

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 10 March 2021

Time: 4.00 pm

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

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillor G Giles.

2 Declarations of Interest

None received.

3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes from 22 February Cabinet were approved as a true record.

4 Pay and Reward Policy

The Leader introduced the report to Cabinet for consideration. The Council's Pay and Reward Policy for the workforce was an annual report that required adoption by Council. The policy set out the internal mechanisms for remunerating Council officers and provided any changes since the last adoption.

The policy was last approved in November 2020 and there were no proposed changes to it this year. The Leader however highlighted the annual gender pay gap that would also be published on the Council's website. The Leader was pleased to report that the mean pay gap decreased for a second year to 1.92% from last year's reported 3.6%.

At November's Cabinet, it was reported that the 2019 median gap had closed entirely as the analysis of the data showed that the median point of hourly pay was the same for both men and women. There was a very slight change to this and there was a median pay gap of 0.57% for 2020. The Council's gender pay gap continued to compare favourably with other Councils across Wales and the UK average of 17% but Newport would maintain efforts to eliminate the pay gap between men and women employed by the Council.

The Council was committed to conducting equal pay audits on a three yearly basis. This audit would be carried out once the gender pay gap for 2021 was established.

Comments from Cabinet Members:

Councillor Mayer noted the good progress on the gender pay gap and the real living wage, which was part of the Council's policy and much needed. In light of the cuts over the last decade, the council had done very well to address the gender pay gap and maintain wages for staff during the difficulties faced regarding pay conditions.

Councillor Rahman commended the Cabinet Member, colleagues and officers for reducing the pay gap. It was noted that Newport City Council had one of the smallest gender pay gap by comparison to most councils in Wales. This also compared favourably to the national average which was 17% considering, that Newport City Council was one of the largest employers in Newport it would be setting a positive trend for other businesses. There was a need for a real living wage for all residents across country as well as Newport.

Decision:

That Cabinet approved the updated Pay and Reward Policy in order to meet the statutory requirement for a pay policy statement to be approved and published by Council on an annual basis.

5 **WG White Paper and Consultation - Rebalancing Care and Support**

The Leader presented the report to Cabinet Member colleagues. The Welsh Government published a White Paper on *Rebalancing Care and Support* and was consulting on proposals to introduce new legislation to improve social care arrangements and strengthen partnership working to achieve the vision set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

As a member of the Gwent Regional Partnership Board it was important for the Council to contribute towards the consultation that would assist in shaping and developing the future partnership arrangements across health and social care.

The delivery of social care services (Adults and Children) made significant progress in the last ten years transforming the delivery of social care through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. Both of these Acts were aligned and shaped by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 which strived towards the Well-being Goal 'A Healthier Wales' and having a health and social care system that works for everyone.

There were four specific proposals set out in the paper for consultation, these were:

1. The Development of a **national commissioning framework** which would standardise commissioning processes for care services including the method for determining the fees paid to care providers in the independent and voluntary sector.
2. To establish a **national care commissioning office** either within Welsh Government or through setting up a small arms-length body.
3. Introduce a **Chief Social Care and Social Work Officer** located within Welsh Government to function as the national, professional voice for Social Care and Social Workers.
4. Establish **Regional Partnership Boards as corporate legal entities** and enhanced their functions to enable RPBs to directly employ staff; ensure transparent accountability in relation to pooled budgets and joint commissioning by local authorities and health boards; hold integrated budgets; undertake direct commissioning of health and care with agreement from local partners; establish a planning and performance monitoring framework within each RPB; and be required to report to Welsh Ministers on progress of joint delivery against their integrated priorities.

The Consultation set out by The Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services sought views on the proposals to introduce the new legislation to improve social care arrangements and strengthen partnership working. The Deputy Minister was seeking views that would be considered in developing any new legislation and responses needed to be submitted by 6 April 2021 at the latest. The consultation set out 12 questions covering all aspects of the proposals. The Council's proposed response to the Consultation questions were outlined in Appendix 1.

The Leader invited the Corporate Director – People/Head of Adult and Community Services to say a few words to Cabinet.

