

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 9 March 2022

Time: 4.00 pm

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

1 Apologies for Absence

None received.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Jeavons and Davies declared that they were Board Members of the SW EAS.

3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting from 18 February 2022 were accepted as a true record.

Matters Arising

The Leader was delighted to confirm that Welsh Government approved a request to change the scope of the overall Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) funding envelope for the Council's Band B programme.

As a result, a new £10m project would be added to the programme to support works at St Andrews Primary School to replace the Key Stage 2 building which was currently not being used as a result of structural issues identified in the spring term of 2021.

Officers in the Education Service would work with our colleagues in Newport Norse to develop designs for a permanent solution on the site within this funding envelope, and with a view to Key Stage 2 pupils returning to the site from September 2023.

In the meantime, the Leader thanked Newport Live for enabling the ongoing use of the Connect Centre as a temporary site for pupils, and of course thanked the school community for their ongoing support and resilience.

The Leader was sure that Cabinet would agree that this was an excellent piece of news as Cabinet looked forward to a time in the near future when the whole school could be reunited on one site.

Comments from Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Jeavons felt that it was wonderful news that the school would have all pupils and staff back on the one site. The it was a shame that the building on Corporation Road would be demolished and was testimony to the community infrastructure. The brand-new building however was a welcome addition to Lliswerry.

- Councillor Davies echoed comments of Deputy Leader and thanked officers involved in the project as well as the WG who provided funding which was extremely welcome. The building was part of the 21st Century Schools and was fit for purpose for pupils of St Andrews.

The Leader thanked both the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Skills for their continued support.

4 **Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2022/25**

The Leader presented the report to Cabinet. The Education Achievement Service (EAS) were due to circulate the final version of the plan during the week commencing the 21 February.

Joint Executive Group (JEG) Members agreed that the EAS should move to a three-year Business Plan model, with a detailed annual update for Members to agree, as per the requirements within the Collaboration and Members Agreement (CAMA).

In addition to regular JEG meetings, senior EAS staff attended monthly quality assurance meetings with Local Authority Officers. These Local Authority Officers provided professional learning for school governors which was advertised via the EAS.

Newport specific topics delivered during the autumn 2021 and spring 2022 terms included:

- Financial Management Responsibilities
- Safeguarding for Designated Governors/Chair of Governors
- Managing Pupil Exclusions from Schools and Pupil Referral Units
- Supporting learners who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Supporting Service Children/Military Children in your school

There was a universal offer of professional learning support available to schools in each of the following areas:

- School Improvement
- Leadership and Teaching
- Curriculum for Wales
- Health Wellbeing and Equity and
- School Governors.

Additional support was also available to schools, tailored to meet specific needs:

- Schools receive a set number of days to work with their School Improvement Partner (SIP) and engage in professional dialogue with the EAS and LA to agree and/or amend their improvement priorities and support requirements.
- Bespoke support would also be available for schools who required more intensive support. This included more support from the SIP or the use of a Learning Network School to School Partnership. There was no fixed allocation to this support.

The Draft Priorities for Newport were:

- Development and implementation of the new curriculum
- Ensure effective teaching and learning for learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
- Estyn Inspection R1: Improve the overall performance of secondary schools
- Estyn Inspection R2: Reduce the variance in progress/outcomes for learners eligible for Free School Meals and those not eligible
- Estyn Thematic Review: Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for

example pupils eligible for free school meals

- Estyn Thematic Review: Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils

Comments from Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Davies, business plan was a model and welcomed to sustain a sensitive approach to supporting Newport Schools. It also recognised that there was a pandemic and accounted for the change in the way education had been undertaken. Business Plan made it clear that all schools would see school improvement and supporting teachers. The EAS were committed to undertaking a review for each authority and the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and LA therefore supported the report.
- Councillor Harvey mentioned that it was really good to see nearly 800 school governors and that it was a testimony to those dedicated in supporting their schools. The training programme was very comprehensive.
- Councillor Jeavons, as a board member the Deputy Leader wanted to thank the EAS for the report and echoed comments Cabinet Member colleagues.

The Leader invited Ed Pryce, Assistant Director, South East Wales Education Achievement Service to say a few words.

Ed Pryce thanked Cabinet Member for their comments and added that the final report was available with Democratic Services. The finance element included resource implications and would continue to deliver funding to schools and continue to meet the high delegation rates.

The Leader thanked Ed Pryce for his attendance, which was appreciated by Cabinet.

Decision:

That Cabinet

- Received the report for information and take the opportunity to comment on the contents of the Business Plan as part of the consultation process; and
- Considered the main strengths and areas for development within Newport, and considered how LA services could be aligned with the priorities contained within the document, therefore ensuring all pupils met their full potential.

