

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 11 November 2020

Time: 4.00 pm

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 M Rushworth, Mr R Cornwall, Mr O James, Mr R Thomas, Mrs J Evans.

Part 1

The Leader opened the meeting and asked everyone to bear in mind the significance of today being Armistice Day and to remember those that have given their lives in conflict; she thanked all those that had attended the Remembrance Service at the Civic Centre this morning.

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2020 were confirmed as a true record.

4 September Revenue Monitoring Report

The Leader presented the report that provided Cabinet with the September revenue monitoring position which shows an under-spend of nearly £1.7m; the under-spend includes £1.4m of uncommitted contingency which if required will reduce the overall under-spend. The Leader reported that the contingency may be required as progress is made through the remainder of the financial year, with the impact of the Covid-19 second wave being unknown. Therefore, expenditure the Council may need to pick up may be over and above that available to the Council from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund.

The reported under-spend at this stage of the year is a positive position for the Council and is an improvement on the previous position reported to Cabinet for July. The September Monitoring report reflects the clarification of funding that has been made available by Welsh Government in relation to Covid-19 related loss of income and increased expenditure.

Another positive reported is that there has been an improvement in the service areas' forecasts, including a £400k improvement in the projected delivery of savings.

The following key budget issues were identified which Heads of Service have been asked to review and put in place mitigating actions to resolve:

- In spite of the improvement previously reported, there is still £1.1m of savings which are yet to be delivered. This is largely due to the Covid pandemic which has delayed the implementation of the savings, but as the pandemic continues there is a risk that the delay in delivering these savings may continue into the next financial year. Therefore Heads of Service need to agree actions to mitigate these delays if savings continue to be undelivered.
- As reported in previous months there is increased demand reported in a number of areas of social care including Children's Independent Fostering Agency spend showing a forecast overspend of £450k and Emergency Placements in the current circumstances projecting an overspend of £354k.
- Schools' position has changed since the previous forecast and is showing an in-year over-spend of £1.3m, which will mean them going into an overall deficit balance position of £186k. This highlights a very challenging position, and it is recognised that schools are delivering through unprecedented and uncertain times. However, as the year progresses, with Welsh Government confirming increased costs of cleaning and cover for staffing which is Covid-19 related being reimbursed through the hardship fund, there is still the potential for this position to improve.

The Leader confirmed the over-spend highlighted is offset by savings across service areas, including significant staffing savings and also reflects a saving on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme budget of £900k. However, this is offset somewhat by a £500k overspend on Council Tax income collection, which has seen a significant decrease in collection since the start of the pandemic, and an amount will have to be set aside at year end for the possibility that this may not be collected. It is important to note that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme position reflects that Welsh Government have funded the increase in demand for the scheme resulting from the pandemic. The Leader was pleased to see such very positive support from Welsh Government in relation to this.

The Leader summed up by confirming that overall, whilst this monitoring report is showing an overall under-spend position, this is in the backdrop of uncertainty surrounding the pandemic for the remainder of the financial year, and will be monitored closely and updated in future reports.

Cabinet was asked to:

- note the overall budget forecast position and the significant overspending areas which is predominately resulting from undelivered MTFP savings impacted by the on-going pandemic, the risks associated with this and recommend that HoS continue to focus on implementation of agreed savings as soon as is possible;
- note the planning assumptions within the forecast position and in particular, the uncertainty around (i) the ongoing impact that Covid will have upon service areas and (ii) funding support available from Welsh Government (WG) for the remainder of the financial year;
- note the forecast movements in reserves;
- note the significant financial challenges facing schools and the serious impact it will likely have on the Councils other revenue budgets and reserves and that further work is in progress to review forecasts.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report and for the Corporate Management Team to take a targeted approach to reducing spend across service areas whilst ensuring management of key budgets and risks.

5 Capital Programme Monitoring and Additions Report

The Leader presented the report that provides an update to Cabinet on the capital monitoring position as at the end of September and the changes to the programme since the last report. The report also provides an update on the available capital resources and capital receipts.

