



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

**CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL**  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**  
**COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A virtual meeting of the CABINET will be held on Thursday, 21st May, 2020 at  
3.30 pm

Contact: Hannah Williams - Council Business Unit (Tel No. 01443 424062)

Councillors wishing to request the facility to address the Cabinet on any of the business as listed below, must request to do so by 5pm on the Tuesday, 19 May 2020.

It must be noted that the facility to address the Cabinet is at the discretion of the Chair and each request will be considered based on the agenda items being considered, the interest of the member in each matter and the demands of the business on that day. Any member wishing to speak must do so in accordance with the arrangements proposed by the Chair, for facilitating participation of non-committee members, in a virtual meeting. To make such a request please email:- [ExecutiveandRegulatoryBusinessUnit@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:ExecutiveandRegulatoryBusinessUnit@rctcbc.gov.uk)

**ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

**Note:**

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest; and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they **must** notify the Chairman when they leave.

**2. MINUTES**

To receive the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February as an accurate record.

**(Pages 5 - 16)**

**3. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

To receive the report of the Chief Executive, which provides the Cabinet with the Council's response to COVID-19.

**(Pages 17 - 28)**

**4. THE LEADER'S SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

To receive the [Leader's Scheme of Delegation](#) following the recent amendment:

- The appointment of the Cabinet Member for Adult Community Services and the Welsh Language

**5. URGENT ITEMS**

To consider any urgent business as the Chairman feels appropriate.



**Director of Communications & Interim Head of Democratic Services**

**Circulation:-**

**Councillors:** Councillor A Morgan (Chair)  
Councillor M Webber (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor R Bevan  
Councillor A Crimmings  
Councillor M Norris  
Councillor J Rosser  
Councillor R Lewis  
Councillor C Leyshon  
Councillor G Hopkins

**Officers:** Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive  
Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Gio Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Nigel Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services  
Paul Mee, Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services  
Richard Evans, Director of Human Resources  
David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates  
Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development  
Andy Wilkins, Director of Legal Services  
Barrie Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services  
Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF

### RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 13 February 2020 at 10.30 am at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

#### County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:-

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber      Councillor R Bevan  
Councillor A Crimmings      Councillor M Norris  
Councillor J Rosser      Councillor R Lewis  
Councillor C Leyshon

#### Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive  
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Mr P Mee, Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services  
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources  
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services  
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services  
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

#### 103 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

#### 104 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 as an accurate record.

#### 105 Change to the order of the agenda

The Cabinet agreed that the agenda would be considered out of sequence as detailed in the minutes set out hereunder.

#### 106 Consideration for Family Engagement Officer Roles

The Director, Education and Inclusion Services presented the report to Cabinet, which sought consideration for the funding and consequent employment of Family Engagement Officers in six secondary/through schools to help tackle school attendance.

The Director informed Members that there had been a decline in secondary

school attendance within RCT in the academic year 2018/19, which placed RCT 22<sup>nd</sup> in the All Wales attendance table. As such, in order to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are supported, a model of best practice within the Primary Schools had been identified, that was believe to be beneficial to supporting attendance as well as forming and enhancing relationships with parents in the lowest performing settings.

The Director drew Members' attention to Section 5 of the report, where the Family Engagement Officer proposal was outlined. Members were asked to consider piloting the placement of a Family Engagement Officer in each of the following lowest performing schools:

- Porth Community School (Red)
- Aberdare Community School (Red)
- Mountain Ash Comprehensive School (Amber)
- Ferndale Community School (Amber)
- Tonyrefail Community School (Yellow)
- Ysgol Nantgwyn (Yellow)

The Cabinet Member for Education and Inclusion Services voiced her support for the proposal and spoke of Glenboi Primary School, where the role of the Family Engagement Officer had worked extremely well in engaging families and improving attendance.

The Leader and Deputy Leader spoke positive of the proposal and agreed that the good practice needs to be shared as supporting families is essential.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the information contained in the report; and
2. To the funding and consequent employment of Family Engagement Officers in six secondary/through schools to help improve attendance.

#### **107 Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 examination results for 2019 and Primary and Secondary School Categorisation for 2019/20**

The Director, Education and Inclusion Services provided the Cabinet with the final confirmation of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 examination results for 2018-19 and Primary and Secondary School Categorisation for 2019/20. Prior to her presentation, the Director advised of an oversight in the report, confirming that the data is final and not provisional.

The Director proceed to outline the results concluding that overall, the school categorisation outcomes suggest improvement in the numbers of primary schools requiring green and red support and that categorisation at secondary level remained stable. However, Members were informed that it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons across 2018 and 2019 datasets due to the fact that the 2019 outcomes include the 'first award' data only.

Members noted that in order to move away from threshold measures, Welsh Government no longer provide analyses on the percentage of learners achieving: individual subjects, including the Welsh Baccalaureate at Foundation or National level, or threshold performance measures, namely the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) or Level 2 threshold.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Inclusion Services thanked the Director

for the robust report. The Cabinet Member was pleased to note that although deprivation was an influence of educational performance, the Council remained ambitious with measures in place to improve performance where possible.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the information contained within the report; and
2. To note the action taken to date and the future planned intervention of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services in partnership with Local Authority Education Services and Central South Consortium to support schools currently categorised as amber and red.