5 Revisions to the South East Wales EAS Collaboration and Members Agreement (The CAMA)

The Leader presented the report, explaining to colleagues that was a CAMA (Collaboration and Members Agreement) in place since 2012 when the EAS began. This was a revision to the agreement 10 years on.

The CAMA described the agreement between the *Education Achievement Service (EAS)* and the five local authorities (Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent).

The EAS Company Board requested an update to the CAMA as their funding model changed over the last decade. Since the start of the EAS, there were now less core staff employed and a higher delegated funding rate to schools.

Legally, to keep the company from going into liquidation the EAS Company Board needed to retain 50% of their responsible outgoings.

The updated CAMA clarified that any future EAS staff severance costs would be paid by the EAS if funds were above their 50% of responsible outgoings. In the event that there were insufficient funds available, the five Local Authorities would pay a proportion of these costs. This was a normal expectation of a joint funded partnership.

The risk level was low as the EAS had significantly reduced contracted staff. Head teachers acted as 'School Improvement Partners' which supported 'school to school' working and allowed schools to income generate and retain more funds.

The Joint Officers Group, made up of a Cabinet Member from each local authority had a role in evaluating the EAS staffing structures and a specific contingency fund set up in Newport to manage any unforeseen but agreed severance costs for the EAS, should they be required. If one of the local authorities decide to withdraw from the EAS, they would be responsible for 100% of the associated severance costs.

This revised agreement was very important because it enabled the EAS, as an Arm's Length Company, to have financial stability without individual local authorities having to set up separate and expensive school improvement services.

Comments from Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Davies supported the recommendation regarding the severance cost in principle, as outlined in proposal in the report.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed to the revised form of wording in paragraph 1.11, agreeing that Newport City Council (as one of the five local authorities) pay pro rata EAS employee severance costs remaining, after the company has used 50% of its previous year end reserve balance to pay the first portion of these severance costs.

6 Corporate Risk Register - Quarter 3

The Leader presented the report to colleagues on the update of the Council's Corporate Risk Register for the end of Quarter Three, 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2021.

Cabinet members were asked to consider the contents of this report and continue the monitoring of these risks and the actions being taken to address the risks identified in the report.

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

The Quarter three risk report would also be presented to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee at the end of March (2022) to review the Council's risk management process and governance arrangements.

At the end of quarter three the Council had 44 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 two, 18 risks were recorded in the Corporate Risk Register:

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

In comparison to quarter two, 16 risks had remained at the same risk score with two risk scores decreasing:

- Ash Dieback Disease – Since the Council commenced its programme of work to remove diseased trees the risk score has reduced from 20 to 16. The delivery of this work was being assessed every quarter and replacement trees are planted in Newport.
- Balancing the Council's medium-term budget – The Council received its 2022/23 funding settlement figure from Welsh Government as well as indicative funding allocations for the following two years. The 22/23 settlement figure was more positive than anticipated and the Council's budget for 22/23 has been approved. The overall medium term financial plan was broadly balanced but additional pressures could emerge and result in a budget gap.

Comments from Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Davies referred to the two red risk markers against education services. This was in relation to the demand for ALN and SEN support in schools, this had been an ongoing concern in the last financial year, with the legislative changes brought about by the WG. The other key risk was financial services, however with the £8.1M investment the Cabinet Member was confident that we could deliver an improved service.
- Councillor Jeavons was pleased that the Ash Die Back score had reduced from 20 to 13 and thanked City Services and the specialist partners who were undertaking the removal of these trees.
- Councillor Cockeram referred to social services and the staffing issue across Wales and the UK. The Regional Partnership Board would write to the minister regarding problems with staff payment as Councils could not compete with the Health Care sector.

The Leader thanked staff for their hard work in Newport City Council Care homes and outstanding contribution and resilience.

Decision:

Cabinet considered the contents of the quarter two update of the Corporate Risk Register.

7 Climate Change Plan

The Leader was pleased to present our organisational Climate Change Plan to colleagues.

Climate Change was one of the defining global challenges of our generation and there was an urgent need for the world to decarbonise, to limit global temperature rise and avert the worst impacts of climate change. There was also a need for the world to adapt to the impacts of climate change now and in the future.

As a globally responsible organisation, the Council declared an ecological and climate emergency in November stating that we would:

Develop a clear Climate Change Organisational plan, in consultation with our citizens, for the next five years that would set out the actions we need to take to achieve this.