The Leader reported that in terms of updates to the programme since the last report to Cabinet in August, Newport has an extensive capital programme investing in a variety of important schemes across Newport from investment in schools, regeneration activities, heritage and energy efficiency schemes. Following additions of over £2.4m the overall capital programme is now £206.7m.

Additions to the programme include: further investment in 21st Century Band B schools, including utilisation of secured Section 106 monies and a number of secured Welsh Government grants, including investment into electric powered refuse collection vehicles and support for businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic.

The monitoring position for 2020/21 shows further slippage into future years of £3.8m, this reflects the profile of the delivery of schemes for the remainder of the year. There is also a small underspend on completed projects of £470,000 mainly within City Services.

The available capital resources (headroom) shows a similar position to that previously reported at c£21m. However, the Leader confirmed that as the Council approaches the back end of this five year programme and looks to the Medium Term Financial Plan, there is a need to reflect the revenue impact of this headroom over the MTFP and look at the parameters in which the next capital programme will be delivered. This will form part of the capital strategy, which is reviewed and updated annually and will look at the long-term capital strategy for the Council. This will be discussed by Cabinet, alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan, in February.

With regard to capital receipts, the report requested Cabinet to approve the use of £2.03 million of capital receipts in order to pay off loan premiums which were payable when loans were repaid early in 2015/16. Whilst this gave a net saving at the time, there was a premium payable of c£500,000 per annum. There is just over £2 million left to be paid, and capital receipts can be utilised to pay this off and enable a saving to be put into the MTFP in 2021/22 of £507,000, leaving a balance of £3.1m of uncommitted receipts, including £1.1m relating to Welsh Government Joint Venture receipts.

Cabinet was asked to:

- note the monitoring position and approve the additions and slippage included in the report;
- note the available capital resources, reflecting that this will be updated as part of the upcoming capital strategy; and,
- approve the use of capital receipts and note the balance of remaining capital receipts

The Leader invited Cabinet colleagues to comment:

Councillor Giles commended the excellent work contained in the Band B Programme for Schools and the continuing work associated with this. She congratulated the education service and schools for their continued hard work.

Councillor Cockeram referred to page 48 of the agenda - Children and Young People Services – and queried the reference to the project being funded via an Integrated Children's fund allocation from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. He believed this information was incorrect and the project was being funded by the RPB Board. The Leader asked the Chief Executive to pick this up outside the meeting and to clarify the position with regard to the source of funding.

Councillor Harvey was pleased to confirm the stage 2 applications had been submitted for the work to the Transporter Bridge. She also passed on thanks from the small businesses along Chepstow Road for the help and assistance they have received from the Council during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Jeavons referred to active travel and applauded the 20 km of roads that have been made suitable for this purpose; over 27,500 counts of people had been recorded in May using the cycle-ways. Leader concurred with his comments and was pleased to be witness to how well the routes are maintained by the Council.

Cabinet was asked to:

1. approve the additions and amendments to the Capital Programme requested in the report (Appendix A);
2. approve slippage of £3,808k into 2021/22;
3. note the available remaining capital resources (headroom) until 2022/23;
4. note the capital expenditure forecast position as at September 2020;
5. note the balance of and approve the allocation of in-year capital receipts including the use of £2.030m receipts for to reduction of payments for loan premiums.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously approved:

- i. the changes to the Capital Programme and noted the monitoring position as set out in the report, including the use of capital receipts, and,
- ii. agreed to prioritise capital expenditure to maintain spend within the current affordability envelope, recognising that the revenue pressures from future borrowing are part of the overall MTFP budget gap.

6 Audit Wales Financial Sustainability Report

The Leader presented the report which outlined Audit Wales' findings from its Financial Sustainability report, the Council's response and implementation of actions. The Leader asked Cabinet to note that the review was carried out in 2019, taking into account the balance sheet as at March 2019, and prior to any impact of Covid-19. Therefore the report needs to be taken in that context, albeit a number of findings and recommendations are still appropriate.