## **108 Leader's Scheme of Delegation**

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication updated Members with the changes to the Leader's Scheme of Delegation and it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the Leader's Scheme of Delegation; and
2. To note that the Leader of the Council is able to amend the Scheme of Delegation relating to executive functions at any time during the year; and that an update of the 3A will be presented to Members at the next meeting of the Cabinet.

**(Note:** At this point in proceedings, County Borough Councillor J. Rosser left the meeting)

## **109 Recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group**

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, which met on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020, to consider a report on the draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy for Rhondda Cynon Taf and a report on the action that can be taken in the Air Quality Management Areas, to ensure air quality improves across the County Borough.

In respect of the Wildflower Grass Management Policy report, the Service Director advised that the Steering Group were in favour of the proposals to increase the number of sites in wildflower management and to establish a Biodiversity website.

In respect of the Air Quality Management Areas report, the Service Director advised that the Steering Group spoke of the Clean Air Day on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and felt that the Council's participation in the initiative would promote a positive message to its residents but agreed that the correct message would need to be conveyed, whether that be in respect of car sharing, cycling to work or tree planting. Furthermore, the Steering Group recommended that in addition to progressing with the short-term and practicable actions, the viable, long-term actions needed to be identified to include within the Council's Highway Capital Programme for Cabinet consideration

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and the Welsh Language echoed the feelings of the Steering Group in relation to the Wildflower Grass Management Policy report. The Cabinet Member stated the importance of encouraging biodiversity but reiterated the need to convey to the public that it is not a cost-cutting exercise.

The Cabinet Member went on to speak of the Air Quality Management Areas report, commenting that, generally, air quality across RCT is contained and managed well, with just sixteen small areas identified.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to praise the Climate Change Steering Group on the vast amount of work undertaken in such a short period of time.

Speaking of the Wildflower Grass Management Policy, Members recognised the importance of signage and communication to ensure residents understand the need for biodiversity across the Borough.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the two reports considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020; and
2. The recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group:
  - I. To approve the Wildflower Grass Management Policy for Rhondda Cynon Taf
  - II. To continue progressing with the short-term and practicable actions identified in Table B of the Air Quality Management Areas report;
  - III. That having regard to the current local circumstances, the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services work with the Group Director of Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services to identify the viable, long-term actions from Table B of the Air Quality Management Areas report, to include in the Council's Highway Capital Programme for Cabinet consideration; and
  - IV. That the Council seek to engage with its residents on the Clean Air Day, which is taking place on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2020, which is funded by the Welsh government and forms part of the wider Clean Air Day campaign across the UK.

## **110 Making a Difference: The Council's Draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024**

The Chief Executive set out a new draft Corporate Plan from 2020 – 2024, explaining that the draft Plan provides a vision for the County Borough and sets out the Council's priorities and objectives it will focus upon over the following four years.

The Chief Executive spoke of the consultation, which had been undertaken over a 12 week period and drew Members to the appendix to the report, where the feedback was outlined. Members noted that the feedback was particularly positive with a clear mandate supporting the Council's Vision and the three priorities.

The Leader spoke of how essential the Corporate Plan is to RCT, commenting that it paints a county wide picture, with all budget reports aligning to it. The Leader was pleased to advise that all of the priorities of the Council's previous Corporate Plan had been delivered and asked that all staff are thanked for their invaluable involvement.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider and challenge the draft Corporate Plan;
2. To note the feedback from the consultation process; and
3. To present the draft Corporate Plan to Council at its meeting on 4th March 2020.



## 111 ITU Collaboration

The Service Director, Frontline Services presented the report, which sought Cabinet approval for the Integrated Transport Units of both Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councils to work collaboratively to create a centre of excellence for the delivery of passenger transport services across both local authorities.

Members were referred to Section 5 of the report, where outlined for consideration was the proposal to pool together resources under a memorandum of understanding, which would be overseen by a joint board/steering group.

The Service Director emphasised that only when a full 12 months of data is available will a full and clear picture be available on how the collaboration is performing against the original business and delivery plan.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Heritage Services praised the proposal and commented that residents would continue to receive the best services, despite a decrease in funding from the Government. The Cabinet Member commented that she looked forward to the review in 12 months.

The Deputy Leader was pleased with the proposal and commented that the report evidenced the willingness of the Council to engage with its neighbouring Local Authorities to enhance the services provided to residents.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. That Council officers work with Caerphilly County Borough Council to explore the creation of a centre of excellence for the delivery of passenger transport services across Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf; and
2. That a further report be brought back to Cabinet on the outcome of that review for their formal consideration at a future date.

## 112 Supporting Town and Retail Businesses in Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Business Rate Reduction Scheme

The Director, Finance and Digital Services provided the Cabinet with the results of the consultation process on a local Business Rate Reduction Scheme for Rhondda Cynon Taf and an update on the continuation of the Welsh Government High Street and Retail Rate Relief (HSRR) Scheme for 2020/21.

