

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 8 January 2021

Time: 2.00 pm

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

In Attendance: B Owen (Chief Executive), M Rushworth (Head of Finance), G Price (Head of Law and Standards), R Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change), O James (Assistant Head of Finance), T McKim (Policy Partnership and Involvement Manager), A Jenkins (Governance Team Leader)

1 Apologies for Absence

None received.

2 Declarations of Interest

None received.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes from 16 December 2020 were confirmation as a true record.

4 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021-2022

The Leader presented the report, which outlined the draft budget proposals for 2021/22. It was the subject of significant work over the last few months; much of it was done within a challenging context of very little or no information from UK or Welsh Government (WG) regarding core and short term Covid-19 related funding for 2021/22 and uncertainty coming out of Brexit. The Council only received details of its draft 'Revenue Support Grant' (RSG) on 22 December 2020 and given the significant uncertainties mentioned above, finalised proposals after that. More work was still required, given the much higher than expected grant settlement, although a lot of work was done after the settlement so that the draft budget was as comprehensive as possible.

As a result of this the budget consultation started slightly later than usual but the remaining budget-setting timetable was adjusted to maximise the time available for consultation. This meant that residents, service users and stakeholders; such as the independent Fairness Commission, would have four full weeks to take part in the consultation. The consultation had commenced and the Leader asked that residents, partners and all parties engaged fully. The Leader was committed to a full and comprehensive engagement on this, including with internal processes such as scrutiny committees.

As always, all individual proposals, both investments and savings, were listed in the appendixes to the report. The budget savings with service impact were included in detail and

the report provided links to the detail of other budget savings. We were specifically consulting on those with service impact and would take comments received into consideration before finalizing any decisions in February. Others proposals with no impact were being agreed today for implementation by Heads of Service.

Turning to some of the detail:

- Inflationary costs increased the amount to just over £5m next year and was around this level each year, based on planning assumptions. There was significant uncertainty on pay inflation next year with both the UK Chancellor announcing a one year pay freeze, excluding the lowest paid and that Local Government determined its own pay arrangement. In addition, teacher's pay was determined by the relevant Welsh Government Minister. As this was a high risk budget area, the Council had provided for inflationary increases here, as noted in the report
- For 2021/22 specifically, the council was currently planning to invest almost £8m in the draft budget over and above an allowance for pay and pricing inflation. More details on proposed investments were included in appendix 1 and some of the key items included:
 - £1.8m investment in school budgets
 - £2.6m investment in the capital programme, to facilitate both the Councils and City Deal aspirations for the city and region
 - £1.5m for increasing demand in social care demand for both children and adult services
 - £305k investment to deliver the promises set out within the Corporate Plan such as the delivery of digital aspirations and a new household waste recycling centre.
- In terms of savings, the quantum for 2021/22 was £3.3m of which just over £600k had already been agreed in previous budget decisions and £2.7m were new proposals. Of this, the Council identified just under £1 million for consultation but we had also worked hard to identify as many savings with little or no impact and these amounted to £1.7 million.

The Council was consulting and agreeing on all budget savings set out in the report for this year and including a small amount of nearly £260k which was identified for future years.

There was also a proposed Council tax increase of 5%. The Leader appreciated that this was larger than inflation increase but as the report highlighted, Newport had a low Council Tax and even with a good WG financial settlement, we needed to be mindful of this to ensure support our most vulnerable residents, invest in our infrastructure and support our ambition for the city regeneration. Even with the good additional funding the WG settlement would bring, our need to invest in services and the city meant we needed to increase Council Tax and find savings. The budget was not about the Council Tax increase only; it was balanced by savings also being made and the investment in the city and services, which came with it.

Comments from Cabinet:

Councillor Rahman referred to the £35M savings and noted that since 2012 there had already been £74.8M worth of savings and cuts but that services were still running well, which was thanks to the staff delivering the services of a caring Council supporting residents.

Councillor Truman noted that these were challenging times but that the Council and residents would get through this. The budget demonstrated that the Council was investing in services and staff working were working hard, it was therefore important to invest in services where we could. This was a listening budget, which would welcome comments from members of the public. It was also mentioned that some councils had gone bankrupt but that Newport City Council were not in this position and was still managing to maintain services which was positive.

