

**COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN REMOTE MEETING VIA SKYPE FOR BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 15:00**

Present

Councillor SE Baldwin – Chairperson

TH Beedle	JPD Blundell	NA Burnett	MC Clarke
N Clarke	RJ Collins	HJ David	P Davies
PA Davies	SK Dendy	DK Edwards	J Gebbie
T Giffard	RM Granville	CA Green	DG Howells
A Hussain	RM James	M Jones	DRW Lewis
JE Lewis	JR McCarthy	D Patel	RL Penhale-Thomas
AA Pucella	KL Rowlands	B Sedgebeer	RMI Shaw
CE Smith	SG Smith	JC Spanswick	RME Stirman
G Thomas	T Thomas	JH Tildesley MBE	E Venables
SR Vidal	MC Voisey	LM Walters	KJ Watts
CA Webster	DBF White	PJ White	A Williams
AJ Williams	HM Williams	JE Williams	RE Young

Apologies for Absence

MJ Kearn and JC Radcliffe

Officers:

Gareth Denning	Policy Team Leader
Deborah Exton	Interim Deputy Head of Finance
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Laura Kinsey	Head of Children's Social Care
Martin Morgans	Head of Performance and Partnership Services
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Jonathan Parsons	Group Manager Development
Andrew Rees	Democratic Services Manager
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Nigel Smith	Finance Manager
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

428. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following interests were declared:

Councillor PA Davies declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 - Presentation on The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal & Programme of Future Presentations to Council as she knows the Chair Regional Economic Partnership and Investment Panel.

Councillor SE Baldwin declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 - Presentation on The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal & Programme of Future Presentations to Council as he knows the Director of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal.

429. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of Council of 22 July 2020, be approved as a true and accurate record.

**430. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR**

The Mayor thanked all staff across the authority for their continued hard work in these difficult times, and that their ongoing efforts are very much appreciated.

He congratulated Mr Laurence Brophy of Pencoed who had recently cycled from Land's End to John 'O Groats to raise money and awareness for the homelessness charity Llamau. He stated that Mr Brophy's journey was even more remarkable as at 88 he is set to become the oldest man to complete this challenge. To date he has raised over £3,000 for charity.

The Mayor announced with sadness of the recent passing of Mr George Davies, who acted as Mayoral consort to his daughter Marlene Thomas during her year as Civic head and was also a former community councillor. Despite celebrating his 90th birthday while consort he never missed an event and threw himself into whatever the role required, the long days never phased him and he would often go on to further community work after finishing his civic duties. On behalf of the Council the Mayor extended his condolences to Marlene Thomas and her family.

**431. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER**

The Leader informed Members of announcement that Rhondda Cynon Taf has unfortunately become the second area in Wales to go into lockdown and he briefed Members on an update of the situation in Bridgend. Cabinet at its meeting yesterday, endorsed a regional action plan which outlined a raft of measures for tackling the spread of Covid-19 and responding to any incidents or outbreaks of the virus. The Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan covers the entire Cwm Taf Morgannwg area, and has been co-ordinated between local authorities and the health board and describes in detail the roles, key objectives and measures for the region, setting out arrangements for preventing the spread of infection among the most vulnerable, mitigating and controlling its impact, and monitoring it within local communities. The plan also outlines the procedures in place when decisions on implementing local actions or restrictions are required, seen most recently in the Caerphilly area, and now Rhondda Cynon Taf.

He stated that many clusters and incidents can be managed through the Test, Trace, Protect programme without any need to close premises or initiate wider lockdown restrictions, robust investigation, management and control arrangements are in place for any significant developments. He informed Council of the central role Council's have in how Covid-19 is being managed in Wales. Demonstrated in how social care and support to vulnerable residents, the childcare hubs which have supported essential key workers and vulnerable children is provided. The maintenance of essential services, the deployment of staff to support the Test Trace Protect programme. If the Council needs to respond to further significant incidents or outbreaks, it will fulfil this role.

The Leader informed Members that people may be concerned at the recent rise in infection rates across the South Wales region and the lockdowns that have already been declared, and he reassured Members and residents that necessary systems are in place to try and prevent this from happening in Bridgend County Borough. At the same time, it should be recognised by all that whether the County Borough enters a local lockdown or not largely depends on how the community chooses to act. He stressed that it was more important than ever for the County Borough to come together as one community, to behave in a responsible and safe manner, and to follow national requirements on social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, using sanitise. He stated that the pandemic was far from over, and residents must not let their guard down. He informed Members that a joint statement had been issued earlier this week between the Council and South Wales Police requesting all residents to behave responsibly and remain alert

and urging people not to turn up and gather in large numbers for the cancelled Elvis Festival in Porthcawl, and to think twice, stay safe, and stay home. He hoped Members will support these efforts and will help to promote these important key messages among their constituents.