The Director explained that the proposal offered a local discretionary relief to be provided in addition to the Welsh Government HSRR of up to a maximum of £300 per qualifying business. The Director drew Members' attention to Appendix 3 of the report, where the results of the eight week consultation were outlined.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services spoke positive of the report and welcomed both the Welsh Government Retail Relief, along with the Council's proposal of additional local discretionary relief. The Cabinet Member was disappointed that out of the 485 businesses that would benefit from the support, only 26 people responded to the online consultation.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the outcome of the consultation exercise as set out in paragraph 7 of the report;
2. To note the continuation of the Welsh Government High Street and Retail Rate Relief Scheme for the year for 2020/21; and
3. To proceed with the proposed local Business Rate Reduction Scheme for 2020/21.

**This meeting closed at 11.15 am**

**Cllr A Morgan  
Chairman.**



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

### **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET**

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 20 February 2020 at 10.30 am at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

#### **County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:-**

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber    Councillor R Bevan  
Councillor A Crimmings    Councillor M Norris  
Councillor J Rosser    Councillor R Lewis

#### **Officers in attendance**

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive  
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates  
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services  
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources  
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services  
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services  
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

#### **113 Apology for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor C. Leyshon.

#### **114 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

#### **115 The Council's Future Commitment to Delivering Shared Education Advisory Services**

The Director, Education and Inclusion Services provided the Cabinet with the decision of the Central South Consortium Joint Committee to consider shared education advisory services in partnership with the other four councils in the region for at least the next three years.

The Director spoke of the independent review of the Consortium, which had been commissioned by the ISOS Partnership and drew Members' attention to the appendices of the report, where the review and implementation plan, which had since been approved by the Joint Committee, was outlined. Members were pleased to note that the report evidenced that the educational performance of the Central South Region had significantly exceeded that of the other three Regions.

The Cabinet were informed that the report had also been presented to the Council's Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the 12th February 2020 where Members welcomed the review by ISOS but emphasised that the opportunity for local authority scrutiny functions to challenge the performance of the Consortium needed to be improved.

The Director informed Members that should the Council wish to withdraw from the Agreement, the earliest they could do so is 31st March 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Inclusion Services spoke positive of the outcome of the review, commenting on the importance of identifying areas for improvement. The Cabinet Member stated that the report would provide stability in a period of significant change to the educational sector in Wales.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the contents of this report; and
2. To support the decision of the Central South Consortium Joint Committee to continue to deliver shared educational advisory services in partnership with the other four councils in the region for at least the next three years.

## **116 Council Fees and Charges Policy 2020-2021**

The Director, Finance and Digital Services provided the Cabinet with the report which set out the proposed revisions to Council fees and charges levels for the financial year 2020/21 and details of fees and charges decisions already approved that could be included within the 2020/21 proposed Budget Strategy.

The Director spoke of the Cabinet's review of the fees and charges levels as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements and it was proposed that a 1.5% standard increase be agreed to be effective from 1st April 2020.

The Director drew Members' attention to Section 5 of the report, where a summary of proposed fees and charges, which were not subject to the proposed standard increase, were detailed:

- Leisure for life - Nil increase;
- Car Park Charges - Nil increase;
- Summer and Winter Playing Fees (Sports Clubs) - Nil increase;
- School Meals (Primary and Secondary) - Increase of 5p per meal (and then no increase for two years i.e. 2021/22 and 2022/23);
- Meals on Wheels and Day Centre Meals - Increase of 10p per meal;
- Pontypridd Lido (Adult users entry fee) - Increase of 50p per adult swim;
- Rhondda Heritage Park - Increase of £1 for the adult entry fee and family ticket for the Welsh Mining Experience (underground tour) and to standardise the non-entry fee for both adults and children for Santa's Toy Mine to £10

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Heritage spoke of the increase in charge for adults using Pontypridd Lido, advising that when consulted upon, residents were positive.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To approve the proposed revised levels for all areas of the

Council's fees and charges as set out at section 5 and detailed at Appendix 1 of the report;

2. To build the net budgetary impact (£2k for 2020/21) into the budget strategy proposals for consideration by Cabinet and Council as appropriate; and
3. To note the fees and charges decisions already approved and included in the 2020/21 proposed Budget Strategy.

## **117 The Council's 2020/21 Revenue Budget**

The Director, Finance and Digital Services provided the Cabinet with the results of the second phase of the Budget consultation in order for Members to consider and amend as necessary the draft budget strategy, which they would wish to recommend to Council at the meeting on 4th March 2020.

The Director advised that although the financial climate remained a challenge, the Council to date had delivered year on year balanced budgets alongside a robust investment programme, which supports key priorities.