The report provides a wide overview of the financial sustainability of the Council giving a number of findings and recommendations. In summary the review and findings conclude that: ***“the Council has a relatively strong financial position, but has recently recognised the need to develop a more strategic and sustainable approach to consolidate the position”***. The Leader confirmed that this point is recognised and that the recently appointed Chief Executive will work alongside Business Change and Finance colleagues to develop a more strategic approach with the Council's Strategic and Corporate Management Teams. The Leader recognised that this will be challenging due to the lack of certainty of funding from Welsh Government, further exacerbated in the current Covid-19 pandemic. Welsh Government's announcement of the financial settlement has already been delayed.

The report confirms the Council has a good track record in delivering its activities within budget and strong delivery of savings. However, the Leader acknowledged that this will become more challenging as the savings put forward are more complex and challenging to deliver.

The report recognised that the Council has a high level of useable reserves, and whilst that does give some financial resilience, the vast majority of the reserves are committed for specific projects and is somewhat distorted in that c50% of reserves relate to funding future costs of the Council's PFIs. It was noted that if reserves are used to fund short-term issues, these will need to be replenished. In summary there are no easy, impact free solutions through reserves but they do ultimately provide some capacity in the last resort.

The report noted that detailed findings of the report are attached at Appendix 1 (Welsh) and Appendix 2 (English).

The Leader was pleased that Audit Wales had recorded such positive comments about the management of the Council's finances.

Cabinet was asked to note the outcome of the review, the Council's response and implementing the necessary actions raised.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed:

- i) to note the outcomes of the report and,
- ii) that officers would provide regular updates on the progress of their service area implementing the necessary management actions.

7 Audit Wales Certificate of Compliance

The Leader introduced the report and confirmed the certificate of compliance is issued by Audit Wales following their audit of the Council's 2019/20 performance.

The Leader confirmed Audit Wales are the Council's external auditors and have a duty to ensure that public bodies, such as Newport Council, have the necessary arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources to deliver Council services.

The work completed by Audit Wales also supports the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by ensuring that public bodies are undertaking sustainable developments to meet the needs of future generations and adhering to the five ways of working principle.

The report asked Cabinet to note the Auditor General for Wales' comments in the certificate attached to the report ***'to confirm that the Council has discharged its duties under section 15(6) to (9) of the Measure and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties'***.

Cabinet was asked to:

- i) note the positive outcome of the Certificate of Compliance in relation to meeting its statutory duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report and noted that the Certificate of Compliance is positive and confirms that the Council has discharged its duties under the Local Government Measure 2009 with regards to Improvement Planning.

8 Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2019/20

The Leader presented the report that confirmed that under the Equality Act (2010), the Council is required to report annually on the progress it has made against the strategic equality objectives contained within its Strategic Equality Plan. The Equality Act also requires local authorities to publish staff equalities data, details of which are contained in the report

The Leader confirmed this is the fourth and final Annual Report on progress set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2016/2020 that was approved by Council in 2016. The Council's new Strategic Equality Plan was received by Cabinet and agreed at the July meeting and is now published on the Council's website.

The Leader explained that since implementing the previous Strategic Equality Plan in 2016, the Council has built on its strong commitment to partnership working and has engaged with staff, consulted with external stakeholders and increased its community engagement. The measures put in place through the nine Equality Objectives were used to indicate successes as well as identifying room for improvement. The Leader was pleased to confirm that changes made and the path ahead are encouraging; and by reflecting on the learnings from this strategy, the Council is able to move forward with purpose.

The report contained highlights from the past year which include:

- The Apprenticeship Scheme was rolled out successfully and NCC were finalists in the ACT Training Employer of the Year award 2019;
- 'EU Citizens Meeting' was established and the Council worked in partnership with third sector organisations as well as local EU communities to develop its work in this area;
- The successful implementation of the B.A.M.E. Network, which continues to be built on and improve to ensure Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic voices are heard in decision making;
- The 'Work Based Learning Academy' has created job clubs, training courses and bespoke 13-week training provisions to support young people seeking employment;
- Participation in Oxford University's 'Inclusive Cities Programme' – a knowledge exchange in relation to migrant communities;
- The Lighthouse 55+ scheme for older people celebrated its first anniversary and supported over 250 people in the year ;
- A further nine families (40 people) have been resettled, under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme;
- Preparatory work in 2019/20 for the new supported housing scheme for six young homeless people, paved the way for the scheme to open in early 2020/21. This was only possible due to the excellent partnership working from teams and partners such as Newport City Homes and Llamau;
- The Council completed its statutory consultation on the Schools' Accessibility Strategy, which aims to improve and upgrade the physical access to schools in Newport;
- Development in the work to promote the Welsh language within minority communities across Newport has increased, thanks to a dedicated Policy Officer and the recruitment of a Welsh Language Promotion Officer;
- The Council has continued with its commitment to developing Elected Member Champions, with leads for Race, LGBTQ+, Disability and Impairment, and Welsh Language, raising the profile of equality work throughout the year across the Council.

The Leader confirmed the Annual Report was reviewed recently by Scrutiny and the Committee's comments are included in the report. One of the issues they raised was the analysis of the data for the Council's workforce, which highlights key areas for improvement. This will be addressed in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020/2024 alongside work continuing on the commitment to a representative workforce and the recruitment and retention of under-represented groups.

The Leader invited the Cabinet Member for Community and Resources to comment who reiterated the Leader's comments and confirmed this work is not done just to tick boxes but shows the Council's commitment to a workplace culture and approach to service delivery that values inclusion and diversity.

The Leader invited Cabinet colleagues to comment

Councillor Rahman said that the Council is one of the few local authorities taking an active approach in dealing with systemic racism and echoed the point that this is an ongoing process with work still to do on improving issues such as poverty and inclusion.

Cllr Davies reiterated the previous comments but also noted the socio economic duty that has to be implemented by 2021 and that every decision has to take into account the impact on residents; this work will ensure the Council can deliver on that duty,

Cabinet was asked to:

- i) approve the report and,
- ii) agree to publish it on the Council's website

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously approved the report and agreed to its publication on the Council's website in order to ensure that the Council remains compliant with its statutory obligations.

9 Future Generations Commissioner for Wales' Report and Newport City Council Progress

The Leader introduced the report that briefed Cabinet on the Future Generations Commissioner's report and provides recommendations for the Council in light of the report.

The report details the Commissioner's assessment of the improvements public bodies should make to achieve the well-being goals and embed the sustainable development principle into the way they work.

Included in the Cabinet report were the following points:

- A reminder of the main duties of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015;
- The eight areas of focus and high level recommendations contained in the Commissioner's report; and,
- A summary of the progress the Council has made in implementing the Act along with the next steps.

The Leader confirmed that one of the duties of the Commissioner is to publish the Future Generations Report, which contains the Commissioner's assessment of the improvements public bodies should make to achieve the well-being goals.

The Commissioner's report sets out a number of areas of focus for public bodies:

- Leadership and Change
- Land Use, Planning and Place Making
- Transport
- Housing
- Decarbonisation and Climate Change
- Skills for the Future
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Health and Wellness System

In terms of Newport's position, the Commissioner acknowledges embedding the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 into an organisation is a journey. The Leader confirmed the report evidences the Council has made steady progress towards implementing the Act over the last four years

both internally and working with the PSB. However, there are areas where progress is still necessary and the next steps have been set out in the report under each of the areas of focus.

The Leader was pleased to see the progress made over the last four years and was particularly pleased to report that the Council is expanding the number of supported housing units to respond to the increasing need due to Covid-19, and as such ensuring the most vulnerable in the city are able to improve their housing and wellbeing. In addition, the Council is moving towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030 through a whole range of projects including a collaborative community renewable energy project, which will increase the amount of roof mounted solar in the city by 25%.

The Leader emphasised the Council's commitment to implementing a sustainable approach and had appointed a Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development whose portfolio will take this legislation forward.

