

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS  
ON WEDNESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2021 AT 15:00

Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

S Aspey	SE Baldwin	TH Beedle	JPD Blundell
MC Clarke	N Clarke	RJ Collins	HJ David
P Davies	PA Davies	DK Edwards	J Gebbie
RM Granville	CA Green	DG Howells	RM James
M Jones	MJ Kearns	DRW Lewis	JE Lewis
JR McCarthy	D Patel	RL Penhale- Thomas	AA Pucella
JC Radcliffe	KL Rowlands	B Sedgebeer	RMI Shaw
CE Smith	SG Smith	RME Stirman	G Thomas
T Thomas	MC Voisey	LM Walters	KJ Watts
CA Webster	DBF White	A Williams	AJ Williams
HM Williams	JE Williams	RE Young	

Apologies for Absence

NA Burnett, T Giffard, M Hughes, A Hussain, JH Tildesley MBE and E Venables

Officers:

Mark Galvin	Interim Democratic Services Manager
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Gill Lewis	Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Michael Pitman	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

607. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Alex Williams – Personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda item 8. in that he lived in a property fronting an unadopted road. Councillor Williams left the meeting whilst this item was being considered.

Councillor R Stirman – Personal interest in Agenda item 8. in that she lived in a property fronting an unadopted road.

608. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of Council dated 17 November 2021, be approved as a true and accurate record.

609. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:

Mayor

The past month has been a relatively busy one so I will not update you on all that has taken place, but I will mention a few highlights.

## COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2021

The Charity Fundraising event my wife and I organised at the Heronston Hotel at the end of November was a great night out with over £1,000 raised and plenty of fun was had by all who attended. I would like to say a big thank you to all who bought tickets and for those who donated raffle prizes or made donations due to being unable to attend. Such events are not easy to organise without any support, but I am pleased to say that it was a success.

I attended the official opening of Y Nyth Education and Wellbeing centre at Bryngarw Park which is a wonderful facility for children of all ages to learn about our environment and outdoor spaces. There were a number of children present who were quite interested in the mayoral chain and I just about got away without it being broken! Partly my own fault though for starting to make plasticine imprints of the mayoral crest.

My first visit to the Ogmores valley took place with an invite to the Ogmores Valley Local Heritage and History Society annual book launch at the Mem in Nantymoel. There were performances by Ogmores Valley Male Voice Choir and also the Ogmores Valley Silver Band with a number of Christmas carols. I hope to return again soon to formally open the new miners memorial that has been placed along side where the Berwyn Centre once stood.

Finally, please note that the Citizenship Awards are open for nominations but will close on Friday 7 January 2022. My plea to you all is for each Councillor to nominate at least one individual or group from your area. With no awards being possible last year, let's make this year one of the biggest number of nominations ever, to thank those in our communities who go above and beyond day after day to help others and make a difference.

### Deputy Leader

Details on Christmas and New Year recycling and waste collection arrangements have been confirmed.

With the pandemic still in effect, we are once again asking households where someone is showing coronavirus symptoms to make sure that all tissue waste, such as kitchen roll, toilet paper or wet wipes, is double-bagged and set aside for 72 hours.

After this, the bag can be placed out inside the household rubbish bag. To help keep collectors safe, on no account should such waste be included with paper recycling.

Collections this year will be carried out as normal up to and including on Christmas Eve, but not on Christmas Day, Boxing Day or New Year's Day.

From Monday 27 to Thursday 30 December, collections will take place one day later than the normal collection date.

Waste that is due to be collected on New Year's Eve will be picked up on Sunday, 2 January, and collections will return to normal from Monday 3 January 2022.

Residents will be able to put out one extra rubbish bag for the first scheduled refuse collection after Christmas. There will also be an additional vehicle collecting cardboard, so please note that this may be collected separately to other household recycling.

Members may want to remind residents that there is no limit on how much recycling can be put out for collection, and that the vast majority of materials can be recycled. The main items that cannot be recycled are cards that have glitter on them, wrapping paper, black plastic, cellophane wrap, bubble wrap and polystyrene.