The Corporate Director highlighted that the paper was a significant step forward in indicating the direction of travel to deliver the ambitions in the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. The thread running through this was greater integration with health and social care. Discussions with colleagues at the WG also indicated this as well as wanting to hear the views of the public. It was however important to understand how it shaped the future relationship between the local authorities and the regional partnership board and with WG itself. It represented a significant step in that direction and it was important that we contributed to the consultation, as this was the second biggest budget area for local authorities and would have a significant impact on the future arrangements in relation to social care.

Comments from Cabinet Members:

Councillor Cockeram raised some issues relating to the consultation. The social services policy group met with the minister and felt positive about the prospect of a framework being put in place, along with funding pot, however the Cabinet Member was disappointed with white paper. There were mixed thoughts on this and the regional partnership board chairs were also disappointed, as they were doing particularly well with new ways of working. The Cabinet Member was concerned about the impact on sustainability if the funding depleted. The paper was also very extensive, with a lot of pressure on the WG. There was an increase in the older age population, dementia was also on the increase, these were issues that would need to be tackled. The Cabinet Member questioned where did social services fit into this and what contribution would the Council be making. The Cabinet Member did however applaud the move by the WG to put a Chief Officer for Social Services in the WG. There were some good aspects within the paper however, he did have concerns regarding the future of the regional partnership board. The deadline of 6 April was also a short period to do the White Paper justice.

Councillor Truman stressed that there was an opportunity to express any views or concerns during this consultation period. There were many points to consider in particular how the national framework would operate and a lot of clarification on how the proposal put by the WG.

The Leader echoed comments of her colleagues and agreed that the regional partnership board, under the guidance of the Cabinet Member for Social Services was working well and in light of this, there was concern that there may be issues regarding governance. Considering the consequences of the White Paper, it was therefore important that Cabinet shared their views with Welsh Government.

Decision:

That Cabinet considered the contents of the report and agreed the consultation response for submission by the closing date of 6 April 2021.

6 Quarter 3 2020/21 Corporate Risk Register Update

The Leader introduced the next item to Cabinet Member colleagues, which was an update of the Council's Corporate Risk Register for the end of Quarter three (31 December 2020).

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

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

The Quarter three risk report would also be presented to the Council's Audit Committee at the end of March to review the Council's risk management process and governance arrangements.

At the end of quarter three the Council had 52 risks recorded across the Council's eight service areas. Those risks that were deemed to pose the most significant risk in the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and services were escalated to the Council's Corporate Risk Register for monitoring.

At the end of quarter three 18 risks were recorded in the Corporate Risk Register:

- Ten Severe Risks (15 to 25);
- Six Major Risks (7 to 14); and
- Two Moderate Risks.

One risk (Pressure on Housing Risk) was closed in quarter three as it was amalgamated with the Pressure on Homelessness Risk (in the Corporate Risk Register). This was in response to the close links between both risk areas and the mitigating actions that the service area (including partners) was taking to support people and families needing affordable and secure housing in the City.

In addition, quarter three of the Corporate Risk Register had seen two risk scores increased, three decreased and 13 risks remained at the same score in quarter two.

In relation to the demand for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Special Education Needs provision (SEN) (Risk Score 12 to 16), this risk score increased from 12 to 16 as the service had seen a growing number pupils with complex needs entering schools due to the pandemic. Special schools and primary Learning Resource bases were at capacity and the ALN implementation group would reconvene in the spring to review SEN funding to schools.

Newport Council's Property Estate (Risk score increased from 8 to 12). The Council's partners Newport Norse had undertaken condition surveys of its operational estate and identified increased number of works that were required to repair and maintain the condition of its assets.

The post transition Brexit (Risk score decreased from 16 to 12), following the approval of the trade agreement between the UK and the EU. There remained however risks to the post Brexit arrangements to ensure EU Citizens living in the UK applied for EU Settled Status by the 30 June deadline.

Additionally, the economy remained in a precarious position due to Covid and the implementation of the new trade arrangements, which could impact on the short to medium term stability of the economy, labour market and consumer confidence.