The Leader invited the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development to comment. The Cabinet Member thanked officers for the work undertaken to develop the Cabinet report from the information contained in the detailed report by the Commissioner, and which clearly defines the next steps for the Council. In the last five years the Council has made steady progress, the Cabinet Member was particularly pleased with the reduction made so far in Newport's carbon footprint and is looking forward to seeing further progress in that regard. She confirmed that as the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Future Generations Agenda she will be requesting regular updates to ensure appropriate actions are taken forward in relation to that Act.

The Leader invited Cabinet colleagues to comment:

Councillor Rahman was pleased to work collaboratively with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development and welcomed the progress made with installing solar panels on Council buildings. He also referred to community asset transfers and mentioned Maindee Unlimited and the successful transfer of Maindee library and the work being taken forward to transfer other assets within the Maindee triangle.

Cabinet was asked to:

- i) note the progress made as set out in the annual report and,
- ii) endorse the Areas of Focus and Recommendations to enable the Council to move to the next stage of implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

NOTE:

At this point in proceedings, the meeting suffered IT Technical issues and Cabinet was suspended. The meeting reconvened at 1728 hours and the Leader apologised for the disruption caused.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report which will enable the Council, working alongside its partners and communities, to improve the overall well-being of current and future generations.

10 Annual Compliments, Comments and Complaints Management Report 2019/20

The Leader introduced the report that confirmed that all Public Services in Wales are required to record and respond to feedback from residents in accordance with the guidance and legislation issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (Ombudsman). There are additional statutory requirements that must be met for complaints about Social Care. The report focusses on the overall performance regarding compliments, comments and complaints, and corporate performance in more detail.

Feedback on the above is recorded in the My Newport platform. The report summarises the complaints received in 2019/2020 and makes recommendations for actions that will improve the service provided by the Council.

The report noted that the Ombudsman requires public bodies to listen to feedback from the public and use that feedback to shape services and drive continuous improvement. This includes having systems in place to record, analyse and report on the feedback received from residents.

The Ombudsman passed new legislation last year (The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019), and has very recently published new model policies and guidance underpinning this. The structure and content of the annual report reflects the changes.

The Council receives many compliments from residents about the services provided and this was the first full year that residents were able to use customer accounts, webforms and an app to record these quickly and easily. It was noted that the majority of compliments recorded are for City Services, as the most visible service with the most daily interactions with residents. Whilst the Ombudsman requires the Council to record compliments, he does not require data on these numbers, however, the report acknowledges that compliments received are a positive reflection on the services provided to residents.

Comments are also a way of recording the feedback from customers who are unhappy with policies and decisions made by the Council. City Services received the most recorded comments about policies for the same reasons it receives the most complaints. It should be noted that this was also a year when policy changes that impacted every household were implemented. Changes such as the introduction of smaller bins in order to meet recycling targets and the transfer of responsibilities for Civil Parking Enforcement to the Council generated much higher levels of feedback than usual. This, combined with the simple and easy way that residents can submit their feedback has contributed to the increase in numbers year on year. The report confirmed that it will not be possible to make a fair comparison until 2021, when there will be two full years' worth of data recorded on the new system.

The number of complaints received by the Council account for 1.84% of the total customer contacts recorded by Customer Services last year. There were more complaints recorded this year, however, this did not result in an increase in formal reviews or cases being referred to the Ombudsman.

The Leader was pleased to report that increasing numbers of complaints this year is not necessarily a cause for concern, as the Ombudsman expects Local Authorities to receive feedback in the form of complaints, and to make it easy for residents to complain. The low numbers of formal Stage 2 reviews and Ombudsman referrals are reflective of service areas handling complaints appropriately when they are raised. City Services received the most complaints, reflecting the nature of their work and direct interface with residents.

The report noted that 25.5% of complaints were upheld or partially upheld which is broadly in line with performance in previous years.

The improved methods of submitting feedback, including complaints, also supports social services complaints. The volume of complaints received for social care services has increased slightly year on year, but fewer complaints have resulted in Independent Investigations and Ombudsman referrals. This indicates that complaints are being well handled at the first stage and resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

The number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman's office is below the national average for Local Authorities in Wales. 38 cases were referred to the Ombudsman during this time, and four of those required Ombudsman intervention where an 'early resolution' was agreed with the Council and complainants.

