

# Minutes



## Cabinet

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Date: 5 May 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

Apologies: Councillor G Giles

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### 1 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Gail Giles

### 2 Declarations of Interest

Nothing apparent.

### 3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Minutes from 7 April – please move confirmation as a true record.

### 4 Policy Review; Compliments, Comments and Complaints and Unacceptable Actions by Complainants

The Leader to present the report to Cabinet.

The Council had a clear policy in place that explained how it managed feedback from residents for a number of years. There were a number of recent changes to key legislation that affected the council listened and learned from residents.

The primary driver for the amendments was to reflect the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019. In September 2020, the Ombudsman wrote to all Local Authorities and confirmed that the revised Statement of Principles, Model Complaint Handling Process, and Guidance were in full effect. The Ombudsman requested that public bodies reflected on how their practices and procedures complied with the updated guidance and how they would ensure that all complaints were captured appropriately.

The key changes to the policy included

- Changes to the reporting and monitoring arrangements.
  - Updated definitions of Roles and Responsibilities for the management of complaints.
  - Increased clarity on the arrangements for managing complaints regarding partners and service providers commissioned by the Council to provide services.
- And;
- Increased signposting to advocacy and support services.

The updated reporting and monitoring arrangements also reflected the requirements of the Local Governance and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 which came into effect on 1 April 2021.

The statutory function of the new Governance and Audit Committee's included reviewing and assessing the Council's ability to handle complaints effectively, and to report on and make recommendations in this respect.

In addition to the Ombudsman's requirements, there were other changes to legislation that concerned complaints handling which were reflected in the updated policy. These included:

- The Regulated Fostering Services (Services Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019
- RISCA (Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016)
- Welsh Language Standards Regulations (No.7) 2018
- Challenging Bullying – Rights, respect, equality: Statutory guidance for local authorities (2019).

These changes to the policy were concerned with making it clear to residents how complaints in these specific areas were dealt with, including signposting to access further help and support.

There were also some minor changes to the policy regarding Unacceptable Actions by Complainants. Whilst the council was committed to dealing with all complaints equitably, comprehensively, and in a timely manner, the council did not expect staff to tolerate abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour. In some cases, unreasonable behaviour could also impede the investigation of the individual's complaint or could have significant resource issues for the council.

The policy confirmed the arrangements in place to address these issues in a confidential, fair and objective manner via a forum that met on a regular basis to review these cases and agree any appropriate action within the remit of the policy. The policy also reflected the fact that not all unacceptable behaviour was in relation to complaints.

Cabinet were asked to consider and endorse the revised Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy, and the new Unacceptable Actions by Customers policy, to be introduced from 10 May 2021 in order to meet statutory and legislative requirements.

#### Comments of Cabinet Members:

Councillor Mayer mentioned that the Council were very good at handling any issues that arose and that it was very rare that complaints proceeded to the ombudsman. Councillor Mayer added that Councillor Cockeram and along with other Cabinet Member colleagues were concerned that in the past only complaints were processed but it was a positive step forward now that members of the public could pay the council compliments. Councillor Mayer encouraged everyone to record compliments as well as complaints in future.

Councillor Davies commended the on its openness and transparency and mentioned that there was clear signposting for members of the public to complain, particularly in relation to equalities assessment and the Future Wellbeing and Generations Act.

Councillor Cockeram endorsed the previous comments and was pleased to see that compliments had moved up the agenda and that guidance needed to be changed to reflect this. Staff should also be encouraged to record compliments from the Chief Executive to all staff members in a better manner.

Councillor Truman echoed comments of colleagues and welcomed the new compliments format.

Councillor Rahman added that the policy gave every citizen the right to be heard and respected. This Council was willing to listen to residents and were open and transparent.

Resources were in place now and going forward the council would learn from their mistakes and do better.

Decision:

Cabinet were asked to review and endorse the proposed amendments to policies.

## 5 **Covid-19 Recovery Update**

The Leader to present the report to Cabinet.

This Cabinet Report was 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 and Corporate Plan.

For Newport Council this was an unprecedented period of time where we had faced many difficult decisions, seeing residents and businesses impacted by Covid and the restrictions to protect the most vulnerable in our communities. There was not one person who had not been impacted by this pandemic.

We have seen Councillors across all political parties, officers and our strategic partners in health, Newport Live, Shared Resource Service, Newport Norse and other service providers coming together to solve emerging issues; finding innovative and new ways of delivering our services, and supporting those who need our help.