The Leader announced that since schools started back, there had been nine incidents where staff or pupils had returned positive tests for coronavirus, resulting in pupils and staff self-isolating in line with national guidelines as a precautionary measure. He stated that such incidents are inevitable while the pandemic is ongoing, but with all reasonable safety measures in place based on full risk assessments, the advantages of attending school far outweigh the disadvantages. Schools had been preparing for pupils to return for some time now, and in each case have been able to take swift action to act promptly using advice supplied by Public Health Wales. All schools have a full range of measures to reduce risk, limit contact and maintain high standards of hygiene. Pupils who are unaffected are continuing to attend lessons as normal, those who are self-isolating are receiving lessons thanks to online access, virtual classrooms and blended learning facilities. He requested that parents, carers and guardians need to support these efforts to fight the spread of the coronavirus by remaining vigilant, and by not sending children to school if they exhibit any symptoms.

He stated that the sudden rise in cases across the UK, current news headlines are also rife with stories about how central Government and Welsh Government are dealing with delays in coronavirus testing. Measures are in development, with mobile test units are to be launched in Wales which can be deployed where they are needed most. The Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan is available to view at the council website, and he encouraged Members to read it for a greater insight into how the pandemic is being combatted on a regional scale. He stated that the Council will continue to work alongside partners to do all it can to protect vulnerable residents, and to ensure that it continued to provide vital services for local people.

The Leader extended his sympathies to Mrs Marlene Thomas, former of the County Borough on the loss of her father, Mr George Davies, who performed the role of Consort during her year in office.

He congratulated Mr Laurence Brophy of Pencoed on his achievement of cycling from Land's End to John 'O Groats to raise funding for Llamau.

He extended a warm welcome to Janine Nightingale, Corporate Director Communities who was attending her first meeting of Council.

432. PRESENTATION ON THE CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION CITY DEAL & PROGRAMME OF FUTURE PRESENTATIONS TO COUNCIL

The Chief Executive introduced a presentation to Council on the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal programme and informed of the programme of future presentations to Council. He stated that the purpose of the presentation on the City Deal programme was threefold, namely for Members to have a better understanding of the programme, an opportunity to demonstrate the good progress made and to discuss opportunities for the programme within the County Borough of Bridgend.

Council received a presentation on the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal programme from Kellie Beirne, Director of CCR City Deal and Frank Holmes, Chair of the Regional Economic Partnership and Investment Panel. The Director of CCR City Deal stated that the CCR City Deal is a £1.3bn pound public-led investment programme across a triumvirate partnership of 10 local authorities, Welsh and Central Governments. It was targeted to generate 25,000 additional jobs, to lever £4 billion of additional

investment and an uplift of 5% in Gross Value Added to the economy. She informed Council that the Councils work together as ten because they share a functional economic geography but within that, some of the most and least competitive places co-exist, a growth strategy in isolation could exacerbate rather than address some of those endemic problems. She outlined the programme's innovation proposals, which would be used to not only be technology and business focussed, but also about powering up civic society, driving growth in foundational economies and public services sector. The ambition is to create conditions for generalised prosperity and to ensure economic ambitions are matched with more progressive social policy and to have resilience, which endures.

The Chair of the Regional Economic Partnership and Investment Panel informed Council of the processes which have been in place and that he had put together an experienced board of individuals with its role being to assess the investment programme, advisors to the joint Cabinet and to bring inward invest. He stated that the Board needed a plan to ensure money was invested in accordance with the investment programme in order to leverage the £4bn additional investment. The Board had embarked on 3 pillars needed to have true connectivity regionally with public and private partnerships. In order to be competitive there was a need for investment in innovation and connectivity with digital connectivity being paramount and to be resilient to benefit this and future generations. He stated that the plan had recently been reviewed, alongside developing an invest framework to leverage innovation and to assist companies to grow. Significant research has been undertaken to ensure money was put to good use across the region.