As part of the declaration, we also stated we would:

Reduce council carbon emissions to net zero carbon by 2030, and

Review the services the council provided to ensure they support the city's journey to both net zero carbon and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Our Climate Change Plan set out the themes, priorities, actions, and milestones that were needed to take over the next five years to achieve that commitment.

The plan was developed by staff and managers across the council and was scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in October 2021.

A full public consultation took place in November and December 2021 where over 600 individual comments were received which have helped to shape the plan further.

The plan would be a key document for the Council going forward and would guide our direction of travel as an organisation in tackling the climate and nature emergency and their impacts.

The Leader invited the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development to comment.

Councillor Hughes mentioned that the Council had made a good start and had already made a substantial reduction in carbon emissions exceeding targets set out in our Carbon Management Plan. This resulted in a 29% reduction of scope 1 and scope 2 emissions over the last three years.

Councillor Hughes looked forward to further reductions as we continue to retrofit our council buildings, and further increase our electric fleet vehicles.

There was however, still much more that we needed to do as an organisation to mitigate and adapt to the nature and climate emergency and our organisational Climate Change Plan would set us on the right path for this journey to ensure we act on behalf of current and future generations.

As Cabinet Member with responsibility for carbon reduction and future generations, Councillor Hughes was pleased to see the fruition of this plan and would be monitoring progress closely and requesting regular progress updates to ensure that we continued to proceed at the pace that would be required.

Comments from Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Davies added that as previous Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, she was tasked by the Leader to take forward the plan at the beginning of the pandemic and since that time, the Climate Change Plan had developed immensely. This was not only because of the support of Councillor Hughes but also because of the support of officers. Councillor Davies thanked Tracy McKim, Head of People (Policy and Transformation), Emma Wakeham (Senior Policy and Partnership Officer) and Ross Cudlipp (Carbon Reduction Manager) for their involvement and hard work which had structured the development into a plan of action. It was our corporate responsibility to take this forward, as this would have more of an impact with positive consequences.
- Councillor Harvey felt it was a fascinating document to read which covered all the basis and could only get better. Councillor Harvey added that it was down to us as a Council to make a stand and protect what we had in place for future generations.
- Councillor Truman said that the document set out the targets which needed to be acted upon immediately as future generations would remember and judge the decisions made by us.
- Councillor Jeavons mentioned it was a worthwhile report, highlighting the achievements of Newport City Council. The prospect of changing the home to school transport for the future with the introduction of electric or hydrogen transport would be a fantastic achievement.

The Leader added that whether this was an individual change or on a larger scale, the Council needed to work hard to achieve this change for the future. The Leader was incredibly proud of the Council and what it had achieved through this Climate Change Plan.

Decision:

Cabinet approved the attached draft council organisational Climate Change Plan.

8 Covid Recovery Update

The Leader presented the report to colleagues advising that despite all of the challenges being faced in Wales and the world in the last month, Covid remained prevalent across its communities.

Whilst cases continued to fall the impacts of restrictions over the last two years continued to impact the health and social care sector.

Wales remained at alert level 0 and from 28 February masks would only be required in retail, public transport and health and care settings.

The Welsh Government continued to take a cautious approach and in March would be assessing the public health position and whether to remove the legal requirement to wear face coverings by the end of March.

For elected members and officers in the Council the advice remained to work remotely unless required by their role.

As part of the Council's New Normal project preparations were being made for staff to undertake hybrid working, ensuring rooms and facilities across the Council's estate were suitable and safe places to work and undertake our democratic roles. The Leader added that the Cabinet meeting in April would be a hybrid meeting.

Both this report and the EU Transition report were highlighting the ongoing pressures and uncertainty many households faced across Newport and Wales with the cost-of-living crisis caused by rising energy, food and fuel costs.

Both Newport Council and the Welsh Government were supporting households and businesses struggling to meet these pressures. Newport Council had committed an additional £100,000 towards tackling food poverty, supporting food charities and groups.

The Council was also supporting the Welsh Government's Winter Fuel Support scheme which was extended to 28 February and with amounts increased from £100 to £200.

The Leader added that it was important that councillors supported struggling households and people in Newport, helping them to find the right support and guidance during this difficult time.

- Strategic Recovery Aim 1 – The Work and Skills team are working in collaboration with Acorn Recruitment Agency, offering opportunities for residents to work in the health and social care sector.
- Strategic Recovery Aim 1 – Newport Council secured 3-year Children and Communities grant funding to support families across Newport

- Strategic Recovery Aim 2 – Completion of major schemes such as the Indoor Market, Market Arcade and Chartist Tower will be supporting the rejuvenation of city centre.
- Strategic Recovery Aim 2 – Awarded 18 City of Newport Business Development grants
- Strategic Recovery Aim 3 – Library and community services operating normal hours
- Strategic Recovery Aim 3 – Adult services supported our most vulnerable residents during the recent storms ensuring they had safe and secure accommodation before returning back home.
- Strategic Recovery Aim 4 – Projects to improve housing and temporary accommodation for residents have been continuing.
- Strategic Recovery Aim 4 – Participatory budget work awarding funding towards projects across Newport to help communities recover from the pandemic.