Real Christmas trees can be disposed of at local community recycling centres based at Brynmenyn, Tythegston and Maesteg, or can be dropped off at the Waterton Depot from Tuesday 4 January onwards.

Finally, I'd like to extend my thanks to Gill Lewis, Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change in this her last meeting of Council before she leaves the Authority at the end of this week. Her services to the Authority in her role since she arrived with the Council have been immeasurable and she has been a fantastic asset. This has particularly proven to be the case since the pandemic, where she has kept the Authority's finances safe in the most turbulent of times. It has been a pleasure working alongside Gill, who I have the utmost respect for as an Officer.

I also extend a warm welcome to Gill's replacement, Carys Lord.

The Leader added his personal thanks and gratitude to Gill Lewis, on behalf of Council. He added that Gill had been the consummate professional since she joined the Council which initially was planned for just a few months even though she ended up staying for 4 years. The reason for that though he added, was because she set the bar so high not just as a Section 151 Officer, but also as the Officer in charge of Housing, Customer Care and ICT.

In terms of the latter, Gill had to support overnight through the provision of essential equipment, in the region of 2,000 – 3,000 Officers so that they could continue providing Council services through working at home, as well as providing temporary accommodation for over 200 people who were homeless and we indeed still provide support to these vulnerable people, as well as others in society. Despite this commitment, Gill had also kept an iron like grip on the Council's purse and its finances.

The Leader added that he was extremely grateful for the excellent service she had provided during the last 4 years and he warmly welcomed her replacement as Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, Carys Lord, who was sure would provide similar excellent support in the above service areas of the Council.

These sentiments were echoed by both the Mayor and fellow Members.

The Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change thanked Members for these warm comments of appreciation.

#### **Cabinet Member - Communities**

Together with the Mayor, Leader and Cabinet colleagues, I was delighted to attend the opening of a new education and wellbeing centre recently at Bryngarw Country Park alongside Dawn Bowden, the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport.

Called 'Y Nyth', the new centre is just one of several new improvements delivered in partnership with Awen Cultural Trust following a £750,000 investment from the Valleys Regional Park programme.

The programme has set up twelve 'discovery gateways' designed to recognise and maximise natural and cultural assets to generate social, economic and environmental benefits.

Y Nyth features a purpose-built classroom and kitchen, while the park's visitor centre has been redeveloped to offer year-round activities for families and visitors.

New outdoor natural play equipment has been installed which is designed to support children's physical and mental health, develop their creativity, imagination and critical thinking, and encourage their social interaction.

A new bike shelter has been installed with a 'green' roof to increase biodiversity, and solar panels have been fitted to the visitor centre, café, B-Leaf building and stable offices.

The park has also benefitted from new boardwalks and path upgrades, refurbished public conveniences and a new sculpture trail leading through five of the natural habitats to be found within Bryngarw.

Bryngarw Country Park truly is one of the gems within the county borough's crown, and I hope that members will visit the park and see for themselves how these improvements are delivering an enhanced visitor experience.

Finally, I would like to thank Councillor Lyn Walters for all her hard work recently, by assisting in Ravenscourt with the administering of the Covid jab booster in order to help protect individuals from the disease and particularly the new Omnicron strain.

#### **Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help**

Members may recall that it was in December 2020 when Councillor Burnett first advised Council of the extreme pressures facing our domiciliary care service, and of how this was being reflected throughout the social care sector across Wales.

One year on, I would like to pick this up by providing you with a brief overview of the current situation, and what we have been doing to mitigate it over the last twelve months.

While the situation remains difficult and our services continue to face severe challenges, we are meeting the overwhelming majority of local needs in a timely and effective way.

A comparison with pre-pandemic figures reveals an eight per cent rise in the number of care hours delivered since 2017-18, and current trends indicate that we can expect to see increasing need in order to support people to remain as healthy and independent as possible in their own homes.

I would like to start this statement by paying tribute to our frontline social care workforce who have worked tirelessly for the last two years and are caring for more people, with higher level of needs, than ever before.