The Director of CCR City Deal informed Council of the mission for resilient good growth also grounding in foresight and what was coming, which was likely to be disproportionately impacted by Brexit given the reliance on EU structural funds for economic growth. She stated there would be no more city deals and that all new regional economic investment at UK Government level will now come through UKIS. Characteristics would have to be developed to allow the region to be competitive and that the public sector would need to change. The Director CCR informed Council of the solid foundations which had been built upon, how working practices and the speed of decision making had been transformed. She outlined a snapshot of the Investment and Intervention Fund, in that 28 projects in the pipeline with total investment requested of £390m. She highlighted the projects which had been approved to date in the public and private sectors and where additional investment had been secured. She informed Council that the Region had extended its voice through the Global Welsh project. The Director of CCR gave an overview of what this meant for Bridgend, building on strengths and opportunities of being a manufacturing intensive location. She concluded that City Deal had built firm foundations for the next stage of the journey.

A member of Council questioned the impact on the City Deal programme following the decision not to approve the M4 relief road. The Chair of the Regional Economic Partnership and Investment Panel stated that it was his opinion that not proceeding with the scheme would not be good for business or for Wales and it would impact on international business. The scheme had the support of the Federation of Small Businesses, the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Directors. The Director of CCR stated that the Regional Transport Authority believed there needed to be a levelling up of key transport schemes and that the HS2 project would impact on City Deal.

A member of Council referred to the decision that there would be no further City Deals and asked what programmes would be in place to ensure funding remained in place. The Director of CCR stated that there was a need to have sustainability and there is an expectation that City Deal will leverage more funding. The Chair of the Regional Economic Partnership and Investment Panel informed Council that the right governance

had been set up to ensure it had the trust at all levels of government so that the region can stand up against other regions in order to get its fair share of investment. The Leader informed Council that the region wants to work with global players on broadband and technology providers. He stated that the region is one of the fastest growing regions in terms of population and there is a need to ensure that investors invest in the region to benefit all residents.

A member of Council referred to Bridgend's proximity to the Swansea Bay City Deal region and questioned whether there is collaboration with that region. The Director of CCR informed Council that there is a great deal of dialogue with the Swansea Bay City Deal region and there is collaboration to ensure that programmes are aligned. The Swansea Bay City Deal differs from the CCR City Deal in that it is about projects, whilst the CCR City Deal is about economic growth. Dialogue is also held regularly with the Western Gateway region. Swansea University collaborate with the CCR City Deal due to the region having a compound semi-conductor manufacturer. The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration stated that Bridgend's location on the border with another City Deal is an advantage and that Bridgend has always been a transport hub and was keen that Bridgend develops into a hub from the west to connect with Cardiff Airport. He referred to the irregular rail service to Pyle station and commented on the need for investment in the station and for an hourly service on weekdays and for a park and ride facility to have connectivity with Porthcawl and to valley communities. A member of Council questioned whether there are plans to have an integrated solution between Pyle and Porthcawl. The Leader commented that funding had been secured from City Deal and the Welsh Government for a major investment at Pyle station to improve links with Porthcawl. The Cabinet Member Communities saw it as an advantage that Bridgend is on the border of the Swansea Bay City Deal and is uniquely placed in attracting global businesses having the second busiest train station in the region and having links with the airport.

A member of Council questioned the impact of Covid 19 on the plans for City Deal. The Director of CCR stated that all schemes had been looked at in light of Covid 19 and that a comprehensive survey has been undertaken to ensure investment and support is available to small and medium enterprises. The Leader informed Council that businesses were being invited to make bids to the Challenge Fund, particularly the medical technology sector. The Chair of the Regional Economic Partnership and Investment Panel informed Council that the Challenge Fund looks at addressing economic problems and will create opportunities.

A member of Council asked what the socio-economic impact of Covid 19 would be and sought assurances there was flexibility within the strategy to change to different circumstances. The Director of CCR stated that the programme could not standstill and there was a need to have balance within the programme as its intention is to improve lives. The Chair of the Regional Economic Partnership and Investment Panel commented that an evidence base is kept up to date and that 2 PHD students monitor this activity. He stated that it was difficult to predict the impact of Covid 19 but there was a need to have the best data available. The Leader informed Council City Deal had responded to the pandemic in reshaping its programme and is structured in such a way so that it has the agility to respond to changes.

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

- (1) Noted the presentation by the Director of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the Chair of the Cardiff Capital Region Regional Economic Growth Partnership.
- (2) Noted the programme of future presentations to Council as outlined.

The meeting adjourned at 16.55 and resumed at 17.00.

433. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2019-20

The Interim Deputy Head of Finance presented a report, the purpose of which was to comply with the requirement of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the Code), to report an overview of treasury activities for the preceding financial year and to report on the actual Treasury Management Indicators for 2019-20.