Comments from Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Truman took the opportunity to thank all officers within Newport City Council as he was retiring in May, in particular, Trading Standards, Licensing and Environmental officers.

The Leader and Chief Executive thanked Councillor Truman and all members who would be standing down this year on behalf of all officers of Newport City Council.

- Councillor Davies echoed the comments of the Leader and the Chief Executive. The impact on the health and care sector meant that there had been a loss of key workers. The Council officers had set up a bespoke programme to attract people into the care sector. This included access to free training, the WG demanded that every care worker had a recognised qualification and that would be provided for free by Newport City Council. In addition to this, earlier today, the Cabinet Member was invited to a similar arrangement in relation to the construction industry which was taking place at the Newport East hub to focus on free access to training for their CSE Card. The hub was full of young people which showed signs of positive recovery across the city. The library was also open in the Newport East Hub and the learning academy was full, with 16-18 year old students working hard.
- Councillor Jeavons thanked Councillor Truman and referred to front line services who continued to work during the pandemic and asked to spare a thought for these people, especially for those living with people at risk to catching Covid.
- Councillor Harvey echoed comments and thanked Councillor Truman for his support.
- Councillor Hughes also thanked Councillor Truman. As a trustee of a local food bank acknowledged the support of Newport City Council and £100,000 allocated.
- Councillor Cockeram wished Councillor Truman all the very best for the future. In relation to the issues with social services, work experience and placement was discussed in colleges in relation to domiciliary care. Also offering places for university students in care homes for their work experience.

Decision:

Cabinet noted the contents of the report and received updates from officers as part of their portfolio.

9 Post EU Transition Update

The Leader presented the report the above report to Colleagues. Since the last Cabinet Report in February, global uncertainty continued to impact on people's lives in Newport and Wales.

On 1 March, Newport Council presented and passed a motion in relation to the current situation in Ukraine and was united across all parties in its response to the dreadful attack on Ukraine and its people. This was a heart-breaking situation for the Ukrainian people, many of whom were having to leave their homes to find refuge.

It was also concerning for Ukrainian citizens living and working in Newport and across Wales, for their loved ones and their country.

Newport had a long and proud tradition of giving sanctuary to refugees and would do what it could to help those impacted by this unwarranted invasion.

Also for European and global citizens living in Newport it was important to stress that they were also valued residents that could live, work and contribute towards making Newport a multi-cultural place to live.

The Ukrainian conflict was just one of several global situations that was having an impact on the cost of living in Newport and Wales.

The rising costs of energy, food and fuel was impacting all households but it was having the hardest impact on some of the city's most vulnerable residents.

The Welsh Government and the Council were doing all it could for households during this difficult time and there were services that could support and alleviate these pressures. The Leader and Councillor Hughes passed a motion at Council on 1 March, in relation to the National Cost of Living Crisis, to write to central government for action to suspend the proposed increase in National Insurance contributions, reduce VAT for Energy Bills, and introduce a new lower price cap on energy bills to households from excessive price rises. Newport Council would be administering the Council Tax rebate relief for A to D band houses and additional rate relief schemes have been agreed that would support many businesses still recovering from the impact of the pandemic.

The Council was also continuing to support food poverty groups and organisations providing funding and support to distribute food and debt advice.

This Report also recognised that there was still more the Council could and would do to support communities, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in Newport and would be evolving its work alongside third sector and other public services to address the concerns raised by residents.

Comments from Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Hughes wanted to acknowledge the support that people in Newport were giving to the Ukrainians through aid and was proud to be part of the city.
- Councillor Harvey received a message from Newport Veterans hub who were loading supplies on a wagon to be sent over to the Ukraine. Councillor Harvey also expressed her pride in the city.

The Leader reflected on the situation and wanted to remind residents that they had the support of the Council. The Leader was very proud of the Polish community for their mobilisation of aid. There were also Russian citizens in Newport and the Council recognised

that the actions were that of one person in Government and welcomed everyone to the Newport Community.

Decision:

Cabinet noted the contents of the report and received updates from officers as part of their portfolio.

10 **Work Programme**

This was the regular monthly report on the work programme.

Please move acceptance of the updated programme.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the Work Programme.