Councillor Jeavons referred to page 42 of the Agenda papers; waste enforcement officers still needed to continue to improve the recycling needs and he thanked residents for their recycling efforts. This essential service provision was still in place, which was good for Newport.

Councillor Davies commended the budget proposal, and echoed previous comments that this was a listening budget and that it was a key priority that residents responded. One of many investments which was to be praised, was the empty properties fund.

Councillor Harvey mentioned that we were in the worst situation since World War Two and that staff on ground were continuing to pick up waste/refuse whilst putting themselves at risk. Newport City Council delivered a first class service ran by first class staff.

Councillor Giles noted that the Council always and remained committed to ensure residents had everything they needed. This was a difficult time for parents/cares and teachers alike. Education Services had a demand on the budget, giving vital provision and commitment to new school builds, including Welsh Medium schools.

Councillor Mayer wanted to remind members of the public that there were different ways of commenting on consultation, via mail, the website; My Newport and Newport Matters. It was hoped that the residents would engage with the Council and give their feedback.

The Leader invited the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor Cockeram to say a few words regarding the budget proposals and how it would impact on his portfolio/service area. It was explained how the council was making positive strides to improve social care for children by investing in accommodation such as Rose Cottage which cut down on out of County placements. There was huge savings being made by reducing Out of County placements. Rose cottage was a total success and was nominated for the Social Care Awards and although we did not win, were highly commended. Social Services gave an excellent All Wales presentation on Rose Cottage, giving an example of a local child, returned from Out of County Placement in Scotland, where they thrived at Rose cottage and eventually returned to their birth mother. Savings of around £8K per week was also being made. Another home was being refurbished and would be ready by February and Windmill Farm, with three houses, it was therefore justified to close Cambridge House.

The Leader reflected on the comments that colleagues made and it reiterated that it was their job as a Cabinet to consider the proposals that would go out to the public, which was an important decision to make. The Leader thanked Cabinet Members for their valued comments and experience in their portfolios, in particular Councillor Cockeram and Truman and the commitment of officers. The Council continued to modernise Newport without having a negative impact on the economy.

This was also about investing in the service areas as requested by the Wels Government and these were evidence based decisions on how services had been maintained throughout the pandemic, by comparison to other councils. These decisions were not taken lightly and the Council had a moral and ethical duty. The information was all there and the Cabinet welcomed comments from the public.

Careful consideration had been taken not to consult on the refurbishment of View Point Car Park with both Councillors Harvey and Giles supporting this decision. The Leader thanked Councillors Mayer and Whitehead for their input.

Agreed:

1. Cabinet considered very carefully all the proposals put forward by officers and agreed to the following draft proposals for public consultation:

- i) Budget savings proposals in appendix 2 (summary table) and appendix 5 (detailed proposals), including the decision making point (either full Cabinet or Head of Service) for each one. This was with the exception not to proceed with the savings proposal for introducing parking charges to three park and countryside car parks - Glebelands, Christchurch (Local Nature Reserve) viewing point and Morgan's Pond (off Bettws Lane) (proposal No STR2122/07).
- ii) Approved implementation of the delegated decisions in appendix 3 by Heads of Service with immediate effect, following the usual Council decision-making processes.
- iii) A council tax increase of 5%, a weekly increase of £0.77 - £1.02 for properties in Band A to C, the most common bands in Newport, as set out in paragraphs 3.21 – 3.24.
- iv) Proposed fees and charges in appendix 7, there were no increase in car parking fees in this Appendix.
- v) The budget investments shown in appendix 1.
- vi) The budget investment provision in schools of up to £4,937k, which was based on an assumed teachers/ NJC pay increase and provided for a fully funded increased funding requirement, based on that, plus the cost of new/ expanding school provision as noted in paragraph 3.14 – 3.20. Specifically here, Cabinet agreed to confirm and finalise this when there was certainty on Teacher's pay from September 2021 with the intention of retaining the objective described above, within the funding provision available.