The Interim Deputy Head of Finance reported that treasury management at the Council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 Edition (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve a Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) before the start of each financial year. Advice to the Council on treasury management is provided by Arlingclose and following a recent tender process, they had been re-appointed for a period of 4 years, until August 2024.

The Interim Deputy Head of Finance reported that the UK's exit from the European Union and future trading arrangements remained one of the major influences on the UK economy during 2019-20. The Bank of England, which had held interest rates steady at 0.75% through most of 2019-20, moved in March 2020 to cut rates from 0.75% to 0.25% and then swiftly thereafter brought them down further to the record low of 0.1%. The Interim Deputy Head of Finance informed Council that towards the end of the financial year, the Covid-19 pandemic swiftly changed everything causing uncertainty in financial markets.

The Interim Deputy Head of Finance reported on the Treasury Management Outturn for 2019-20 and informed Council that it has complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements during 2019-20. She summarised the external debt and investment position for 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, no long-term borrowing was taken out in 2019-20 and no debt rescheduling was undertaken as there were no significant savings to be made, however, the loan portfolio would be reviewed during 2020-21. The Interim Deputy Head of Finance informed Council that favourable cash flows had provided surplus funds for investment and the balance on investments at 31 March 2020 was £30 million, with an average interest rate of 0.82%. This was an increase in investments outstanding from the start of the financial year where investments were £27.4 million at an average interest rate 0.94%. The interim Deputy Head of Finance summarised the investment strategy and outturn in that the main objectives during 2019-20 were to maintain security of cash; ensure liquidity, so funds are available when needed and only then to seek yield on investments. She informed Council that the majority of investments had been held as short-term investments with UK local authorities and banks of high credit quality.

A member of Council commented that it was standard practice for local authorities to borrow and lend to other local authorities. The Deputy Leader informed Council that the Treasury Management Strategy is approved by Council and officers implement that strategy. He stated that lending to other local authorities is a secure way for the Council to invest. The Interim Deputy Head of Finance informed Members that the Council makes short-term investments with UK local authorities and are always repaid, very often the same money is reinvested. Advice on investing is always taken from the Council's Treasury Management advisors.

A member of Council questioned whether the Council could re-negotiate its LOBO borrowing given the lower interest rates currently. The Interim Deputy Head of Finance

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informed Council that the lender has the option to propose a new interest rate and the Council has the option as the borrower whether to accept that rate. She stated that with interest rates being low, lenders were unlikely to reduce their rates. She also informed Council that the Council would face penalties if it repaid early.

A member of Council asked whether officers could explore the opportunity of cheaper borrowing due to interest rates being low for inclusion in the next report on Treasury Management to Council. The Interim Deputy Head of Finance agreed to look at this.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- Approved the annual treasury management activities for 2019-20;
- Approved the actual Treasury Management indicators for 2019-20 against the ones approved in the Treasury Management Strategy 2019-20.

### 434. UPDATED CORPORATE PLAN 2018-2022 REVIEWED FOR 2020-21, FOLLOWING IMPACT OF COVID-19

The Chief Executive sought approval of the updates to the Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2022 reviewed for 2020-21, following the impact of Covid-19 and for Council to adopt the revised Corporate Plan.

He reported that the Corporate Plan 2018-2022, describes the Council's vision for Bridgend County Borough, the 3 well-being objectives and the organisational values and principles that underpin how the Council will work to deliver its priorities. He stated that the Plan represented the Council's contribution to achieving the 7 national wellbeing goals as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and its improvement objectives under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

He reported that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had affected the ability of the Council to progress on the delivery of its well-being objectives set out in the refreshed Corporate Plan. He stated that it was prudent to revisit the current commitments and targets and refocus the key priorities for the rest of 2020-21. He set out the proposed changes to the Corporate Plan which included some minor changes to the Council's commitments as well as some new ones to reflect the key priority areas the Council needs to focus on for the remainder of 2020-21. He stated that there are a number of new success measures in the Plan, as well as current ones, where the targets have been revisited. Where targets have been reduced as a result of the impact of Covid-19 a rationale had been provided, for example, town centre closure has had an impact on businesses and footfall.

The Chief Executive informed Council that the Plan will be reviewed annually to take into account changing circumstances and progress made against the well-being objectives and to ensure that the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are met. The revised commitments and measures will supersede those commitments and measures set out in the current Corporate Plan and will become the updated Corporate Plan 2018-2022 reviewed for 2020-21. He informed Council that delivery will be supported by the Medium Term Financial Strategy and directorate business plans and monitored quarterly through the Corporate Performance Assessment process, directorate management team meetings and the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and taking into account recommendations made by the Recovery Panel.