I need to advise Council, however, that currently, the number of people waiting to have their assessed needs for care and support needs met is rising.

A great deal of work has taken place over the last twelve months, on both a local and a national level.

Cabinet yesterday approved new commissioning arrangements for care and support at home which will enable all providers to pay their workforce the real living wage.

We have significantly supported the sector through the social care recovery fund to ensure providers are in a position to pay their staff at that level in advance of the new contracts coming into effect in 2022 – 23.

As you know, we set up a project group with the aim of developing an action plan capable of meeting needs in a different way. We are looking at ways of supporting staff in the social care sector and have been supporting providers through the social care recovery fund.

If people are waiting for care and support at home, risks to their well-being are being managed by the proactive review and assessment of each individual's circumstances. We are directly involving people themselves, their families and informal carers with this.

Where continued waiting is not an option, alternative provision such as day opportunities, residential care, residential reablement and respite short breaks are being explored and offered.

We are also using fast-track direct payments and the carer's grant to meet people's assessed needs and are liaising closely with families on how much support they may be able to offer.

The situation remains difficult and has not been helped by the fact that three independent providers have given notice on some packages of care, meaning it has created additional demand around 39 people and more than 400 service hours.

In terms of our domiciliary action plan, the project group is aiming to increase capacity by 20 additional members of staff by 1 April next year, while a Reablement Service has been reintroduced at Bryn y Cae to support people with reablement needs.

Various marketing strategies have been introduced to publicise job vacancies as widely as possible, and we have both participated in and benefitted from the national 'We Care' recruitment programme, including taking part in recruitment roadshows.

We are currently recruiting casual staff to build capacity for our internal services, while Human Resources are reviewing long-term absence cases and are supporting staff to return to work as soon as is practicable.

In terms of actions that are currently being prepared, community recruitment roadshows have taken place in Porthcawl and Ogmere Vale are being planned for Maesteg and Bridgend, and we are actively promoting career pathways to market options available within the social care sector.

A concerted publicity campaign is being planned which will include a series of adverts on Bridge FM starring existing carers talking about their roles, and staff have also been offered the opportunity to increase their contracted hours.

Plans are in development for the best deployment for staff who are non-drivers, and an alternative transport proposal is currently at the options appraisal stage.

If successful, this could see the launch of all-new pool cars, electric bikes, scooters and more as a way of ensuring staff who do not have access to a car can still make their rounds.

We are also developing an early warning system which will recognise signs that the independent sector is struggling to deliver packages of care and are working closely with the Social Care Development Workforce Programme to create an induction program which supports independent providers who are struggling to retain staff.

Finally, a pilot scheme to utilise health care support workers has been agreed and is in the process of being implemented, and a review of day services is underway.

This is exploring a wide range of options for extending opening times, adjusting care timeframe schedules, analysing staffing and transportation issues, and much more.

So, in summary, we are doing more than ever before. With both short, medium and longer term plans in place, terms and conditions are being addressed through recovery funds and recommissioning. We are working to ensure that we meet our responsibilities under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act, and that needs can be met in alternative ways where necessary.

I would also like to add that all parts of Wales and indeed the UK are in the same position and are facing the same types of challenge.

#### **Cabinet Member – Future Generations and Wellbeing**

Members may want to advise their constituents that people who rent privately but who have fallen behind due to Covid-19 can apply for a Tenancy Hardship Grant, an initiative introduced by Welsh Government.

To be eligible, they must have at least eight weeks of unpaid rent built up between 1 March 2020 and 30 June 2021, and tenants must not have received housing benefit whilst the unpaid rent was building up.

The grant is specifically designed for private rent sector tenants who may have been furloughed, experienced a drastic reduction in hours, or even lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

It is paid directly to the landlord or agent to reduce the likelihood of losing the tenancy and it does not have to be paid back.

More information on how to apply is available at both the council and Welsh Government websites.