2. Cabinet noted

- i) The position on developing a balanced budget for 2021/22, acknowledging that the position was subject to ongoing review and updates especially in light of the late announcement from WG in respect of the final 2021/22 funding.
- ii) The medium term financial projections, assumptions contained within and that the projections contained investments required to implement the Corporate Plan promises.
- iii) That initial Fairness and Equality Impact Assessments were completed for all those requiring one.
- iv) The need to prioritise the development of a 'strategic change programme' in order to develop a long-term sustainable financial footing for services.

5 November Revenue Budget Monitor

The Leader presented the report, which dealt with the revenue budget at the November 2020 position. It confirmed the latest forecast showed an underspend of £2.7 million. This was an increase on the September position which showed a forecast underspend of about £1.7 million, and reflected the improved forecast position within schools and also lower than anticipated demand currently being experienced with adult social care as a consequence of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The bottom line underspend was inclusive of the £1.4 million revenue budget contingency which was currently not required and accounted for just under half of the overall underspend. Other in-year underspends were linked to some one-off budget savings this year due to, mainly, significant delays in recruitment and also far less miscellaneous expenditure being incurred than normal, for example travel/subsistence and printing costs. The forecasts made the assumption that the current areas of spend and lost income in relation to the Covid-19 situation would continue to be reimbursed and supported by the WG.

In terms of key issues, undelivered MTFP savings represented the largest individual budget issue at this time. The performance on forecast delivery of savings was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 situation and whilst this position had improved since that reported in September, there remained over £1 million of undelivered savings. Any undelivered savings at the end of the year would still need to be delivered as soon as possible in the following year but that would be in addition to any new savings for the 2021/22 financial year.

In that sense, whilst unavoidable, it would cause problems and be challenging. The Leader asked the Chief Executive, Heads of Service and Cabinet Members to focus on these now as much as was reasonably possible and continue the improvement. This was carried out in the most challenging context and situation and the Council was doing what it could to reduce pressure for next year. In addition to this, the other area of budget pressure was the continuing demand on social care budgets; children's in particular, and a £725 thousand overspend was forecasted. The overspends were offset by savings against other service / non-service areas totalling nearly £3 million, resulting in an overall underspend of £1.2 million, which was then added the currently unused general contingency budget of £1.47 million.

Whilst the level of forecast overspending across schools was an area of significant concern throughout the year, a forecasted underspend was anticipated as shown in the report. Forecasts were reviewed in light of the impact of the pandemic and the reimbursement that the schools would receive from the Welsh Government hardship fund and one off funding received. It was pleasing to note that school revenue budget forecasts had improved and this would increase the overall school reserves to nearly £1.7 million. The Leader was mindful however that school budgets continued to be under significant strain and many schools were still projecting an overspend in the current year. Officers continued to work with individual schools on their financial recovery plans and this was showing good results.

The forecasts showed that the Council was in a good position to face the challenges that were met. More work was required and was underway to review what unavoidable 'catch up' spending was needed to make next year and would be taken into account in assessing uses of the underspend. That element should not be significant in itself. This would also allow the Cabinet to consider how best to utilise the underspend. The Leader was mindful of the on-going risks of Covid and uncertainty at this point of the full package of support that Councils would receive next year for unavoidable Covid related costs and lost income faced in the first quarter or half year. Brexit was also potentially going to be an issue as much of the detail was still unknown and could have an impact. These would be key issues to consider as well as other Cabinet priorities and the usual need for one-off funds to support projects. The council would consider these in detail in due course but the position allowed flexibility to assess the above issues.

Comments from Cabinet:

Councillor Giles thanked all school staff, head teachers and Governors and would ensure support in every possible way for education to continue to provide a service to pupils.

Councillor Truman was concerned about the ambiguity around Brexit regulations and training for officers advising that clarification was needed.

Councillor Cockeram referred to Children Services and child referral, which had increased during the pandemic and the need to be mindful of this, as another lockdown was a serious issue for the safeguarding of children.