He highlighted the main changes which proposed in relation to the learner outcomes section due to the introduction of hybrid and blended learning and the development of safe school environments. There will be an increased focus on infrastructure support for

businesses to overcome the impact of the pandemic. In relation to building resilient communities, the Council will work in partnership with Town and Community Councils and community groups to create long term solutions to manage and maintain facilities / services. In relation to culture and leisure there was a need to rebuild participation by improving accessibility and removing barriers. Opportunities would be looked at in relation to digital transformation to evolve new ways of working and service re-modelling.

He informed Council that Cabinet had proposed changes in relation to adding a narrative in relation to vacant premises and free parking and to continue to work with existing and start-up businesses. In relation to working with Town and Community Councils, the Council will also work with the third sector. There would also be an additional to work on reducing homelessness and to work with rough sleepers using Welsh Government funding. The Council will develop a mental health strategy for adults and children. The Council will also develop apprenticeship opportunities. The Leader commended the revisions to the Corporate Plan.

A member of Council questioned whether the financial impact of the pandemic will have an impact on the number of staff the Council employs. The Chief Executive informed Council that the financial impact of the pandemic was as yet unknown as it was not known the extent of what would be funded by the Welsh Government. He stated that the Council had new burdens and there may be a change of roles for staff and new roles. A covid fund had been created and he was optimistic that the Welsh Government would fund one off costs, but he was concerned at the loss of income to the Council. He stated that will be working differently and it was not about reducing the number of staff.

A member of Council stated that the mental health strategy should also include older people due to the loneliness they have experienced during the pandemic. The Leader commented that the strategy will cover all adults and children with the ambition for it to be delivered for the health board and the third sector.

**RESOLVED:** That Council approved the updates to the Corporate Plan 2018-22 reviewed for 2020-21 attached as Appendix A and adopts the revised Corporate Plan attached as Appendix B.

435. **BRIDGEND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) - REVISED DELIVERY AGREEMENT**

The Development Planning Team Leader advised Members of the necessity to revise the Local Development Plan Delivery Agreement (DA), previously approved by the Welsh Government (WG) in June 2018 and sought approval to make amendments to the Timetable for LDP preparation in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. He informed Council that the Development Control Committee had, at its meeting on 20 August 2020, agreed the recommendations in this report and referred the recommendations to Council for approval.

He reported that the Council received a letter from the Welsh Government on 7 July 2020 advising it to undertake an assessment of the technical evidence base underpinning the replacement LDP, alongside the preferred strategy and policies in terms of sensitivity to the consequences of the pandemic. He stated that this task had been completed with the findings outlined at Appendix 1 of the report for noting. The Welsh Government had also advised that Delivery Agreements should be adjusted to account for any necessary changes to the LDP timetable due to delays caused by the pandemic. This should also include amendments to the Community Involvement Scheme (CIS) given the need to adjust to new patterns of working and consider alternative methods of stakeholder engagement brought about by the need to maintain social distancing. He outlined the proposed revisions to the timetable. He stated that the



Deposit Plan should be subject to consultation between January and March 2021 (previously July - August 2020), however an allowance had been made to extend the statutory consultation period of 6 weeks to 8 weeks to provide more time for people to provide their views whilst accounting for any further restrictions imposed due to the pandemic. He informed Council that the final adoption of the LDP is likely to be delayed by up to 6 months as a result, though the dates relating to the stages following submission of the plan to the Welsh Government are indicative. He outlined how the CIS has been amended to account for different methods of stakeholder engagement to maintain the social distancing measures that are likely to be required for the foreseeable future.

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

- approved the revisions to the timetable and Community Involvement Scheme and authorised the Group Manager Planning & Development Services to submit the revised Delivery Agreement (attached at Appendix 2) to Welsh Government; and
- provided delegated authority to the Group Manager Planning & Development Services to make any factual corrections or minor amendments to the Delivery Agreement as considered necessary.

436. **INFORMATION REPORTS FOR NOTING**

The Mayor informed Council that he had received a message from the Director of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal informing that there had been a release made to the Conservative press claiming that the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal supports the M4 relief road and blamed Welsh Government for its cancellation, Ms Beirne is an officer and let Mr Frank Holmes give his view as an independent businessman. Ms Beirne did not endorse the criticism of the Welsh Government in cancelling the M4 relief road. He requested that the Conservative Member who had made the original statement correct their statement made to the press.