The Leader confirmed the Council is committed to developing the service in focussing further on ensuring the feedback from residents is used to improve service provision and outcomes.

The report provides examples of improvements that have been identified and implemented in the 12 months as a result of resident feedback. This is in line with the Ombudsman's requirement to focus on 'lessons learnt' under the new legislation and guidance.

The report noted that the Council will review the existing policies and procedures to reflect the new legislation and guidance issued by the Ombudsman. Further guidance, training and support will be provided to Officers to improve how complaints are dealt with and to embed a culture of continuous improvement based on the feedback received.

The Leader thanked the Cabinet Member for Community and Resources and the Cabinet Member for Social Services for the help and support they have given in driving forward continuous improvement.

The Cabinet Member of Community and Resources was pleased to report the Council has a very good relationship with the Ombudsman and the Council's developed technology to assist with capturing data has resulted in less complaints being referred to the Ombudsman.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services referred to the many wonderful compliments received with regard to the service provided by social care which don't appear to be recorded in the graph contained in the report. He asked if the Chief Executive could write to officers to encourage them to record compliments more robustly. Overall he was pleased with the content of the Ombudsman's report.

In response to Cllr Cockeram's comments on compliments received, the Leader confirmed the Council does record compliments but the Ombudsman does not require them to be reported.

Councillor Jeavons was pleased to note that most complaints are dealt with at Stage 1.

The Leader thanked all officers for their commitment to public service which has ensured that the Council has continued to provide services to the citizens of Newport during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cabinet was asked to:

- i) consider the volume, nature and themes regarding compliments and complaints received, and the Council's performance regarding complaint management in 2019/2020;
- ii) note the content of the Ombudsman's letter;
- iii) comment on any issues arising from the report or letter; and,
- iv) endorse the recommendations for improvement set out within the report, which ensure that the Council complies with its obligations under the new Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Act 2019

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously agreed the report.

11 Local Toilet Strategy

The Leader introduced the report that confirmed the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017(the Act) binds Local Authorities to think strategically about toilet facilities that are available to the public and invited the Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation to comment further.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that each local authority in Wales is required to adopt and implement a Local Toilet Strategy, as required by the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017; although the duty to prepare a Strategy does not require local authorities to provide and maintain public toilets directly.

The Strategy was presented to Scrutiny Committee in November 2019 and the feedback from that committee was considered, and where necessary incorporated into the Strategy, but no significant amendments were made. The Cabinet Member confirmed the Corporate Heads of Service have been consulted on the Strategy prior to presentation to Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member commended the Strategy and the associated Action Plan to Cabinet for approval.

Cabinet was asked to formally approve and adopt the Local Toilet Strategy and Action Plan.

Decision:

Cabinet voted and unanimously approved and adopted the strategy and action plan.

12 Covid-19 Recovery Update Report

In presenting this report the Leader firstly gave heartfelt thanks to the people of Newport on behalf of the Council for everything they have done since March 2020 and also during the recent Covid-19 firebreak in order to keep everyone safe and to limit the spread of the disease. The Leader hopes to see an improvement of the Covid figures which will be a good result for the hard work undertaken by all and is hopeful that we can all move forward together as a city.

The report provided an update on the progress made by Newport Council and its partners to support the city to comply with the localised lockdown measures and supporting Newport's communities as part of the Council's Strategic Recovery Aims.

The Leader confirmed that in June, Cabinet endorsed 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.

Since the last report to Cabinet in October, Welsh Government put in place a 'firebreak' from 23rd October lasting 17 days. This resulted in all non-essential businesses (including pubs, bars and restaurants) closing; all households being advised to stay at home and to work from home (where possible); and only Primary school, year 7 and 8 pupils returning back to school.

For Newport Council and its partners this meant the closure of Community Regeneration settings (excluding flying Start), Schools (for selected year groups), Newport Live facilities and the Household Waste site

England has now imposed a national lockdown for four weeks until 2nd December and residents in Wales have been asked not to travel to and from England (unless there is a reasonable excuse) to help them minimise the spread of Covid.