Having regard to the repercussions of Storm Dennis and the devastation caused within RCT as a result of the floods, Members were asked to authorise the Director of Finance and Digital Services to amend the budget strategy report to reflect the impact of the allocation of £1M from General Reserves in response to Storm Dennis.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to thank the robust financial team, who she considered to be an asset to RCT and the staff who had continued to deliver. The Deputy Leader noted that the proposed Council Tax increase for 2020/21 of 2.85%, was stable considering the continuing financial pressures and was low in comparison to those proposed in neighbouring local authorities.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to speak of the atrocities caused by Storm Dennis in the local communities and praised residents for the support they have given one another. The deputy Leader was happy to support the additional recommendation, commenting that the payment would help residents and businesses at such a difficult time.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services was also happy to support the additional recommendation and stated that although Wales Audit Office recommend that the General Reserves remain above the minimum level of £10M, they are to be spent at a time of emergency, which it evidently was.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To recommend the Budget Strategy to Council on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020;
2. To authorise the Director of Finance and Digital Services to amend the level of contribution from the Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve as a consequence of any change to the Council's resource levels announced in the Final Local Government Settlement; and
3. To authorise the Director of Finance and Digital Services to amend the budget strategy report to reflect the impact of the allocation of £1M from General Reserves in response to Storm Dennis.

## 118 The Council's Capital Programme 2020/21 - 2022/23

The Director, Finance and Digital Services provided the Cabinet with the proposed three year Capital Programme for 2020/21 to 2022/23.

The Director advised that the proposed three year programme represents a total investment of £131.772M and comprises:

- A core programme of £42.300M over the next three years;
- Prudential borrowing of £20.249M to support the 21st Century Schools Programme, Llys Cadwyn Development and Highways improvement schemes;
- Specific grants of £16.819M;
- Earmarked reserves and revenue contributions previously allocated to schemes and investment priorities of £29.223M;
- Capital receipts, in addition to the 3 year core allocation, of £10.283M; and
- Additional and reallocated earmarked reserves of £1.658M and additional prudential borrowing of £7.500M to fund the investment priorities, alongside the one of Welsh Government capital funding of £2.692M.

In respect of the £1.658M of earmarked reserves, which in addition to the prudential borrowing make a total of £11.850M, the Director spoke of the numerous investment opportunities for the infrastructure, which would support the new Corporate Plan priorities.

Members spoke positive of the report, commenting on the previous significant investment undertaken by RCT and the ambition to further invest.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To propose the attached three year capital programme at Appendix A to Council on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 which includes:
  - A review and proposed release of earmarked reserve balances as detailed in paragraph 5.3 of the attached report;
  - Proposed investment priorities as detailed in paragraph 6.2 of the attached report;
  - The Council's core capital programme;
  - The Council's total capital programme including additional non core funding.
2. To authorise the Director of Finance and Digital Services to amend the level of Council Resources required to fund the Core Three Year Capital Programme as shown at Appendix 2 as a consequence of any change to the Council's capital resource levels announced in the Final Local Government Settlement.

## 119 To consider passing the following Resolution:

It was **RESOLVED**: "That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act".

**120 Acquisition of the Former Bingo Hall, Pontypridd**

The Director, Corporate Estates provided Members with an overview of his report which contained exempt information.

Following consideration of the report, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To acquire the Freehold interest of the premises at High Street, Pontypridd, known as the former Bingo Hall and Angharad's Night Club, at an agreed price plus VAT, fees and Land Transaction Tax;
2. To note that Welsh Government (WG) has offered funding support of £1.540M of Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) funding towards the total costs. The detailed terms and conditions of this funding are currently being finalised with WG;
3. To accept the offer of £1.540M of TRI funding from WG towards the acquisition, related fees and demolition costs of the premises at High Street, Pontypridd, known as the former Bingo Hall and Angharad's Night Club; and
4. To receive a further joint report from the Director of Corporate Estates and the Director of Prosperity and Development on the demolition and redevelopment of the site.

**This meeting closed at 11.05 am**

**Cllr A Morgan  
Chairman.**

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## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**21<sup>st</sup> MAY 2020**

#### **UPDATE ON COVID 19 POSITION IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

#### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR A MORGAN)**

**Author: Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update of the action taken by the Council as a result of the COVID 19 national emergency.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the action taken by the Council to date in response to the Covid 19 pandemic;
- 2.2 Request that a report estimating the potential financial impact of the Council's response to the pandemic is presented to the next Cabinet meeting;
- 2.3 Request that further reports that set out how the Council plans to reopen key services and public areas such as town centres and transport hubs are presented to future Cabinet meetings.

#### **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To provide a comprehensive summary for Cabinet of the action taken by the Council since the Covid 19 restrictions were imposed by the UK and Welsh Governments; and set out future steps the Council will take to prepare for the future phased lifting of these restrictions.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 In a televised address to the UK on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, the Prime Minister announced unprecedented lockdown measures to stop the spread of the Covid 19 virus between households, changing the way in which everyone in the UK lives their daily lives. This resulted in an initial three week lockdown of the movement of people, forcing people to remain at home, other than key workers, a significant increase in the UK Government's response from the changes introduced on:
- 16<sup>th</sup> March, which focused on avoiding all non-essential contact with others;
  - 20<sup>th</sup> March all bars, pubs, cafes and restaurants were closed, followed by the closure of schools and childcare facilities, except for the children of key workers.
- 4.2 The purpose of the lockdown has been very clear as set out in the four UK governments' messages of Stay at Home; Protect the NHS; Save Lives. The overwhelming focus has been to delay the virus and ensure the demand for NHS services does not exceed the supply, which could result in many hundred thousands of deaths.
- 4.3 There is a requirement in the new lockdown legislation that the respective governments review the position every three weeks and determine whether they increase, decrease or maintain the existing lockdown restraints across the UK. The most recent review of the current lockdown was at the weekend of the Victory In Europe celebrations on 8<sup>th</sup> May. The First Minister for Wales stated that whilst the virus infection rate had fallen and fewer people were being admitted to hospital, progress had not been sufficient to lift the lockdown restrictions, other than to ask local authorities to consider re-opening libraries and community waste recycling centres. The message from the Welsh Government remains the same – Stay at Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives.