The Leader of the Conservative Group requested a point of order as he believed there had been a breach of the Constitution. The Mayor stated that the statement was as a result of a message which he had received from the Director of the CCR City Deal. The Monitoring Officer advised that it had not been referenced which part of the Constitution had been breached. The Mayor stated that the message he had received from the Director of the CCR City Deal was that someone had spoken to the Conservative press. The Leader of the Conservative Group stated that it was not clear that the remark had been made by the Conservative Group. The Mayor stated that the remark was unlikely to have been made by the Labour Group and that the Director of the CCR City Deal did not criticise the Welsh Government, but the remarks had been by someone who is independent of the City Deal. The Conservative Group Leader and Deputy Leader took issue with assertion made against their Group. A member of Council who had asked the question at the presentation in relation to the cancellation of the M4 relief road clarified that he had not contacted anybody, which included the press.

A motion was made to move progress on the matter, which was seconded.

The result of the vote was 20 in favour to move progress on the matter and 9 in favour of continuing the debate.

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The Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer reported on the following Information Reports which had been published since the last meeting of Council.

Title	Date Published
Urgent Delegated Decisions	10 September 2020
Final Statement of Accounts 2019-20	10 September 2020

RESOLVED: That Council acknowledges the publication of the documents listed in this report

### 437. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FROM:

#### **Question from Councillor T Thomas to the Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations**

Will the Cabinet Member outline their plans to reduce the risk of homelessness during the continued concern of the Covid-19 pandemic?

#### **Response of the Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations**

As you have previously been informed, individuals become homeless for a plethora of reasons, for example, a relationship breakdown, difficulties in a parent and child relationship, domestic abuse. These reasons (risks) have not changed due to the COVID- 19 pandemic, but what has changed is the expectation on local authorities.

As you will know, at the start of the pandemic all local authorities were expected to ensure that no individual was street homeless during the lockdown. Welsh Government expected Bridgend County Borough Council to provide suitable temporary accommodation *with en-suite facilities* to this group. Welsh Government expanded the definition of vulnerability under the current Housing Act to consider the impact of the COVID- 19 pandemic. Their view is that the COVID- 19 pandemic presents a grave and exceptional risk to those persons who are homeless as these individuals may be unable to adhere to health advice, self- isolate, socially distance or maintain necessary hygiene requirements and it appears almost inevitable that a person who is either street homeless or faced with street homelessness is less able than an ordinary homeless person to fend for himself or herself. One impact of this change in the guidance has meant accommodation units where we would usually place homeless individuals did not meet the current requirement i.e. due to social-distancing the capacity threshold was reduced, and need for en-suite facilities due to the highly contagious nature of the COVID-19 virus.

Last year Cabinet set our strategy to tackle homelessness in Bridgend County Borough, with the aim being ***“To work collaboratively on a corporate basis with external partners, and service users, in a responsive, creative and timely manner to prevent and relieve homelessness throughout the county borough, ensuring people can access suitable accommodation, with the support required to meet their needs”***.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not changed our ambition, but with the additional funding provided by Welsh Government it has allowed us to expedite some of our plan and bring forward projects which otherwise would have been waiting in the pipeline for funding to be made available.

Our co-produced plan understood homelessness is a complex and multi-layered issue requiring a multifaceted response. Analysis of needs of the cohort of people that have been housed during the COVID-19 pandemic confirms this to be the case. For example, out of those households placed during the COVID-19 pandemic, only 1 in 15 had no support needs with everyone else having needs which required mental health and/or substance misuse support - providing accommodation is not the only answer. In order to ensure that the housing provided is suitable for the individual, the individual must be willing and wanting to address some of their other needs.

Bridgend County Borough Council has submitted funding bids to Welsh Government for both capital and revenue projects to help ease the additional housing requirement. I've set out below some examples of the types of projects we have supported with the additional funding from Welsh Government, which I hope you find useful and as always I am happy to meet to discuss in more detail or if possible arrange visits such as the one we carried out at the Brynmenyn Hostel last week.

The revenue projects include providing additional support services for Brynmenyn Hostel which has allowed for the hostel to be used for triage and identify the support need of service users. We have also used the revenue grant to support Pobl to manage accommodation on Commercial Street in Maesteg and the officers are working regionally with neighbouring authorities and the Cwm Taff Morgannwg Health Board to deliver a joint pilot outreach project related to substance misuse, which has had a positive start and I hope will be sustainable for the future.

The capital projects have received indicative support from Welsh Government and will look to increase the number of accommodation units in Bridgend. These projects range from the purchase of properties in the private sector by RSLs, and conversions of homes that no longer meet the needs of our homelessness demographic to extending the capacity in our current schemes.