#### **Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration**

Following on from last month's similar good news with Plasnewydd Primary School, Maesteg, Ogmores Vale Primary School has now also received an early Christmas present with the same news, ie that it has been moved out of special measures. So there are presently no BCB schools in special measures.

Inspectors from Estyn have confirmed that they are satisfied the school has made sufficient progress on a series of recommendations.

This is excellent news for the school. I know that Council Officers and colleagues from the Central South Consortium have been working closely with the teachers and headteacher at the school in order to achieve the necessary progress that has now been made and I would like to congratulate them all for their efforts.

Chris Elmore MP has introduced a Xmas Card this year, with some lovely designs on them put together by some school children from the County Borough. I would therefore like to thank Dylan Simmonds, Bettws Primary, Layla Roll-Jones, Ysgol Cynwyd Sant Primary, and Lucy Evans, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Primary Schools, for their flair and imagination here with the card design.

Finally, the Porthcawl Community Orchestra will be playing Xmas Carols in John Street, Porthcawl, this coming Saturday, between 11am – 1pm, so any donations from the public for charity here, would be greatly welcomed.

### Chief Executive

Members may have seen media coverage or posts on social media concerning temporary restrictions that we have been forced to impose over the use of drop-off zones at three local schools.

For the sake of clarity, I'd like to briefly confirm why we have been forced to put these restrictions in place.

The affected drop-off zones are located at Brynmenyn Primary, Pencoed Primary and Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen where, if used correctly, they offer a safe, convenient facility.

Unfortunately, parents and carers at the schools were advised that an assessment of the drop-off zones had revealed some quite serious concerns over their misuse which, if it continued, could result in their withdrawal.

Despite this, multiple incidents continued to be observed of vehicles making dangerous manoeuvres, travelling at speed, blocking or not using the drop-off bays correctly, ignoring instructions from officers on site and more, and included several near-miss incidents.

Clearly, we cannot compromise where pupil safety is concerned. A decision was made to make the drop-off zones available only to staff working at the school, parents and carers who are Blue Badge holders, and home-to-school transport vehicles provided by the local authority.

As you might expect, this has not proven to be popular with a number of parents and carers, but I hope that members will appreciate how the urgency of the closure reflects just how seriously the authority and the schools are taking the issue.

Officers are already looking at options that could provide a safe alternative that prioritises the safety of pupils and pedestrians attending or visiting these schools, but until then, the temporary restrictions must remain in place.

I hope this brief clarification serves to explain some of the background surrounding the decision.

In other news, as Members have already confirmed, today marks the last time that our Head of Finance, Gill Lewis, will be attending Council.

You normally earn time off for good behaviour, but Members may recall that Gill originally signed up for six months and ended up staying for more than four years!

This was largely because we tried many times to recruit someone of her calibre, but failed to do so.

Gill's tenure coincided with some of the harshest financial circumstances this Council has ever had to face, and on top of that, we have had the Coronavirus pandemic to contend with, too.

Throughout all of this, Gill's grasp of the issues at hand has been second to none, and she has demonstrated invaluable wisdom and strong leadership.

She has done an outstanding job in steering the Council's finances through some very difficult and uncertain times, initially during austerity and then latterly through the pandemic and all of the challenges that has brought in, not just for finance and the delivery of multiple grants, but also in areas such as homelessness, ICT, digital transformation, customer care and more.

It is no secret that acting as a Council Section 151 officer will never help anyone to win a popularity contest. This is the post where you often find yourself having to say 'no' as you manage issues of affordability and compliance with numerous accounting codes, the principles of our Medium Term Financial Plan and more.

The good news is that Gill has played this role of 'pantomime villain' really well. Our financial management is regarded extremely well by regulators and auditors alike, and Gill's experience and expertise continues to be held in the highest regard by the likes of the Audit Committee, her CMB colleagues and members in general.

While Gill intends to spend more time playing golf and travelling when pandemic conditions allow, I understand that she intends to carry on working initially with colleagues in health, and that she has also picked up some work in Jersey and no doubt, that will make it easier for accessing all her offshore accounts!