The period to Christmas remains precarious for all parts of Wales, including Newport, as attempts are made to minimise the spread of Covid-19 and ensure all of the City's vital services e.g. Hospitals, GP surgeries, schools, Council services and businesses remain open and are able to operate safely within the requirements set by the Welsh Government. This is why it is important for residents and businesses to comply with the new rules set by Welsh. Newport Council continues to work closely with its partners, community groups and third sector partners to communicate these rules to residents and businesses and to support the most vulnerable in our communities.

The Leader took the opportunity to stress to everyone the importance of following the rules. She appealed to the public that, if contacted by the TTP service the importance of following up on that contact, as you will have been in touch with someone who has tested positive for covid-19. The service is confidential and people will not be judged, but it is an important step in trying to stop this disease.

The Leader thanked all staff, partners and councillors for supporting communities and services.

The Leader promised a further update on the Council's progress at the next Cabinet meeting.

The Leader invited Cabinet colleagues to comment

Councillor Truman commended the whole workforce for their work in dealing with this situation and reminded people to stick to the rules; he also commended the people of Newport for their assistance with this.

Cabinet was asked to consider the contents of the report and note the progress made to date and the

risks that are still faced by the Council.

Decision:

Cabinet noted the contents of the report and agreed for Cabinet/Cabinet Members to receive updates from officers as part of their portfolio.

13 Brexit Update Report

The Leader presented the report to Cabinet that set out Newport Council's ongoing preparations for a post 31st December trade arrangements and an update on the Brexit Trade Negotiations between the UK Government and the European Union (EU).

As highlighted in the Covid-19 Cabinet Report, the primary focus for the UK and Newport Council has been on responding to the Covid-19 crisis. However, during this period of time, the UK Government has continued with its negotiations with the EU.

Since the last update, the Council's Brexit Task & Finish officer Group has continued to monitor the UK position closely and preparing as much as possible for whatever agreement is made. This also includes collaborative working with Welsh Government and local authorities as part of the Council's role in the Gwent Local Resilience Forum which also informs the Council's own preparations. However, the longer these negotiations continue, it becomes more challenging for Council services (including partners) and businesses in Newport to effectively plan.

Since the last report the Council has been:

- Supporting businesses and encouraging businesses to prepare through the Economic Development Team and signposting businesses to Welsh Government pages.
- Monitoring and understanding through its key suppliers and partners all supply chain risks, supply availability and cost implications including tariff and VAT implications.
- Awaiting all of the necessary Welsh Government and UK government regulatory requirements (Leader stressed how much pressure this is putting on council staff already stretched by the Covid-19 pandemic)
- As part of the Council's Covid-19 response and support to Food Banks in the City, a working group has been established to improve engagement and identify pressures in communities that are being impacted by Covid-19 and potentially any new arrangements.
- Continued support and encouragement with the Council's partners and community groups to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme e.g. radio adverts. To date Newport has seen over 6,630 applications being made and more targeted work is being undertaken to encourage communities to apply.

The table in Appendix 1 of the report provides full details across the areas covered by the Task & Finish Group.

The Leader was clear that this is an ongoing situation with no resolution in sight, and with no guidance given by UK Government for local authorities to be better prepared.

Councillor Truman voiced concern that Newport is a significant port authority yet council officers are still awaiting guidance on monitoring and checking import standards post-Brexit. He was pleased to report that Welsh Government has provided funding for the training for officers to undertake this work, however, training cannot begin until exact requirements are known.

Cabinet was asked to consider the contents of the report and note the Council's Brexit preparations.

Decision:

Cabinet noted the contents of the report and agreed for Cabinet/Cabinet Members to receive updates from officers as part of their portfolio.

14 Cabinet Work Programme

The Leader presented the Cabinet Work Programme.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the updated programme.

In closing the meeting the Leader apologised for the technical issues and the disruption caused earlier in the meeting, and thanked everyone for their time and patience whilst this was rectified.

The meeting concluded at 1800 hours.

15 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 16 December 2020 at 4pm.