#### **5. HOW HAS THE COUNCIL RESPONDED TO COVID 19?**

- 5.1 To respond to the challenges posed by the Covid 19 lockdown, the Council is continuing to operate the majority of its key functions, with reduced staffing levels.
- 5.2 The following bullet points provide more detail for Members on the level of service provided in response to this pandemic based on the Corporate Plan priorities of People, Place and Prosperity:
- **People**
    - Despite the impact of the pandemic across the country, our staff continue to provide social care services to vulnerable people in very difficult circumstances across the County Borough in people's own homes, residential homes, nursing homes, supported living and hostels;

- In order to manage the impact of the pandemic on the wellbeing of our most vulnerable adults and children and ensure safeguarding issues are addressed during this time we have established multi-agency regional and local Command responses to coordinating the critical safeguarding activities of our partner agencies;
- The Environmental Health, Procurement and the Social Care Commissioning teams working together to provide infection control support and guidance along with PPE to the care sector across the County Borough;
- Homelessness services, domestic abuse services and substance misuse services to vulnerable people. Over the past few weeks we have seen further rises in cases across these services;
- Community Meals services to the elderly. We have seen a significant increase in the take up of this service since with 635 people are receiving daily meals in their homes. A further 413 frozen meals are delivered each week to shielded vulnerable individuals who are unable to cook for themselves.
- We are also coordinating the Shielding Scheme and made contact with 6,726 people identified by the NHS as vulnerable to Covid 19 and are providing them with regular deliveries of food and medicines. This is managed and coordinated by staff displaced from services such as the Leisure Service;
- Key step down social care services for people leaving hospital to ensure the hospitals have the capacity to deal with Covid 19 patients
- The new extra care facility in Aberaman opened on 4<sup>th</sup> May and as at 12<sup>th</sup> May, 4 people have moved in and a further 5 new residents will be supported to take up occupancy over the next two weeks. The extracare facility will also provide some temporary respite accommodation in the short term to enable step up/down from people's own homes, where appropriate;
- The Community Services teams working with the HR and Prosperity teams have put in place the Shielding Scheme for vulnerable individuals and families, providing a service at a level well beyond that imagined by Welsh Government. The new service is managed and coordinated by staff displaced from a range of services such as the Leisure Service. The team has also made contact with 6,726 people identified by the NHS as vulnerable to Covid 19 and are providing them with regular deliveries of food and medicines;
- The Shielding Scheme is superbly supported by our Resilient Families Service and 361 community volunteers whose contribution has been appreciated by the Council and the local residents they are supporting;
- Our Children's Services, Attendance & Wellbeing Service and our schools are keeping in touch with some of our most vulnerable children and families. In addition, our education psychologists and specialist teachers are providing wellbeing support, advice and guidance to the individuals and families that require it, in these very stressful and uncertain times;

- In terms of back office functions a number of initiatives have been ongoing including the development of a Well-Being Helpline and counselling service that we have made available to all staff (including the independent care sector) who may be feeling worried, anxious and isolated which is available throughout the week;
- Whilst, on average, we have had over 1,600 staff unavailable for work due to sickness, self – isolating; being part of the shielded list; have underlying conditions that places an individual at risk, such as being pregnant; or lives in the same household as someone that needs to be shielded, many staff have offered to undertake different roles. Through an ongoing staff survey, 3,000 employees have already responded to the survey to say they will undertake work in the Care Sector and other essential services. So far 365 employees have been assigned to the Care sector, 200 employees have been assigned to the Community Hubs, 95 employees have been assigned to the telephone service to contact shielded residents and 25 employees have been assigned to the food distribution centre;
- To support the communication of key information to residents, the Council's web-pages have provided key service and public health messages. The Council has developed and promoted its own social media content to communicate the importance of social distancing measures and has proactively targeted these messages during key times, such as bank holidays to compliment the 'Stay at Home' public message . During this period the Council has communicated 2,400 social media messages relating to coronavirus, which have been viewed over 16M times to date; the Council's coronavirus webpages have also received 1.1M visits over this eight week period.
- **Place;**
  - The level of waste and recycling that is being collected is the equivalent of a Christmas period nearly every week, yet the waste collection and disposal services across the County Borough continue to provide the usual high levels of service.
  - Street cleansing, fleet maintenance, parks, and the essential highways maintenance teams are continuing to ensure communities are clean, and essential roads maintenance continues;
  - The highways and land reclamation engineering teams continue to address the flooding issues that caused so many problems for communities a few weeks before the lockdown and are monitoring (weekly in some cases) former colliery tips and addressing water issues to ensure their safety;
  - Our youth services, library services, and adult education services are delivering a wide range of provision on-line and the increased take up of these services has been considerable;
  - Increasing the capacity of our crematoria and burial services to cope with the extra demand and ensure funerals can be held with dignity and within a reasonable timescale;
- **Prosperity;**