The Council also knew that there was more we could and would do to support people and businesses out of this crisis.

Council's Covid-19 Response and Progress to date:

Since the previous report in April, further restrictions were eased enabling residents and businesses to slowly return back to normal routines.

With outdoor hospitality and activities reopening (indoor hospitality reopening in May) and other businesses being open since April, it was important that we support our local businesses and economy across Newport to provide a sustainable and successful economy for the future.

The vaccination programme continued to progress across the age groups in Wales with over 1.7 million people that have now received their first vaccination. There was still some way to go and it was just as important for people between 18 and 39 to get vaccinated including our ethnic minority communities in Newport.

This however did not mean that the brakes were off and we could return back to how it was before Covid. As we have seen in countries such as Brazil and India who had significantly suffered it was important that we remained vigilant in keeping to social distancing that those who had symptoms, or their friends or family should get tested, self-isolate and follow the guidelines from Public Health Wales.

Despite the challenges we faced, officers and our partners continued to deliver services across communities in Newport in the last 12 months.

The Council had seen how resilient and resourceful officers were in working from home, looking after their children, family members and home schooling, as well as those officers, teachers, social service staff who had continued to be out across Newport collecting waste, cleaning our streets, visiting and looking after the most vulnerable in the city.

The Council was also looking forward, by shaping how our services were sustainably delivered in the future. This included looking at new ways of working, developing models that would enable staff and service users to use technology and our buildings differently.

In the last month the following key areas were delivered:

- All schools fully reopened in April.
- Libraries and Community Hubs reopened to enable people to access library and other community services.

#### Comments of Cabinet Members:

Councillor Truman commented that the report covered everything and observed how well communities came together during the pandemic. Businesses and partners had also come a long way. Vaccinations had gone really well but Newport needed to proceed with caution. Councillor Truman thanked all citizens and workers of Newport for their continued support.

Councillor Cockeram gave big thank you to foster carers looking after children under the care of Newport City Council during this period.

Councillor Jeavons expressed thanks to Waste Savers and thanked Newport citizens for their patience and understanding.

Councillor Rahman thanked partners, residents and business within Newport tackling the pandemic and Newport Live. Councillor Rahman was glad to see gyms reopening and from 17 May it was hoped to see opening of hospitality such as theatres. Councillor Rahman also thanked Rodney Parade for giving up their grounds for the testing centres and thanked council staff for their hard work and contribution. It was also important that there were restrictions still in place, such as social distancing and washing of hands. We needed to do our part to ensure we were heading in the right direction. Councillor Rahman thanked the Leader for supporting businesses with grants, adding that Newport City Council was one of the, it not the first authority to provide these grants.

Finally, the Leader thanked residents, partners, stakeholders for their support and thanked her Cabinet colleagues for acknowledging this.

#### Decision:

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.

## **6 Brexit Update Report**

Leader to present the report to Cabinet.

This Cabinet Report was an update on the progress in the post Brexit / trade arrangements since 31 December 2020.

The United Kingdom left the European Union and the Single Market on 31 December 2020 businesses (importers / exporters) from the UK and EU were now having to comply with the new custom arrangements.

Since the last report in April, Newport Council launched its webpage on the Council's website for charities, local community groups, and education providers including colleges and universities to apply for UK Community Renewal Funding. The deadline to apply was Friday 21 May where they would be assessed and shortlisted for submission to the UK Government by 18 June 2021.

Newport Council is also exploring potential projects that could benefit from the Levelling Up Funding and bids will be submitted to the UK Government by 18 June 2021.

Newport Council and its partners were continuing to support residents living in Newport with the EU Settled Scheme before the 30 June deadline. Anyone who had not applied should do so and encourage their friends and family members to do so as well. Advice and guidance was offered by the Council to those that had concerns and/or required further assistance in applying.

The Council had seen an increase in the number of individuals / families with No Recourse to Public Funds requiring support and assistance. The Council was working with partners to support those presenting themselves to the Council to ensure they were able to access the services they need.

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

Decision:

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

**7 PSB Summary**

**8 Work Programme: New for June 2021 to May 2022**

Leader to present the report to Cabinet.

This is the regular monthly report on the work programme, which the Leader asked colleagues to move acceptance of the updated programme.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the Cabinet Work Programme for June 2021 to June 2022.

**9 Live Event**