The Housing Solutions Team, in my opinion has gone above and beyond to find every homeless person in Bridgend accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to do so during this period of global concern.

Councillor Thomas in his supplementary question asked what the Council is doing to support armed forces veterans from the risk of becoming homeless. The Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations informed Members that the Council is working with the third sector to support veterans and has signed a commitment to support armed forces veterans. The Armed Forces Champion informed Council that it actively supports veterans charities and he outlined a recent case where a veteran had become homeless, was placed in temporary accommodation pending a move to more permanent accommodation. Councillor Thomas thanked the Members for their response and stated that he would follow this up with a written question to the Armed Forces Champion.

A member asked a supplementary question referring to the extensive discussions at the Recovery Panel and questioned the partnership working and response received from partners during the pandemic. The Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations informed Council that the Council has collaborated with the third sector which has responded rapidly during the pandemic with excellent support from the Wallich, Caer Las and Pobl. She stated that key to this was the support element and that the third sector and Housing Solutions had worked excellently together and meeting weekly. In addition, South Wales Police had responded quickly to anti-social behaviour incidents and had undertaken preventative work in the community. Local businesses, such as hoteliers and owners of bed and breakfast establishments had responded positively by

providing accommodation to the homeless. Registered Social Landlords had attended meetings of the Rapid Rehousing Panel but had furloughed their staff.

**Question from Councillor A Hussain to the Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help**

There is a warning following publication of a joint LGA report with the Centre for Mental Health which sets out the need for preventative local services to help reduce health inequalities and ensure better mental health for all.

Could the Cabinet Member let us know what preventative measures are we taking in our County to help everyone to stay mentally well, including those affected by COVID-19?

**Response of the Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help**

In response to the question on what preventative measures are in place to help people stay mentally well within the County Borough.

The following describes the services that are currently in place

Children's Services:

Many children will benefit from early help and support at some time in their childhood and some will require help from specialist mental health services. In addition to those young people with identified mental health needs, there are many more with early stage difficulties, including those living in situations that increase the risk of developing significant problems and who may benefit from receiving early support to actively promote good mental health.

The key to good mental health, in children and young people, is a robust graduated approach involving the family in issues such as: a healthy birth, consistent, positive parenting, balanced nutrition and exercise, attainment at school, having friends and an ability to cope with life events. Children and young people with good mental health are able to develop emotionally, creatively and intellectually and have the resilience to cope with life's difficulties. It is recognised that childhood experiences impact significantly on the ability to be an effective and nurturing parent in the future.

There are a wide range of preventative services within the integrated working and family support portfolio to support better mental health for children and young people. These include:

- Three early locality hubs located in the north, west and east of the county borough. These include family support workers, family engagement officers, school based counsellors, lead workers (youth workers), education welfare officers, emotional wellbeing workers and community counselling.
- A central hub including a range of specialist services including those to support children on the 'edge of care' and the youth justice service.
- Youth development service – youth workers, participation workers, part-time youth service etc. Specifically, there is a youth emotional wellbeing team that provide support to young people 11 to 25 years old based on an assessed need.
- Early years and childcare including Flying Start.

More specifically, there is a child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) resource within the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) alongside two public health

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nurses who are able to signpost and direct children, young people and families to the correct services.

### Educational Psychology Service (EPS)

The EPS has continued to support our children, young people, school staff and families with a specific focus on well-being in the following ways:

- continued contact and consultation support for schools and families using a telephone support line, emails and virtual meetings;
- developed and distributed 11 packs of materials to schools to support the mental health and well-being of staff, pupils and families during the spring summer term 2020;
- set up and led a returning to school task and finish group in summer term 2020 with representation from schools and local authority officers;
- sent out well-being surveys for school staff across BCBC and followed up all the respondents who requested support;
- developed a Recovery, Re-introduction and Renewal Handbook for Schools and Education Settings following critical incidents to support the reintegration of pupils back into school in autumn term 2020;
- following requests for support, set up two projects this autumn:
  - Year 11 support for pupils in Brynteg School;
  - Year 7 transition support for vulnerable pupils in Archbishop McGrath Catholic School;
- PERMA well-being profiling tool will be piloted this year across 10 Bridgend schools;
- 100% increase in online emotional learning support assistant (ELSA) supervision delivered by EPS focused on recovery and well-being this academic year;
- undertaking a mindfulness research project initially at Ysgol Bryn Castell;
- adverse childhood experiences (ACE)s training rollout pilot via webinars and live EPS support;
- planning meetings by the link educational psychologist (EP) with all schools to identify their priority and support needs.