Education Out of County Placements (Risk score decreased from 12 to 9), this budget was very carefully monitored on a monthly basis. Additional local placements were commissioned from Newport Live and Catch 22.

Plans were being developed to expand Ysgol Bryn Derw to provide additional Foundation Phase placements.

Schools Finance / Cost Pressures (Risk score decreased from 16 to 12). Total sector budgets were now £2M in surplus due to schools being closed for prolonged periods of time. Without careful budget management however, schools were still at risk of developing deficit positions. The total number of schools in deficit remained the same.

Comments from Cabinet Members:

Councillor Rahman, as Cabinet Member for Assets gave a brief background information on this and referred to a survey conducted in 2019 on the Council's property estates and although we were hit by pandemic, the team had been proactive during lockdown. Issues were identified on buildings such as schools and corporate buildings with similar findings to that of the leisure centre. Building Regulations and Health and Safety Regulations had also changed since many of these properties were built therefore safety of the residents were of the utmost importance and finding alternatives was being considered. The risk was being mitigated and managed by using funding from the capital maintenance programme of £1.5M per annum. The Cabinet Member was also having regular meetings with the estates team to keep updated on any issues. It was therefore not a surprise that the property score risk and increased but this being identified. Other sources of funding were also being sought from WG with Norse partners. It was therefore important that the council invested heavily into maintaining the safety of schools for children going forward, hence the provision of £5M from the recent budget.

Councillor Jeavons referred to the risk concerning the major works being carried out recently due to ash die back disease to trees in Caerleon area and City Services were looking at other areas of Newport to address this. There was similar risk across Wales and therefore it was important that this was addressed.

Councillor Mayer referred to the risk area surrounding digitisation issues. The digital programme has significantly improved since the pandemic including enabling staff to work from home. There would always be cyber risks such as phishing attacks and computer viruses, which unfortunately went with the territory. It was therefore good that the risk was red, as it kept the us on our toes to stay one step ahead.

Councillor Harvey was pleased to see the education portfolio move from red to amber and thanked the Chief Education Officer for her hard work, as well as school staff.

Councillor Cockeram referred to stability of social services providers which was a possible risk due to minimum wage pay of Domiciliary care providers which meant that there was a high turnover of staff. The WG needed to make it a more of a professional employment and this should be a priority. The real living wage was also hopefully a step in the right direction. Other pressures in social services were on adult services; as previously mentioned people were living longer and dementia was on the increase. Elderly residents and family were also favouring home care packages which were not cheap; up to £1K per week, people therefore needed to be aware of the cost implications. Pressure on delivery of children services being reduced due to homes such as Rose Cottage, reducing children being homed out of area and being brought back to Newport. There would also be a high volume of referrals due to the pandemic.

The Leader concluded by adding that she was proud of the work in Newport in terms of modernising services and making buildings fit for purposes in the 21st Century and was bowled over by refurbishment of property for children within Newport providing them with the security of a real home.

Decision:

That Cabinet was asked to consider the contents of the quarter three update of the Corporate Risk Register

7 Covid Recovery Update

The Leader presented the report, advising colleagues that this was an update on the Council's and 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.

It was over a year since Newport received its first confirmed case of Covid-19 and the City has been in some form of Covid-19 restrictions.

Due to this, Cabinet and Council over the last year had faced many difficult decisions, seeing many of our loved ones lose their lives and some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens impacted by the crisis.

The Council had also seen the best in people across Newport going above and beyond to help others in times of crisis and on many occasions the Council and our Partners supported people and businesses across Newport.

In the Council's response and recovery from this crisis, it endorsed four Strategic Recovery Aims that ensured we could position ourselves to respond to immediate and future needs of our communities and businesses, such as:

- Strategic Recovery Aim 1 – Supporting Education & Employment;
- Strategic Recovery Aim 2 – Supporting the Environment and the Economy;
- Strategic Recovery Aim 3 – Supporting the Health & Wellbeing of Citizens; and
- Strategic Recovery Aim 4 – Supporting Citizens post Covid-19.

It was now over eleven weeks (20 December 2020) since the Welsh Government put Wales into Alert Level Four restrictions. The last few months were difficult for us all and impacted on normal ways of life, such as visiting close friends and family, children and young people going to school, colleges and University; and non-essential businesses having to close.