Agreed:

Cabinet was asked to:

- Note the overall budget forecast position and the significant overspending areas that was predominately resulting from undelivered MTFP savings impacted by the on-going pandemic; the risks associated with this and recommendation that Heads of Service (HoS) continued to focus on implementation of agreed savings;
- Note the planning assumptions within the forecast position and in particular, the uncertainty around (i) the ongoing impact that Covid would 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 that had the potential to face schools in future should schools not manage within approved budget and the serious impact it was likely to have on the Councils other revenue budgets and reserves and that further work was in progress to review forecasts;
- Note that work was in progress to identify the impact of unspent budgets and grant funded areas to determine what needed to be carried forward to next year.

6 Capital Programme Monitoring and Additions - November 2020

The Leader presented the extensive Capital Programme, investing across the authority in areas such as schools, heritage assets, energy efficiency schemes, invest to save programmes and investing in the regeneration of the city centre.

This report built on the investment already approved by Capital with a request to add an additional £3.915 million to the programme to further enable the delivery of the Councils Corporate Plan priorities, the majority of which was in relation to the acceleration of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal ("City Deal"). It also provided the latest forecasts on expenditure on this year's schemes and slippage of budget spend into future years, which was identified.

Cabinet was asked to approve an additional £3.915 million to the overall programme, mainly for accelerated spending by the Cardiff City Deal Region. As a member of the city deal, we were required to both provide capital funds to it as well as fund any cash-flow funding if spent in advance of Treasury funding. The latest business plan was reviewed and approved by the city deal Cabinet recently and approved the acceleration of spend. Whilst overall spending would remain within the agreed overall funding envelope, all Councils in the city region would need to fund this sooner than was originally planned. The original plan for city deal spending was being incurred each year up until 2026/27 but the new plan would see this expenditure bought forward to end in 2022/23. The revenue impact would therefore span many years and whereas this was steadily increasing up until 2026/27, it would accelerate and increase up until 2023/24, which would need to be factored into our budget planning for the next two financial years within our MTFP. Clearly, this was an ambitious acceleration of spending, in difficult circumstances and would be carefully monitored. The table showing the capital programme reflected this addition and the resulting budget this year was just under £32 million with an overall programme of nearly £211 million.

In terms of monitoring spend, the report confirmed a relatively low spending of just over £11 million on a budget of just under £32 million. This pattern was not uncommon but clearly, the challenging context for progressing schemes and resulting unavoidable slippage this year was understood. As part of the review of forecasts, budget/project managers identified nearly £4.6m of budget slippage which was requested to be carried forward now into future year budgets. The table showing the capital programme reflected this and the resulting budget this year was just under £32 million.

Comments from Cabinet:

Councillor Giles highlighted that the schools tied in with the comments on investment proposals in particular 21st Century Schools and Band B were match funded by Welsh Government and although this was not enough, the Council was doing the best we could considering all the improvements and developments taking place within Education. This was a good representation of our commitment to Newport residents.

Agreed:

That Cabinet

1. Approved the additions and amendments to the Capital Programme requested in the report (Appendix A)
2. Approved slippage of £4,568k into future years

3. Noted the update on the remaining capital resources ('headroom') up to and including 2022/23
4. Noted the capital expenditure forecast position as at November 2020
5. Noted the balance of and approve the allocation of in-year capital receipts

7 Mid-Year Performance Analysis 2020/21

The Leader presented the Mid-Year Performance Analysis for the first six months (April to September) of this year.

The Council's service areas provided an update on the progress against the delivery of their service plan objectives and performance measures, which contributed towards the Council's Strategic Recovery Aims and Corporate Plan.

The report also included feedback and recommendations of the People Scrutiny Committee and Place and Corporate Scrutiny Committee following the presentation of the mid-year reviews in November 2020.

Back in 2017, we launched our 5 year Corporate Plan which set out our vision and goals for improving people's lives in Newport and improving the delivery of our services.

The Council's eight service areas developed service plans, which outlined how they would contribute towards achieving the Council's objectives and improve the delivery of their services.

As with any plan there were challenges and external factors that could impact on the achievement of our goals.

