

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COUNCIL

23 JULY 2021

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

CWM TAF MORGANNWG TEST, TRACE AND PROTECT PROGRAMME A PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) Region – Test Trace Protect COVID-19 Prevention and Response Plan 2021/2022 for noting and to outline the contribution of the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) in the delivery of the plan.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-
1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county.
 2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
 3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council’s well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 Welsh Government produced their “Test, Trace, Protect” Strategy on 13 May 2020 which was based on Public Health Wales’ (PHW) advice. Each region was required to develop a response plan outlining how the aims of the Strategy would be achieved. The Cwm Taff Morgannwg response plan, referred to as the CTM TTP Programme, is being managed on a regional (CTM) footprint under the leadership of the Director of Public Health. A multi-agency Regional Strategic Oversight Group (RSOG) comprising of members of the Health Board, Local Public Health Team and

the three local authorities was been set up to operationalise the response plan within the CTM area.

3.2 The Cwm Taf Morgannwg COVID-19 Prevention and Response Plan for 2021/2022 attached as **Appendix 1** was submitted to Public Health Wales and Welsh Government in August 2020.

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 The 2020/2021 plan led to a number of significant deliverables, delivered in partnership and often within very short timescales, all with the aim of preventing and responding to the pandemic to minimise the impact on our communities as far as possible. This included:

- Establishment of a PCR testing and sampling service;
- Establishment of a contact tracing service;
- Enhanced enforcement services including a Joint Enforcement Team arrangement with South Wales Police;
- A protect service supporting communities who have to self-isolate, including a telephone helpline;
- A community pilot for lateral flow device (LFD) testing and subsequent community roll-out in March 2021 on a targeted basis;
- A COVID-19 vaccination strategy and delivery plan, on track to immunise priority groups;
- An underpinning surveillance system which has targets and triggers where required, for escalation and de-escalation purposes;
- A communication and community engagement framework supporting the whole programme in terms of both prevention and response to the current pandemic.

4.2 The plan is set in the context of a 'look-back' to events in 2020/2021 and lessons learned. It provides some of the epidemiological back-drop, together with the current status of COVID-19 in CTM and potential scenarios communities need to be ready to respond to, as we move into 2021/2022.

4.3 The overall aim and objectives for the TTP programme can be found in the plan attached at Appendix 1 together with the governance arrangements for the programme.

4.4 In March 2021 Audit Wales produced a report "Test, Trace, Protect in Wales: An Overview of Progress to Date" (attached at **Appendix 2**). The key messages on a national level included:

- *The TTP programme has seen different parts of the Welsh public and third sector work together well, in strong and effective partnerships, to rapidly build a programme of activities that is making an important contribution to the management of COVID-19 in Wales.*

- *The configuration of the TTP system in Wales has a number of strengths, blending national oversight and technical expertise with local and regional ownership of the programme, and the ability to use local intelligence and knowledge to shape responses.*
- *The TTP programme will remain a key tool in Wales's battle with the virus for some time to come.*

4.5 The Audit Wales report highlights a number of challenges which impact the delivery of services, these have been taken into account in the development of this year's plan, including:

- Maintaining the required performance in areas such as testing and contact tracing, which has proved challenging in the face of increasing demand;
- Test Trace Protect services have needed to be supplemented with increasingly stringent local and national lockdown restrictions in an attempt to reduce transmission rates;
- When demand has risen across regions at the same time, there has been insufficient contact tracing capacity to meet the increased demand;
- It remains difficult to know how well the 'protect' element of TTP has been working in supporting people to self-isolate;
- Most importantly of all, the public has a huge role to stop the virus spreading by following guidance and self-isolating when necessary.

4.6 Whilst the positive progress in the vaccination programme is recognised there remains uncertainty around COVID-19 variants of concern and there remains the need to maintain monitoring and be agile and flexible, in order to respond to emerging threats. The situation remains under close monitoring and review via TTP systems, with all these important factors informing our future TTP response, as partners move together into 2021/2022.

4.7 In considering the potential COVID-19 scenarios presented for 2021/2022, the following have been taken into account as planning assumptions:

- Considering the information presented, it is anticipated that there should be some certainty in levels of incidence up until July 2021. After this period, the number of variables described means that this becomes much less certain at this stage;
- 'Surge' plans should also be maintained just in case these may be needed;
- Where there is capacity 'headroom' in the Test Trace Protect service, we should look to focusing on more proactive and preventive COVID-19 measures such as for example:
 - Contact tracing – Welsh Government request to embed enhanced backward contact tracing.
 - Testing - support to community LFD testing and other areas of testing developing.

4.8 The plan has therefore been based on the context and scenarios presented, but it must be recognised that this remains an ever-changing and fast moving situation which is under close review by the Regional Strategic Overview Group and we may well need to adapt to circumstances we find ourselves in, that are difficult to predict at present.

4.9 The TTP recovery work is presented as an enabling piece of work which will underpin the programme, as we move hopefully from a health pandemic to an endemic situation. This will be undertaken in close association with existing partnerships such as the Public Services Board and Regional Partnership Board, as well as statutory bodies such as the health board and local authorities who will be key in leading and supporting the broader and longer term recovery.

4.10 Numerous officers have been involved in the tracing of people who have tested positive for coronavirus, linking with health professionals to identify trends and incidents and restrict the spread of the disease. This allowed the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) to monitor incidence rates and address upsurges in case numbers effectively and promptly. Notable areas of work relate to care homes and schools. SRS have also lead on enforcement throughout the pandemic. In collaboration with South Wales Police the Joint Enforcement Team (JET) was established. The team played a huge role in ensuring the goals set out in the national plan were achieved through:

- Investigating quarantine and self-isolation referrals from contact tracers; this work has gained greater import with the arrival in the UK of the different variants of coronavirus;
- Monitoring gatherings at different visitor locations, beaches, country parks, etc;
- Disrupting illegal house parties and the issuing of fixed penalty notices to those in attendance;
- Restricting the opening of non-essential businesses and issuing compliance notices where rules are ignored.

4.11 SRS were also at the forefront of business closures at the start of the pandemic and provided support and advice to a number of premises. As the legislation evolved the advice continued and advice had to change rapidly in line with current restrictions. Officers provided tailored advice to assist businesses with their plans for re-opening.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There will be no effect on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the development of the TTP programme and continue to be an influencing factor. The objective of the TTP programme is to work with communities to prevent ill-health and promote better health and well-being. The work of the SRS commits to improving social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being and promoting sustainable development in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

8. Financial implications

8.1 For 2020-21 BCBC incurred costs of £298,083, mainly in respect of costs of contact tracing staff (£187,000), both those employed by BCBC and the Vale of Glamorgan, via the Shared Regulatory Service, some ICT costs for staff (£24,000) and premises costs (£87,000). The latter included security and toilet facilities for mobile testing units, deep cleaning of test centres and minor repair works undertaken on test centres (e.g. electrical/ lighting repairs). All costs were reimbursed from Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

8.2 For 2021-22 the majority of staff are employed directly by Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC, with the exception of Shared Regulatory Service staff, so BCBC will generally only incur premises related costs, which will be reimbursed by the Health Board.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Council note the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Region – Test Trace Protect COVID-19 Prevention and Response Plan 2021/2022 and the ongoing work of the Shared Regulatory Service in the delivery of the plan.

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Background documents: None