; the revenues team have taken a sympathetic approach and will continue to do so but council tax does need to be collected and the Leader asked for Newport's council tax payers to be understanding of this;
- the increased cost of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Leader urged all those families who are struggling to pay Council Tax to look into and apply for this benefit.

The Leader was pleased to report that the Council continues to work well with Welsh Government and continues to seek further funding wherever possible. However, the situation is changing regularly and therefore there is much uncertainty in the Council's finances for this financial year. The Leader confirmed the Council does have a contingency available to help with this if required.

The Leader emphasised the need for all service areas to manage their core budgets as well as possible and to avoid overspending. The usual budget monitoring processes continue; these are challenging due to the crisis and Cabinet will be receiving a report on the revenue outturn.

The Leader was pleased to report that to date, the Council's response has been comprehensive and robust, with essential services being more or less maintained and additional support given to those most vulnerable. All this has been made possible because of the herculean efforts made by Council staff. The Leader gave sincere thanks for this as the efforts have made a very positive impact on people's lives in this most challenging of times.

The Leader invited Cabinet Member comments:

Cabinet Members agreed that going forward more services may need to be cut in order to provide a balanced budget and they urged the UK Government to discontinue its austerity agenda. Praise was given to staff and the excellent way in which the Council's finances are prudently managed. There is a need to reflect on the costs to alterations in the services provide and new costs that may arise due to Covid-19.

The Leader thanked her colleagues for their comments and reiterated that prior to Covid-19 local authorities were feeling the impact of the Government's austerity agenda. The Leader again praised the Welsh Government for the work they have done with local authorities in providing as much financial assistance as possible; she also commended Newport East's MP Jessica Morden for raising this in the House of Commons and also Baroness Wilcox of Newport who has also raised the plight of local government in the House of Lords.

The Leader invited the Head of Finance to comment. Mr Rushworth encouraged businesses to apply for the business grants offered by Welsh Government – there are six days left before these grants end; he confirmed that mailshots have been sent out to businesses to remind them to apply and he encouraged businesses to apply for the grants before the deadline date of 30 June. He went on to say that there is

some uncertainty going forward with regard to about half a dozen key financial issues and these are currently being discussed with Welsh Government. The situation remains changeable but he expects the first financial budget forecast will be available in the next two weeks. He asked all Heads of Service to look after their core budgets as robust financial management will help the Council get through this difficult period.

The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that work is starting next week on the MTFP for 2021/22 onwards which will be very different to what was proposed previously.

The Leader thanked everyone for their comments and proposed that Cabinet:

- note and comment, as necessary, on the financial support administered and delivered to local businesses, organisations and households
- note the Council's costs in the delivery of specific Covid-19 service support in the first quarter of the year, and in particular that funding support for these costs is currently planned to cease at the end of June, with exception of free school meal provision which will continue until the end of August.
- note and comment, as necessary, on the key areas of financial risks and challenges the Council will face this year as a result of the current situation and the uncertainty that surrounds much of this given the very dynamic nature of the situation.
- note, agree and instruct the importance that all services operate within their core budget for 'non Covid-19 response activities' in this coming year as best they can, given the additional challenges created by Covid-19.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report.

6 COVID-19: Test, Trace & Protect – Creation of a Contact Tracing Cell in Newport

The Leader was pleased to say that this report goes some way to confirming our recovery period and the way forward.

The Leader introduced the report, the purpose of which was to ensure that Cabinet are aware of the current situation and to seek endorsement of the approach going forward for the delivery of Contact Tracing in Gwent.

The Leader introduced the Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation to present the report.

The Cabinet Member confirmed the report sets out the work that has been undertaken, to date, to establish a Local Contact Tracing Team in Newport. The Cabinet Member confirmed that these are just interim arrangements for the first three months, in order to get the service operational in an extremely short timescale. A future strategy will need to be agreed in conjunction with other partners, to develop a delivery model and governance structure for the longer-term. Key to this will be the funding that Welsh Government make available to pay for the service, as this cannot be delivered within existing Council resources.