- Business grants – we have processed and provided over £38m of business grants to over 3,300 businesses, 2,000 (£23m) of which were processed during the first week of the scheme;
- Business Support – we have been proactively working with small businesses who are finding it difficult to navigate the range of Government support measures available. This includes identifying support they could be eligible for and providing a brokerage service liaising with other Council services and external organisations such as Business Wales. The majority of business owners have expressed their appreciation for the support;
- Free school meals – for the first few weeks we provided 1,600 daily packed lunches to FSM pupils from their local primary school. Nearly 100% of the families of the 9,300 children eligible for free school meals are having payments direct to their parent’s bank accounts. This has been quite an administrative achievement;
- Emergency childcare provision is made in school settings for vulnerable children between the ages of 4-19, including children looked after, on the child protection register, young carers or have additional learning needs. Provision is also made for the children of key workers, as defined by the Welsh Government from 8am-6pm, 7 days a week including holiday periods and bank holidays. Initially, all the schools offered this provision, but for the past six weeks it has been delivered on a hub basis with Headteachers in a cluster coordinating the staffing of this provision, which includes their own attendance at the hub facilities. On average 420 children are attending 13 hubs on a daily basis each week, 130 of whom are vulnerable children. In addition, provision is also made available for over 200 children aged 0-4 years as part of the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme in 42 different settings;
- Digitally Excluded Learners - Welsh Government have pledged to provide an additional £3M across Wales to support continuity of learning arrangements for digitally excluded learners. An audit has been undertaken in partnership with schools to identify 3,048 digitally excluded learners and 1,709 surplus devices will be repurposed for the most disadvantaged. Mobile connectivity devices will also be provided for those who require it. A total of 246 devices have already been made available and a further 1,651 new devices will be disseminated for those with the greatest need.
- We have seen a significant increase in the applications and changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support from individuals and families across the County Borough. To date we have seen over 900 new CTRS entitlements awarded since the lockdown started, more than any other Council in Wales; we have also awarded Free School Meal entitlement to an additional 400 pupils;
- Through home working, many other key administrative services such as Council Tax and Business Rates billing and collection, paying our staff and administering the pension fund with the thousands of pensioners being paid each month, have continued;

- We have worked with contractors to continue to safely deliver major construction projects such as Llys Cadwyn, the new industrial unit at Coed Ely, the new primary school in Hirwaun, completing the projects at Tonyrefail and Treorchy schools and reinstatement works following the flood damage.
- 5.3 The Council's staff across all services have been exceptional in the manner in which they have responded to the challenge of the Covid 19 pandemic and have been willing to come forward and do whatever has been necessary. Particular praise must go to those in frontline roles, particularly colleagues in Social Care, Meals on Wheels, School Hubs, Waste and Streetcare, and the Shielding Scheme & Food Distribution Centre.
- 5.4 It is also recognised that the Council's ICT and Digital Services team within the space of a few days transformed the way in which the Council works, with over 3,000 staff across the Council now working from home enabling them to undertake and support many of the tasks and actions highlighted in the paragraphs above. We all recognise this significant change and it has been welcomed by all staff.
- 5.5 The Senior Leadership Team also appreciates the support from the trade unions for the way in which they have engaged with the Council and provided constructive support and guidance.

## **6 THE NEXT STEPS?**

- 6.1 Over the next few months, the UK and Welsh Governments will seek to phase the release of the lockdown measures, and try to ensure that the infection rate remains at a level at which the NHS can meet the demand for its services. In doing so, the Council has five key tasks:
- Contact Tracing;
  - Recovery and Service Planning;
  - Decision Making & Democratic Engagement;
  - Counting the Cost (now and into the future); and
  - Economic Resilience.
- 6.2 **Contact Tracing** – The Council is playing a key role in leading on Contract Tracing across Cwm Taf Morgannwg in partnership with the local health board, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil Councils and Public Health Wales. The purpose of contact tracing and case management is to interrupt chains of transmission in the community by identifying cases of COVID19 (confirmed and suspected), tracing the people who may have become infected by spending time in close contact with them, and then requiring and supporting those close contacts to self-isolate so that they are less likely to transmit it to others.