I and her CMB colleagues also suspect that Gill will be pestering her butler, who doubles as her husband, for more cups of tea.

I thank Gill on behalf of Council, for everything she has done while she has been at the Authority and wish her all the very best for the future.

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

Members will have seen the change that has been made on Cabinet and I am extremely grateful to Councillor Nicole Burnett for her dedication and professionalism as Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help.

I would also like to offer a warm welcome to Councillor Jane Gebbie as the new Cabinet Member who is very energetic, passionate and experienced.

Urgent changes to the way in which people receive their Covid-19 booster vaccinations are being introduced as national efforts to fight the spread of the new Omicron variant get underway.

The move follows the recent announcement from Welsh Government confirming that all eligible adults in Wales will be offered a Covid-19 vaccination booster shot by the end of the month.

To achieve this, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board now needs to deliver 166,000 boosters across the region by 31 December 2021.

The Chief Executive and I together with the Leaders and Chief Executives of RCT and Merthyr Councils met with the Chief Executive of Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board to discuss and progress the rapid acceleration of the vaccination programme, to achieve these targets.

## **COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2021**

For Bridgend, it means that a number of important changes need to be introduced at the Ravens Court vaccination centre.

To accommodate more appointments, opening hours are being extended to cover 7am-10pm. The only exceptions will be on Christmas Eve (7am-2pm) and New Year's Eve (7am-4pm).

The centre will also remain operative every day of the week, including bank holidays, apart from on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Because the centre will be open earlier in the morning and later at night, additional external lighting and shelters are being installed.

Inside the centre, boosters and standard vaccinations will be carried out alongside one another. New vaccination lanes are being set up to accommodate this, and extra staff are being brought in to ensure the process can run smoothly. We have seconded 5 extra staff to assist in the operation of this.

While walk-in appointments for booster vaccinations are not currently available, walk-in slots will continue to be offered to eligible people who need to receive a first or second dose of the vaccine.

Once they have had their jab, the amount of time people will need to wait before leaving the premises is being reduced to five minutes.

The appointments are being arranged now and will be automatically offered to every eligible adult within the county borough.

People will not need to contact the health board or local GP, but should expect to receive an appointment via a text message. Only those who have not provided a telephone contact number will receive an appointment via post, which is different to that which applied for the two previous doses.

Even if it is on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve, I cannot emphasise strongly enough how important it will be for people to accept the offered appointment.

It remains essential for people to ensure they receive the booster. This remains vital for improving our levels of protection against the fast-moving Omicron strain, and we need to do all that we can to keep ourselves, our friends, family, workmates and neighbours safe.

The appointments will start to come through very soon, and we will be issuing further information on the booster roll-out.

In other news, I'm sure members will be pleased to know that a new contractor has been appointed for the construction of the Welsh medium childcare facility planned at land off the Isfryn Industrial Estate in Blackmill.

After the previous contractor went into administration, Stafford Construction Ltd a local and experienced firm, has been awarded the contract for the work. A new schedule is currently being finalised, and construction is expected to begin in the New Year.

The hub will be one of four all-new Welsh medium childcare facilities planned for Bridgend County Borough.

Designed to serve the Ogmore Valley, the settings will provide 16 sessional Welsh-medium childcare places, together with six places for children up to two, and wraparound or out-of-school provision for 52 weeks of the year.

Once completed, it will feature new play space, quiet rooms, storage facilities, offices and a car parking area with room for up to seven vehicles. With new landscaping to the front and side of the hub, soft play facilities will be installed as well as a canopy capable of providing children with shelter and shade outdoors.

At the same time, Stafford Construction have also started work on the new Welsh-medium childcare facility based at Bettws.

Based at the site of the former Boys and Girls Club, this will serve the Garw Valley and surrounding valleys gateway area and features similar facilities to its Blackmill counterpart.

With two further hubs still to come in Porthcawl and Bridgend, this represents a significant £2.8m investment into Welsh language facilities and services, and also underlines the council's ongoing commitment towards childcare and promoting the Welsh Language.