There will be an increased focus on well-being and recovery this academic year, in addition to the projects specified above. Well-being and good mental health will continue to underpin all our consultation and intervention work.

### Adult Services

There are a wide range of preventative services for adults including those provided jointly with the Health Board

In 2019 the Local Authority remodelled their mental health provision to offer a Prevention and Early Intervention service (**DEWR**) that provides a community service for citizens experiencing mental ill health. This was to ensure we could support our citizens who did not meet the criteria for some specialist services.

The ethos of **DEWR** is to address social issues that are impacting on an individual or their families/supporters to prevent the onset of a mental illness. **DEWR** offers a number of flexible, person-centred approaches to ensure that citizens are able to fully participate in society and that the focus remains on their views, wishes and feelings. We engage in direct work with citizens and families targeting their identified support needs in order to promote mental wellbeing.

We can support citizens aged 16 and above who are at high risk of developing poor or impaired mental health, and their families and carers. This can include people experiencing homelessness, high functioning Autistic Spectrum Disorder or aspects of a Learning Difficulty.

**DEWR** can provide high-quality, person-centred support to citizens designed to enable them to achieve and sustain optimum levels of independence and mental wellbeing, either by group activity or on a one to one basis. The team also supports colleagues in Children Services to assist with the development and transition of a child into adulthood, by addressing any emerging mental health issues.

During these unprecedented and unique times, our service has had to adapt to continue to meet the needs of our population. The introduction and increased use of technology has enabled us to support the community, and with the commitment of staff, we have met the challenges that Covid 19 has produced. Regular contact and assistance were vital for many within our locality, and all forms of contact were doubled, to provide reassurance and confidence to those we support.

Via the medium of Skype, staff have continued to offer group work such as gardening, crafting, cooking, and Mindfulness sessions. The day to day preventative work for sustaining mental health continues as the wellbeing of those under our care has been our priority, and we have also increased our involvement and engagement with carers and supporters to sustain stability within the home during such difficult periods. Alongside the tremendous efforts of our third sector partners such as BAVO, the team has endeavoured to support those most vulnerable in the community, to ensure their safety and manage their anxieties about the current situation.

As expected, the pressures and associated outcomes of lockdown and such uncertainty has taken its toll on many of our residents, and the team remains extremely busy. The aim for the future is to continue developing new approaches to target challenges that have surfaced during these extraordinary times. This may include self-esteem and body image anxiety, an increase in addictive behaviours and more intensive work with families where ASD is prominent. The disruption of routine has hit this group particularly hard and a section of the team will concentrate on providing targeted intervention to minimise the impact of the pandemic for those in this category. We will continue to provide support to those who require help at the earliest stage to prevent the need for long term intervention at a later period.

**Assisted Recovery in the Community (ARC)** is joint Health and Local Authority Prevention and Wellbeing service which provides Occupational Therapy, community support and practical advice, guidance and structured support for individuals with mental health issues. The team offer assessment, which can then provide a wide and varied range of medical interventions, psychological therapies, either in groups or on a one to one basis.

The adult team do liaise closely with our third sector partners and voluntary organisations, police, education, housing, employment services and interlink the support they can provide.

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Councillor Hussain was pleased to note that the Council its best to keep residents mentally, physically and socially very healthy. He was concerned about the absence of mention about elderly population who do suffer with depression, isolation, loneliness and alcohol dependence and not to forget in this vulnerable group 'post COVID 19 stress syndrome'. Councillor Hussain in his supplementary question was curious to know more about PERMA well-being profiling tool which you are going to pilot this year across 10 Bridgend schools and could the Cabinet Member let the Council know more about it? The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help undertook to provide a written reply.

A member of Council asked what the Council's plans are for working with the third sector and did it dovetail with the Regional Partnership Board. The Head of Children's Services informed Members that the service is working very closely with the third sector who report to the Regional Partnership Board and is a priority for the region and its sub-groups.

A member of Council referred to the possibility of a local lockdown and asked if the Council could do anything differently. The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help informed Members that the Council is having to respond daily to a rapidly changing picture. The Head of Children's Services informed Council that the service continues to operate on semi lockdown basis, while continuing to support citizens. Operations are subject to review daily and support to citizens is in line with the Service Delivery Plan and with Welsh Government guidance. She stated that in the event of a local lockdown, the service would resume tighter oversight mechanisms. The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help informed Council that pressures are being experienced by staff working in schools which impact on services and that experiences of Caerphilly and RCT Councils will be picked up on.

### 438. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 18:11