2020 had been unlike any other year that we had faced as a Council and across our communities that had disrupted the delivery of services, and refocusing our efforts to support vulnerable and marginalised communities and households. This had also demonstrated however, the strengths of the Council as it had to respond quickly to these challenges and implement new and innovative ways of delivering our services.

To support this, Cabinet approved Newport City Council's four Strategic Recovery Aims, which supported the Council's Wellbeing Objectives aims but reflect the opportunities and challenges that have presented themselves.

The Leader detailed the progress against the four Strategic Recovery Aims, with majority of actions reporting a 'Green' overall status. The Amber status highlighted potential issues, which could impact on the successful delivery of these actions and only 1% of actions reported a Red status and were at risk of not being completed by their target date. The performance measures we discussed in detail by the Leader as outlined within the report.

The report had also highlighted some of the achievements and notable developments in the delivery of the Corporate Plan and Strategic Recovery Aims.

Cabinet also considered the Scrutiny Committee Feedback and Recommendations. The constructive scrutiny and feedback provided by the Council's Performance Scrutiny Committees back in November on the delivery against the service plans and wider context of the Covid crisis was welcomed by Cabinet. The report also included their feedback and key points raised in each of the meetings and full minutes / videos of the meetings could be accessed online through the Council's website.

Overall, the Scrutiny Committees understood the challenges that this Council and its partners had faced throughout the year and with both Officers and Members helping Committee Members to understand and provide assurance on the delivery of services and the plans.

The Leader and Cabinet colleagues accepted the feedback received from our colleagues at both Scrutiny Committees and encourage both Cabinet Members and Senior Officers of the Council to consider these in the delivery of services and future reports presented.

The Leader concluded that overall, Newport Council and its services were progressing well against their objectives despite the many and varying challenges during 2020 and in the New Year.

As highlighted throughout this year, the inequality in society remained a significant challenge and as a Council working together with its partners, residents and businesses there was an opportunity to make a difference for everyone in the City.

The Leader went on to say that Cabinet had a responsibility for the oversight and delivery of these service plans and where good progress was being made that this be recognised and celebrated. Equally, the Cabinet must also take responsibility and ensure that where underperformance was reported that the necessary action(s) was taken by the service areas to improve their performance and deliver the services required by our constituents.

The Leader therefore asked Cabinet Members to note and agree the contents of this report.

Comments from Cabinet:

Councillor Harvey reiterated that this was a terrible year however, was astounded by all the amazing results within the report and could not speak highly enough of officers, the report was commendable.

Councillor Truman echoed Councillor Harvey's comments and referred to his portfolio, and the selfless work of council staff that volunteered to work for Track and Trace. Environmental Officers also had to carry out their normal duties as well as providing a service for Track and Trace and congratulated them on their fantastic effort.

Councillor Davies mentioned that in December the Council was awarded two national solar powered awards. Newport City Council were striving to reduce their carbon footprint by using zero emission transport within Regeneration, Investment and Housing Service area.

Councillor Giles listed to the huge demands, which had been met regarding education and support for schools and within a short period of time, the strain on secondary schools, cancelled exams and staffing issues, looking after most vulnerable children, attendance, changes in teaching practice, protecting families, provision of MS Teams amongst many other challenges.

Councillor Jeavons referred to the collection of waste and recycling and reminded those present that staff also catch Covid but that this had not deterred their hard work. The willingness of staff from the bottom up did not go unnoticed.

Councillor Cockeram referred to the Youth Offending Team where not one child had been in custody over 18 months as well as the foster carer's initiative. There were an extra six foster carers which made excellent strides towards decreasing the independent sector.

Councillor Mayer referred to the development of Neighbourhood Hubs page which was on hold because of the pandemic however was looking forward to this being developed further in due course.

The Leader took the opportunity to thank the teams in Law and Regulation, People and Business Change and SRS who helped councillors to function as elected members, establish

our Governance and allow committees to continue to take place. The Cabinet would not be able to meet in this format if it was not for the staff support.

Agreed:

Cabinet were requested

1. To note the contents of the report
2. To receive a further update on the year-end position once the data was available
3. To take urgent action in conjunction with the Directors and Heads of Service to address areas of poor performance.