I am sure that members will welcome this good news, and that like me, you are looking forward to seeing the hubs take shape.

611. **GAMBLING ACT 2005 STATEMENT OF LICENSING PRINCIPLES 2022-2025**

The Head of Shared Regulatory Services presented a report, the purpose of which, was to seek Council approval of the publication of the Council's Statement of Licensing Principles for the next triennial period 2022 to 2025.

He advised that the Council as a local authority, has strategy functions under the Gambling Act and it therefore had to effectively discharge these.

The report outlined the response to the consultation carried out in respect of the above and made recommendations for revisions to the Statement of Licensing Principles. The proposed amendments were shown highlighted in red within the document at Appendix A to the report.

The proposed review had also taken into account the unprecedented impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on businesses which provided gambling facilities.

Paragraph 3.5 of the report set out the three licensing objectives which were central to regulating gambling and the principles upon which the Council is required to operate in accordance with these.

The Head of Shared Regulatory Services stressed, that the Council did not have responsibility for online gambling. The Council was only responsible for licensed premises based licensable activities and some examples of these, were shown in paragraph 3.3 of the report.

He added that the Council has to publish the Policy, which had to be agreed every three years.

The Head of Shared Regulatory Services advised Members that the Council's Licensing Committee had previously approved the report and recommended that it then be

presented to Council for ratification. The Committee further recommended that Council approves the current set of principles, to take forward for the next three-year period.

Though he made the point that the local authority does not have responsibility for online gambling, this did impact upon our local communities quite significantly, and it therefore integrated with some of the Council's policies, such as looking after individual's well-being and/or mental health.

Therefore, he assured Members that local authority officers did engage regularly with the Gambling Commission, Welsh Government and perhaps most importantly, with the Chief Medical Officer, who all recognised how gambling impacts detrimentally upon local communities and were looking at steps to control this.

So, the Head of Shared Regulatory Services concluded, that whilst the Policy could control online gambling, the service was trying to use as many levers as possibly, to protect members of the public out in the community. It was easy through online gambling to lose hundreds of pounds in a matter of minutes, without someone having to leave their living room. Therefore, the challenge to prevent, stop or reduce it, was a difficult one.

As this was the Head of Shared Regulatory Services final Council meeting before retiring, the Mayor together with other Members wished him the very best in his retirement and emphasised what an excellent Officer he had been in looking after the interests of the constituents of three local authorities, which was a challenge in itself that had been made far worse, due to the extra work the service had taken on during the pandemic.

The Leader echoed these sentiments adding that Dave Holland and his colleagues had literally saved 1,000's of peoples lives during the pandemic through hard work that at times had been overbearing on staff within the service. Members also wished his successor Helen Picton the very best, as his successor.

The Head of Shared Regulatory Services thanked Members for their kind words on behalf of himself and his Officers, who had greatly appreciated the support Members had given them, particularly during the period of Covid-19.

**RESOLVED:** That Council approved the Statement of Licensing Principles, incorporating the amendments highlighted within Appendix A of the report, together with the additional amendment in paragraph 4.6 and to approve publication in accordance with the appropriate regulations.

612. **PRESENTATION BY CWM TAF MORGANNWG UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD AND PROGRAMME OF FUTURE PRESENTATIONS TO COUNCIL**

The Chief Executive presented the above report, part of which introduced the representatives present from the above University Health Board (CTF UHB).

In attendance from the Health Board were Paul Mears, Chief Executive, Emrys Elias, Chairperson and Anthony Gibson, Group Director, Bridgend ILG.

Mr. Mears, Chief Executive expressed how pleased he was to be able to attend today and give Members an update on work ongoing presently in the Health Board. As Council would appreciate, work had been constant with staff under extreme pressure throughout the course of the pandemic to the present time.

The presentation today would obviously cover COVID-19 and planning around our recovery of elective surgical work and planning for winter work that we're doing in partnership working with Council colleagues locally in Bridgend. The Chief Executive, Cwm Taf, also intended give an update on maternity and neonatal services, the Community Hospital, Maesteg and CAMHS.