The Cabinet Member went on to say, as everyone will be aware, the Test Trace Protect Strategy is a key element of the Welsh Government route plan for relaxing the Coronavirus lock-down in Wales. The increased testing and contact tracing will allow identification of who has the virus and who is at risk of having caught it so they can self-isolate and prevent spreading it to others.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that in Wales, councils have been tasked with the responsibility to establish local community contact tracing cells in each of their areas, in partnership with the regional Health Boards, with the contact-tracing being overseen at a national level by Public Health Wales.

Welsh Government published their plan on the 13th May so there was a very short timescale to set this up and running. The Cabinet Member paid tribute to the officers for the enormous amount of work that has gone into setting up the Local Contact Tracing Team in Newport. This required a collective effort across all Council services, to recruit and train staff, set up the equipment, develop temporary databases and put in place interim management arrangements.

The Council's Environmental Health Officers, due to their experience in dealing with contagious diseases, are leading on this work at both a local and regional level. The Cabinet Member stressed that this would not have been possible without significant numbers of staff from other services volunteering to carry out this contact tracing work from home, many of whom are currently vulnerable and "shielding".

Due to the rapid pace of change, there have been significant developments since the report was first drafted, and the Cabinet Member updated Cabinet on progress in the past few weeks:

- started contact tracing work on 1st June with 10 contact advisers from Customer Services and five contact tracers from Public Protection, all working from home and using an interim database set up by the Shared Resource Service (SRS).
- the new CRM national data base is now on line and operational, but it has meant re-training the staff to use a different IT system. Since then, we've had a steady flow of positive cases.
- In the first two weeks in June, there were 11 positive cases referred, which generated 54 separate contacts. It is anticipated that the work will increase as restrictions are relaxed and testing is increased. PHW deal with distribution of the data.
- On 9th June, confirmation received from Welsh Government that funding will be made available for the costs of delivering the service from July to the end of March 2021 but no specific amount has been allocated. Provisional estimates suggest that a workforce of over 400 staff would be required across Gwent at a cost of approximately £13 million. This included six local teams with 70 staff in each and a Regional Overview Team led by Health Board Clinical Leads and Environmental Health Officers.
- There is no clear agreement on the future delivery model and governance arrangements. It was envisaged that the Health Board would employ the staff and manage the service regionally but discussions are now focussing on councils continuing to employ the local contact tracing teams. In relation to governance, the proposed model envisages a partnership board at the top of the structure, which could include elected members. But, as indicated earlier, the delivery model is entirely dependent on the available funding.
- PHW expect the service to run on a 24 hour service 7 days a week.

In closing the Cabinet Member highlighted the impact that the contact tracing work will have on other regulatory services. The Council has 17 staff allocated to the interim service and the Environmental Health Officers will continue to have a role at a regional level for the whole of the contact tracing period. Therefore, other statutory and regulatory services will have to be scaled-back significantly to accommodate the contact tracing work.

The Leader confirmed this is one of the key areas that covers the recovery process and invited Comments from Cabinet Members:

The Cabinet Members fully supported the service which will help to keep schools open, keep the R rate low until such time a vaccine/treatment can be identified. All agreed the staff dealing with this system are exceptional especially as the ABUHB was the epi-centre for the virus at the start of this pandemic.

Cabinet Members thanked Welsh Government for bearing the cost of this service which was welcomed. However, with 7 staff having been redeployed is a cost to the Council in respect of retraining and this needs to be funded. It was suggested that further conversations are needed with Welsh Government, PHW, and ABUHB with regards to ongoing funding, office space, etc. All fully supported this service which is helping to stop a new wave of covid-19 and all commended the Cabinet Member and staff.

The Leader thanked colleagues for their comments and invited the Head of Law and Regulation to comment. Mr Price confirmed that the Council can't sustain the redeployment of staff indefinitely and there will also be issues around governance and the delivery model and if that is affordable; there has to be a budget which should be at a regional level.

The Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation commended staff for their hard work in getting this up and running in two and a half weeks and which had been a cross-Council effort. He confirmed the need to look at the delivery and funding of the service going forward and asked Cabinet to note the report and endorse the approach taken to establish the service.

The Leader was happy to accept the report as the service is very necessary for recovery going forward.

Decision:

Cabinet voted unanimously and agreed the report.

The Leader closed the meeting and thanked officers for the outstanding work done during this period. She also thanked Cabinet for their support and gave special thanks to the Deputy Leader.