- 6.3 The Council's Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services is leading this process in Cwm Taf Morgannwg supported by other members of SLT. This task is quite a challenge as we are seeking to initially establish six teams across the region with over 300 staff from principally from local government before the end of the month. The team will initially focus on high risk settings such as care homes, school hubs, supported living, homeless accommodation etc, before expanding the number of teams to thirteen and providing a response to community clusters and actively testing the wider population.
- 6.4 **Recovery and Service Planning** - The Council's Senior Leadership Team has been preparing recovery plans that consider how the Council can begin to reopen services when the Welsh Government begins to lift the restrictions. In preparing these plans we are taking into account the changes we have been forced to make to our services, the different ways of engaging residents and clients, and the way we work taking into account that social distancing is likely to become the "norm" for quite a while. The UK Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty has said *"This disease is not going to be eradicated, it is not going to disappear... The UK will have to maintain some forms of social distancing until a vaccine or effective treatment for Covid19 are developed, both of which are unlikely this year"*.
- 6.5 In planning for the future:
- The Director of Education & Inclusion Services has begun to test out options with Headteacher groups to understand how social distancing could be managed in schools and what lessons can be learnt from other countries that have begun to re-open schools to specific groups of pupils.
  - The Director of Corporate Estates is reviewing the Council's office accommodation to ascertain the maximum number we could base in each setting, and then work with the respective managers to balance the mix between office, agile and home working. Similar discussions are ongoing with leisure, libraries, theatres, visitor attractions and other services across the Council.
  - The Group Director of Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services is reviewing how social distancing could work in town centres, transport hubs and other locations across the County Borough and put in place, initially temporary measures, to facilitate social distancing.
  - The Group Director of Community & Children's Services is considering how to resume the full range of services the community will require in the coming months and has plans to:
    - Review safeguarding issues when all partners, including schools and communities, have more direct contact with children, families and adults;

- Review the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children, young people, adults and families, as some have found the lockdown period very difficult;
  - Complete Court work that has been started in the period such as care orders, revoking orders such as placements with parents, and adoption orders;
  - Review the Children Looked After placements and where appropriate make changes, as this has been very difficult during the lockdown.
- 6.6 SLT has also challenged services to learn from this experience and ensure we do not routinely return to “normal – as we were” but take the benefits of working from home, delivering services digitally or in a different way. The use of technology such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams has changed the way many managers and staff have engaged with each other over the past few months and the verbal feedback we have received suggests that we are more productive as a result of this technology. Through HR, a further survey is being undertaken with over 3,000 staff to capture their views and experiences of agile/homeworking over the past few weeks.
- 6.7 One of the big lessons we have learnt, is that we can be very decisive and move mountains in a very short time if we all pull together. In a week, we enabled the 3,000+ workers to have the technology to work from home – it would normally have taken us three years to do the same. Yes, it’s not perfect, but we can continue via trial and error to solve any problems we encounter.
- 6.8 We also need to take into account that if we do not have a vaccine or treatment for the virus there are groups of residents that will still have to self isolate for a long period and they will need our continued support. In doing so, we need to consider how we will continue to engage the army of volunteers that have provided a sterling service to support the Council.
- 6.9 Over the next few weeks, as guidance becomes available from the two governments, further reports will be made available to Cabinet on how the Council could begin to reopen key services in a phased approach.
- 6.10 **Decision Making & Democratic Engagement** - Since the lockdown, decision making and governance has continued to operate in compliance with the Council’s Constitution. Key Executive decisions such as closing services have been made by the Leader of the Council and/or the relevant Cabinet member in discussion with the Chief Executive and relevant Senior Leadership Team Director(s). A variety of decisions have been taken either as part of the wider coordinated CV19 emergency response, or as mandated by the laws that have been enacted as part of the response. All of these decisions have been within



the normal delegated powers of Chief Officers, and where possible taken after consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

- 6.11 Due to social distancing, no Committees have met. Weekly briefings of the Cabinet with the Senior Leadership Team have been held weekly via Microsoft Teams and more recently Zoom video conferencing. The Senior Leadership Team has also met daily, with the Leader also in attendance. This has allowed the Senior Leadership Team to make appropriate operational decisions in consultation with the Leader, which has enabled immediate action to occur which has been important. I consider that this method of open discussion and decision making between the Leader and officers has been extremely effective.
- 6.12 However, Covid 19 is likely to be with us for at least a further year along with social distancing requirements, and we need to ensure that the committee processes of local government are reinstated. The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 have changed the pre-existing laws to enable fully remote meetings to take place as long as those participating can hear and be heard. It also provides for the distribution and publication of all associated documents via electronic means only. . As a result, the Council will incrementally resume its committee functions. In consultation with the Chairs of the the Committees, arrangements are being made to hold virtual meetings in the near future, starting with Cabinet and Planning.
- 6.13 Holding large committee meetings via Zoom or Microsoft Teams can be a challenge, and all participants need to understand how to use the technology and the protocols and practices that need to be adopted to ensure the meetings operate effectively and everyone can engage in the meeting. Therefore, it has been proposed, in consultation with the Group Leaders, to adopt a phased approach to the resumption of committee meetings. All members are having the opportunity to have their respective devices updated to include the appropriate virtual conferencing technology and shortly training will be available to all members.
- 6.14 A draft timetable for the roll out of the virtual committee meetings is being considered by the Committee Chairs. This timetable will need to be flexible as members and officers learn and adapt to holding committee meetings in this way, over the coming weeks and months.
- 6.15 **Counting the Cost (now and into the future)** – The additional cost to the Council of responding to the Covid 19 pandemic will be significant particularly with the likely restrictions being in place for the remainder of the calendar year. The Council is losing income it would have generated from a range of services such as leisure, car parking, theatres, visitor attractions, school meals, the sale of recycled waste materials, and other sundry sales. In addition, sickness rates