As we moved into spring and the weather improved the Council understood the frustration and willingness of people to get back into normal ways of life. People were urged however, to keep to the social distancing measures and to comply with the Welsh Government guidance to keep the case rate as low as possible to allow the NHS can recover.

The Leader thanked Newport Live for their contribution, with vaccination centre in the City Centre.

The rollout of the vaccine had seen over 900,000 people receive their first dose and over 40s were already being offered the vaccine.

The Leader encouraged residents of Newport to take up the vaccine when it was offered and encourage friends and family to do the same to get to normal as soon as possible.

Newport Council and its partners supported schools in seeing the return of foundation children back into schools and remaining primary school children returning back on 15 March. It was important that all parents and guardians helped their schools by maintaining social distancing rules and to report as soon as possible any potential Covid cases.

Newport's economy had seen significant setbacks as businesses closed, residents lost their jobs and/or were on Furlough. Newport Council and its partners were committed to supporting people to get back into work, to reskill and/or train. The Council was also committed to supporting the businesses to return as restrictions were eased and encourage everyone in Newport to support their local business.

A recent Estyn report on how local authorities and regional education consortia have supported pupils (most vulnerable) during the crisis was in circulation. The recommendations raised in the report were already being addressed by the Council and Newport's schools.

Ongoing economic activity on major projects were progressing well and announcements of Heritage Lottery Funding for the Transporter Bridge was welcomed.

There was also ongoing progress being made with Housing projects and provision of affordable housing across the City.

The Council continued to offer services online and where not possible in line with social distancing restrictions.

Further updates on the Council's progress will be provided next month.

Comments from Cabinet Members:

Councillor Davies echoed the key points raised and understood that it was a tremendously difficult time for residents. The Cabinet Member thanked everyone for adhering to the principles of isolation; working from home during lockdown. The Cabinet Member wanted to focus on how difficult it was for the economy and that Newport City Council made a huge difference providing help and advice. The achievement by Newport in relation to strategic recovery aims was very positive, the indoor market project commenced along with the Capital City Region investment, which was progressing. Newport and Conwy were successfully selected in a recent bid as pilot for an all Wales local area energy plan project to help us look at ways to improve carbon reduction. The WG aimed to be carbon neutral by 2030 this should therefore be applauded during this difficult time.

Councillor Harvey thanked everyone in Newport who largely abided by the rules during the pandemic. The Cabinet Member was pleased to remind colleagues of the recent introduction of new electric buses purchased by Newport Transport. In addition to this, Newport Transport was now a Dementia Friendly Company with the first Dementia Friendly bus in Wales, this was another step in the right direction. The Cabinet Member was pleased to announce that Newport City Council and its partners were putting all the residents first.

Councillor Truman echoed comments of colleagues and was pleased to see the community spirit shown by Newport residents thrive during the pandemic. The Cabinet Member thanked environmental officers and trading standards officers for keeping Newport safe. All Newport staff deserved a pat on the back for their hard work.

Councillor Rahman mentioned that Newport had come a long way as an authority and as a community and the recovery was encouraging. Newport City Council continued to provide services thanked all council staff risking their lives and their family to keep Newport services running. The Riverfront was busy and full of life, taking advantage of the infrastructure and the active travel routes. Also mentioned the 143,259 people who had died from the pandemic, which was equivalent to the residents in Newport, which put it into perspective. Newport acted swiftly to limit impact of the pandemic to our communities. BAME groups were also vulnerable and swift action limited lives being lost and helped the livelihood of these people with grant money with the help of partners and WG, by comparison to other local councils. The Cabinet Member thanked the Leader and council officers and urged residents to take up the vaccine if offered.

The Leader highlighted the grants for business provided by the Council who were quick to act, supporting small business grants and start-ups as well as large businesses. The Council tried really hard to help those businesses and the guidance and support was still there for these businesses.