There was now a peak phase once more being experienced in relation to COVID, in the form of the omicron variant which was beginning to take hold in Wales. It had presently not had such a significant impact in terms of hospital admissions as of yet here in CTM, and indeed the community transmission rates of omicron in our area was still relatively low. However, as with other variants of the illness the Health Service had to look at its capacity over the next few weeks and months to make sure that there was adequate cover to cope with any implications that the strain may bring, ie admittance to hospital and bed capacity etc. This strain of the illness, will probably take off very quickly as it is doing already in parts of England, he added.

Obviously, a key part of the response to COVID is the testing regime. There we have had a very big demand for our PCR testing. That's pretty stable at the moment, and the plan is to carry on obviously with the testing capacity that we have across our health border area, to ensure that we are giving access as quickly as possible to people who may suspect they have symptoms, to be able to get them tested. And backing up that is obviously the contact tracing that comes behind the testing.

It was also important to make sure that we are able to track and trace people who have come in contact with individuals who have tested positive for COVID.

In terms of vaccination, the Chief Executive of Cwm Taf stated that across its areas, 159,000 booster jabs had been given, which represented 49.59% of the eligible population that comprised the Health Board. Welsh Government though had given a directive in the past couple of days, that we should be offering the jab to all eligible people across Wales.

So by the end of December, the aim is to have everyone offered a jab in the Cwm Taf location, and the Chief Executive felt that it was important to distinguish between offering the jab, against actually getting one in people's arms, which was the aim.

Obviously, the rationale behind ramping up the vaccination booster campaign is to try and tackle the rise of the Omicron variant. We know that the vaccine does provide additional protection against the variant, and clearly, we're trying to vaccinate as many people as possible to minimise the impact on health services, of people's illness. He said that many Members will be aware from the media, that we are not yet completely sure what the impact on hospital admissions will be from the new variant. There is though a possibility that the new variant may result in a significant strain once more in terms of resource on the Health Service.

The Chief Executive, Cwm Taf, explained that additional vaccination centres were now operating from the end of this week. These would be operating from 7:00 AM till 10:00 PM, seven days a week. This, however, was also requiring Cwm Taf to increase its staffing capacity quite significantly, to be able to provide a service at a time when such staff are also obviously very weary due to there being no significant let-up in the pandemic and illness to members of society. He added that the military would also help support this booster vaccination programme.

The only exception being to the opening of further vaccination centres, would be Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Due to these extra opening hours and further Centres

opening, we were able to add an additional 10,000 appointments last week and we've had further increases this week, as we have been able to get more staff on hand to be able to help expand the vaccination workforce.

The Chief Executive Cwm Taf thanked BCBC for their assistance in providing much administrative support to the efforts surrounding vaccination, by providing staff to assist here. He also urged Councillors to engage with their constituents, to get as many in the community vaccinated, as soon as possible, across all age bands. Hopefully, through this joined-up approach, everyone over 18 years of age will have been offered the booster jab by end of December.

Due to the ongoing pressures of Covid-19 and the challenges the illness had brought about, sadly there was now a significant backlog of patients waiting for planned procedures and operations.

With support from Welsh Government, efforts were under way to try and cover this backlog. This year, Cwm Taf had received an additional £16 m from Welsh Government to support this.

However, the Health Service were confronted continually with a significant challenge in terms of trying to juggle the competing demands of managing urgent support for Covid patients, against supporting patients with other illnesses and disease, which had been a massive issue since the inception of the illness.

There remained the problem of people having dates for major surgery, with these having to be cancelled last minute due to an influx into hospital of Covid patients due to new strains of variants emerging, with this being on top of the challenges relating to patients that required primary care; people getting appointment with their GP for other more general illnesses and people feeling the mental strain brought about by the illness, such as those living alone and experiencing isolation, particularly in periods where there had been lockdowns.