and the need to shield or self isolate have created additional pressures on staffing resources across key services. Furthermore, the level of demand for a range of community based services has risen, including a doubling of the provision of community meals to the vulnerable, supporting care homes to remain financially viable, providing suitable responses to children who need to be looked after, the increase in waste disposal costs and the need to supplement the supply of PPE available where necessary across services. It is initially estimated that the financial impact on the Council of the pandemic is at least £4.5m per month over and above its existing resources with further modelling being undertaken around for example the cost implications of future service planning and delivery requirements as referenced above.

- 6.16 Furthermore, the Covid 19 costs are in addition to the significant costs the Council has had to incur due to Storm Dennis, which occurred during the February half term holidays. The Council is actively working with the WLGA and Welsh Government to ensure the additional costs incurred as a result of Storm Dennis and the Covid 19 pandemic will be supported in full in due course. The Director of Finance and Digital Services will provide an update on the 2019/20 year end position and the estimated financial impact for 2020/21 financial year at the next Cabinet meeting.
- 6.17 The Council's capital programme is an important contributor to the local economy providing a valuable work programme to local building and highways contractors, which many rely upon as their stable income. As a result, the Leader approved the Education and Highways Supplementary Capital Programmes, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members, encouraging local contractors to come forward and tender for up to £30m of work. Clearly, a requirement of the contracts will be the need to ensure the safety of the contractors and the general public and strict application of the social distancing requirements.
- 6.18 **Economic Resilience** - Our primary focus will always be on our residents wellbeing and protecting lives, we also need to deal with the economic disaster that the virus has created. We can see globally that many countries in the first wave of the virus are struggling to get the right balance between opening up the economy and managing virus infection rates.
- 6.19 Despite, this difficult message, there are opportunities for businesses in the County Borough. The big lesson for us all is not to rely on overseas imports for key supplies and services. As a country we need more resilience in terms of our supply chain, and therefore more manufacturing in the UK. This will require the public sector in Wales to undertake a radical re-evaluation of our supply chains.

- 6.20 We have already made progress on this. We have local companies manufacturing visors, we have two distilleries manufacturing hand sanitiser and a local company manufacturing bottles and filling them with the sanitiser, and a company has ordered machinery to manufacture face masks for local government and the NHS, with the aim of starting production in early summer. This local procurement has already protected and created many jobs, and it is something we need to consider urgently across our supply chain.
- 6.21 Whilst, the UK and Welsh Governments have put in place a range of interventions to support businesses across a wide range of sectors, locally we need to work with Welsh Government and the Cardiff Capital Region to understand the potential impact of social distancing on the financial viability of our town centres. A number of national chains have recently gone into administration, such as Debenhams, Warehouse, Oasis, and Bonmarche and other key national chains such as Peacocks, Next, Primark and the Arcadia Group are reported, in the national press, to be under financial pressure from low sales.
- 6.22 Therefore, it is likely that fewer national stores will be reopened in the future. Over the coming months we will look to work with local businesses to see how we can best support our town centres and develop an offer that attracts residents to shop locally and support local businesses.

## **7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 An Equality and Diversity Assessment has not been carried out in connection with the recommendations set out in this report as the contents and actions do not require a policy or service change, resulting in no reasonably foreseeable differential impacts.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 There is no requirement to consult on this report, it is primarily for information.

## **9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 9.1 The financial implications of the Council responding to the Covid 19 pandemic are considered in paragraphs 6.15-6.17 of this report.

## **10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

## **11 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 11.1 This is an information report on progress in responding to the Covid 19 pandemic. No decisions are being taken in this report.

## **12 CONCLUSIONS**

- 12.1 The past few months have been challenging on an unprecedented scale for the Council, local businesses and residents with the Covid 19 pandemic quickly following Storm Dennis. To date we have all pulled together, communities supporting each other and the vast majority of people complying with the lockdown restrictions. However, life is unlikely to return to normal for many months if not a couple of years, and the Council and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf need to change the way we live and work, where social distancing, personal hygiene and shielding the vulnerable becomes the norm.
- 12.2 To date, the Council has responded to these challenges efficiently and effectively, and the staff have been outstanding in their response, and particular thanks go to the frontline social care staff.
- 12.3 Throughout this pandemic, the Council has put in place the necessary plans to effectively respond to the potential impacts of COVID 19 and it has continued to deliver essential services and protect local communities and our staff. As we look forward into the future, it is impossible to plan for every eventuality, but it is inevitable that we will see further spikes in the virus as the lockdown restrictions are eased. Based on our experience to date the Council has many challenges to overcome but we are confident that we have the capacity and capability to respond to every situation.