8 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill - Performance and Governance Consultation

The Leader introduced the next Cabinet Report, which was in relation to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill and Welsh Government Consultation on the guidance to support councils implementing the new Performance and Governance requirements.

At the last meeting in December 2020, Cabinet was presented with an overview of the new Bill and were asked to consider the Council's response to the establishment of Corporate Joint Committees.

The Local Government Bill would receive Royal Assent this year and Councils would need to implement the new changes which ranged from electoral reform for local government elections, establishment of Corporate Joint Committees, and as outlined in this report Performance and Governance reform.

The Local Government Bill would replace the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and under the proposals, councils would be required to:

- Conduct an annual self-assessment of performance;
- Complete periodic review to provide an external, expert perspective on performance;
- The Bill also gave Auditor General Wales powers to carry out special inspections; and
- Gives Welsh Ministers powers to intervene where councils faced significant problems.

Newport Council over the last five years made continuous improvement in the monitoring, reporting and scrutiny of performance against the delivery of the Corporate Plan. The Council was also well placed in producing annual reviews into the delivery of the Well-being Plan, Strategic Equalities Plan, Welsh Language and Annual Governance Review.

The Bill also placed additional responsibilities on the council's Audit Committee and Performance Scrutiny Committees to monitor and provide an overview of performance. It would also require councils to engage and involve its key stakeholders more in its annual self-assessment report and periodic reviews.

The Welsh Government (Minister for Housing and Local Government) issued its consultation paper asking councils for its opinion on the draft Statutory Guidance that would be issued to enable councils to effectively implement the new requirements for 2022. The Council's draft response to the consultation document was attached to the report.

The guidance provided a clear overview of the expected roles and responsibilities and considered how these assurance activities, governance arrangements could complement the overall process - subject to the final guidance. Cabinet welcomed the opportunity to comment and it was helpful that the guidance allowed flexibility for Councils to set out how to implement the new requirements in line with our own governance arrangements.

Cabinet was therefore asked to consider the contents of the report and agree the consultation response for submission by the closing date of 3 February 2021.

Agreed:

Cabinet considered the contents of the report and agreed the consultation response for submission by the closing date of 3 February 2021.

9 Covid-19 Response and Recovery Update

The Leader presented the Cabinet Report providing 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.

Since the last report was presented to Cabinet in December Wales upgraded to Alert Level four restrictions due to the new strain of Covid-19 spreading across communities. There was however also hope in the rollout of the mass vaccination programme starting this month.

During the update, the Leader advised that the Festive period was very different and difficult for us all as the new Alert Level four restrictions came into place from midnight (Sunday morning) 20 December following the confirmation that the new Covid-19 strain attributed towards the rise in the number of positive (covid-19) cases across South East Wales.

Once again, this meant that non-essential businesses, gyms, leisure centres and hospitality had to close and households had to stay at home and not to continue with their extended household bubble (excluding single person households and Christmas Day).

In the last few months the NHS across Gwent was under enormous pressure in dealing with the increase in hospital admissions and sadly seeing the lives of many loved ones lost due to Covid-19.

The Council and its partners would continue to support our health partners to come through this crisis and also continue to support the Welsh Government's message of staying at home and only go out to exercise, food and work (if required).

It was important that all residents and businesses complied with these restrictions and help us get through this very difficult time. There was hope in the rollout of the vaccines (Pfizer and Oxford/AstraZeneca) and the Council would be supporting the Welsh Government and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to ensure that as many Newport residents received the vaccines over the next year. This would be a long process and many residents would need to be patient but with the vaccine it would enable us all to meet each other again and help many of our businesses recover.

It was important that Cabinet supported people into new jobs, training and gaining new skills; support children, young people and schools with their education; reduce the inequalities that remained in society for our marginalised, low income households and BAME communities; and finally support those businesses to recover and grow.

Throughout 2020, Newport Council alongside our partners continued to deliver its services with officers going above and beyond to ensure the most vulnerable are cared for and supported. The report continued to highlight the ongoing work, challenges faced by services and achievements being delivered by Newport Council.