Councillor Cockeram referred to Newport Transport and that every bus driver would have a badge on their bus to show that they were dementia friendly and would be receiving a national award for their achievement. It was hoped that this would have a positive knock on

effect other modes of public transport such as taxis. The Cabinet Member was pleased for Councillor Harvey and Newport Transport board members.

The Leader hoped that all partnerships would be ready to facilitate excellent public transport in light of the UK Government considering investment in the South East Wales corridor.

Councillor Jeavons welcomed the positive news in the report and hoped that more good news would be delivered by WG on Friday at the end of the three-week period. Thanked all members of staff within council and echoed comments of cabinet members. The Deputy Leader urged people to proceed with caution to bring infections down.

Councillor Mayer mentioned the role of the community hubs who had provided wonderful support from day one, delivering food packages. They would have also matured enormously as a service for the council and would enhance public provision in the future.

The Leader added that in her role as Leader she had met almost daily since the pandemic with officers and colleagues. No one was immune to the dreadful disease and some of us had been touched by this pandemic in one way or another, without a proper opportunity to say goodbye, which was difficult. With this in mind, the Leader advised that the council would be lighting up the Civic Tower, in yellow, on 23 March for a national day of reflection, which was right and proper to reflect on our losses during this period.

Decision:

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

8 **Brexit Update**

The Leader presented to Cabinet the Brexit report, which was an update on the progress in the post Brexit / trade arrangements since 31 December 2020.

Since the last Cabinet Report, it was nine weeks since the United Kingdom officially left the European Union (EU) and the Single Market. Under the new tariff free trade agreement businesses (importers / exporters) on both sides (UK and EU) were required to comply with the new custom arrangements.

It had already been widely reported that some businesses were struggling to meet these requirements with reports of goods failing to be delivered and/or accepted due to paperwork and overall loss of income.

Whilst it was anticipated that there would be short term disruptions, in the medium to long term, it was important that ongoing support was provided to ensure that this became less burdensome on businesses.

The future economic resilience of Newport and South East Wales was vital to ensure that existing and new businesses could sustainably thrive. As the Council's administration, it was also important that we promoted the 'Newport Offer' to home grown entrepreneurs as well as global businesses.

Having a diverse and sustainable economy that was able to provide sustainable growth would enable Newport's communities not just to 'level up' but also provided opportunities for communities to thrive in the long term for Newport's future generations.

The Leader added that it was important that Cabinet act as a voice for Newport and worked with its Partners (Cardiff Capital Region, Public Services Board, Western Gateway) to ensure

Newport's most disadvantaged communities and groups were able to access these opportunities to level up and enable Newport to recover from this pandemic.

What made Newport a great City to live, work and visit was its diverse communities and groups. Newport was and would always be a welcoming City for people from all nations no matter their race, sexuality, and religion.

For EU citizens already living in Newport, it was important that they, family members and friends applied for EU Settled Status before 30 June 2021.

- Newport Council and the Welsh Government had all the relevant information to help residents to apply.
- Newport Council was working with its partners to ensure people were supported throughout the process.

It remained a concern for Newport City Council that EU citizens were reporting issues relating to their rights, issues of hostility and access to public funds. As representatives of Newport's wards it was important that the Council supported its communities.

Newport Council's communications team continued to share Welsh Government information on the new trade arrangements, business requirements and information for EU citizens. This was being shared through Social Media, Business newsletters and the Council's website.

In the first two months of the new arrangement, Newport Council's services had not reported any initial issues and/or concerns in the supply of goods and services.

The Council's finance team (including Procurement) reported some increases in the cost of procurement but overall supply operated as normal.

As part of the Council's financial prudence, contingencies were in place to manage Brexit / Covid impacts and as the risk stabilised in time this allocation would be re-prioritised.

The Regulatory Services continued to offer support to businesses and Environmental Health staff completed necessary training to complete health certificate checks.

The Council's Community Cohesion officers continued to work with EU communities and offering support for vulnerable communities. Local groups / charities were also being offered the opportunity to access Food Poverty support that have been impacted by Brexit / Covid.

Decision:

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

9 **Work Programme**

This is your regular monthly report on the work programme.

Please move acceptance of the updated programme.

Decision:

That Cabinet accepted the updated programme.

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