The Leader thanked staff, partners and other sectors for their continuous work and supported in the delivery of services and looking forward for a better 2021. Further updates on the Council's progress would be provided next month.

Comments from Cabinet:

Councillor Truman mentioned that whilst Christmas was like no other there was a light at end of tunnel with three vaccines due to be rolled out however, we must be patient and would get through it.

Councillor Harvey echoed Councillor Truman's comments and urged those who thought it was a hoax that thousands of people had died from the virus.

Councillor Rahman echoed comments and stressed that younger people were also contracting the virus and that it and only took one person in a household to have Covid and then infect a whole family.

Councillor Davies highlighted how the council was functioning well and that waste collection continued over Christmas. Officers focussed to ensure homeless people were supported with accommodation and food banks that were in operation. Councillor Davies also mentioned the dedication of carers that had gone unrecognised.

The Leader concluded that the report reflected on all the hard work being carried out by everyone involved and welcomed the comments from Cabinet colleagues. The Leader thanked all those people who donated to food banks. The service delivery ran by these people were also at risk to Covid and we must be mindful going forward to monitor this.

Agreed:

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 Post Brexit Transition - Newport City Council Update

The Leader presented the Cabinet Report, which gave an update of the Brexit trade negotiations between the UK Government and European Union and the Council's preparations for post 31 December arrangements.

On 24 December, the UK Government and EU announced that they had agreed a future trade relationship that would mean businesses would be able to trade tariff free from 1 January 2021.

For many businesses in Wales and Newport that trade with the EU this provides much needed certainty in what has been a very difficult 2020/21. Businesses would still have to comply with the new custom rules and there could be disruption in the supply of certain goods and services in the short term. The Leader encouraged businesses in Newport to visit the Welsh Government (Business Wales) websites and ensure that they understood and complied with the new regulations.

Newport is a city that has a long heritage of forging strong business and trade relationships with the world, enabling people from around the world to live and work in the City, it would be important to continue to promote Newport and provide opportunities for small to medium sized businesses to grow as we recovered from the Covid pandemic.

From 1 January 2021, there was also new rules that came into place. One of the biggest changes was the end of free movement of UK and EU citizens (excluding Irish Citizens) and the introduction of a new points based immigration system. With this in mind, Newport would always be an inclusive city and it was important for all residents (UK / Non UK Citizens) to know that everyone was welcome to live and work supporting the sustainable growth of the city and region.

Newport had already seen a large number of people receive confirmation of their settled status, but there were many more that needed to apply before 30 June deadline. The

Council alongside its multi-agency partners had supported and encouraged EU residents to apply and would continue this up to and after the deadline.

The Leader gave progress on the update as at 31 December 2020 as outlined in the Report:

- Working in collaboration with the Welsh Government, local authorities and multi-agency partners, the Council's Brexit Task & Finish Group and the Gwent Local Resilience Forum were identifying and considering any key risks / issues in the short term as well as the medium to long term.
- Any Brexit related issues that may emerge would be reported into the existing Covid Gold mechanisms.
- The Council was contacting all key suppliers and providers of services and were assured that supplies would be available with as much supply chain risk reduced.
- The Council's Communication team were issuing messages signposting businesses to the 'Business Wales' and Welsh Government websites.
- The Council's Community Cohesion team were working with Food Banks working group, EUSS Working Group to support EU citizens, residents and asylum seekers and to encourage ongoing take up of EU Settled Status. The Food Banks worked tirelessly throughout 2020 supporting low income and vulnerable households. Funding from the Council helped to support the Food Banks in the city.
- The Council was working with Gwent Police and other multi-agency groups to identify any issues of hate crime and discrimination directed at EU Citizens living and working in the City.

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

The Leader welcomed thoughts of Cabinet Members on the report.

Agreed:

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

11 PSB Summary Document - For Information

The link to the Public Service Board Summary Document was attached for information.

12 Work Programme

This was the regular monthly report on the work programme.

Agreed:

Cabinet moved acceptance of the updated programme.

13 Date of Next Meeting: 22 February 2021 at 4pm