In some areas, such as in the Rhondda, Primary Care Centres had been introduced, in order to take some of the strain that had been imposed upon the Health Service by the pandemic. It had been difficult for patients also to actually see a GP for an appointment, with them first having to be assessed over the telephone. What had assisted here however, was the fact that the GP Out of Hours services that was formerly just in Bridgend, had now been extended right across the Cwm Taf area. It was therefore easier to get an appointment to see a GP, though patients may have to travel for this as opposed to seeing their own GP at their local practice. Though this service had also been extended and was now a 24-hour service

Added to this explained the Chief Executive, Cwm Taf, was the support of our Acute Care team in the community who were a home-based service. So if you were a patient, that had been assessed by a GP as needing some additional support such as, for example, input from a geriatrician or needed to be supervised whilst at home, specialist nurses were available in the community to visit patients (at their homes) and actually look after them there, so as to avoid bringing them into hospital. These were of course patients, who could be adequately treated at home without needing to come into a care establishment/environment.

The Chief Executive, Cwm Taf also commended the partnership work that continued to be developed between themselves and the 3 local authorities of Merthyr, RCT and BCBC. This had built upon the work achieved in recent times, concentrating upon further integration of services for the local population and bringing together health and social

care in a much more joined up manner across the 3 localities. Work was ongoing here, he was pleased to confirm, including as a future joint workstream, tackling together the decarbonisation agenda, combined management arrangements between Health and Social Care and health inequalities, such as those experienced in more deprived areas.

The Chief Executive, Cwm Taf, then touched upon some of the improvement work that has been taking place in maternity services, including within the Princess of Wales Hospital, Bridgend. Further training and development of staff undertaken had helped to achieve this, he added

Further work was also ongoing in our neonatal services, which was due to be reported on in the spring. This was an area where Cwm Taf had significant effort and increased support from clinicians across the Health Board, to look at how it could further improve the neonatal services for our most vulnerable. This was initially being looked at in the Prince Charles Hospital in Merthyr, with improvements then being extended to the Princess of Wales Hospital in Bridgend.

The Chief Executive, Cwm Taf advised that the work that had been carried in neonatal services would be the subject of a review, which would be published in January next year.

A program of work was currently underway in the Community Hospital in Maesteg. Work had been required to the roof, as that was in a poor state of repair. These works had now been completed. Invitations to tender would soon be initiated, for work on the inpatient beds and issues regarding capacity.

Cwm Taf had been in consultation with Welsh government for a further funding resource in respect of the above, because the original envelope of funding that was allocated for this work was now not going to be sufficient, given cost inflation that has taken place over the past year or so.

Cwm Taf would be updating the local community, including Ward Members and other stakeholders to ensure that they are kept abreast of developments and the progress here, including the outcome of conversations with Welsh Government.

Finally, the Chief Executive shared some information with Members on CAMHS, which was an NHS service that assesses and treats young people with emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties. CAMHS support covers depression, problems with food and eating, self-harm, abuse, violence or anger, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and anxiety, among other difficulties.

This service was primarily hosted in the Bridgend locality, where there had been a significant increase in demand in recent times, both prior to and since the pandemic. Areas of growth now had to be created to better support these young people and their problems due to this increase in demand, which had not shown any sign of reducing. The impact of the pandemic had obviously not helped them with their problems, but more predictably had exacerbated them. There had been a noticeable spike, the Chief Executive advised, in young people with eating disorders not just in terms of numbers, but also in the acuteness of their problems here. A special service had now been established in order to provide increased support to this particular category of patient.

Work was ongoing with local colleges, in order to try and make sure that children and young people experiencing problems such as those listed above, were provided with counselling support and safeguarding arrangements through the local authority, where this was considered necessary.

At the Prince of Wales Hospital site in Bridgend, there was a specialist Tier 4 centre that provided support for young people with CAMHS issues, including eating disorders.

The Mayor thanked the representatives from Cwm Taf for their submission and then opened up the floor for questions to the Invitees.

A Member referred to Maesteg Community Hospital and his concern that there was a delay there in terms of moving things forward with regards to the works that were being proposed there. He was also concerned with the fact that there were rumours circulating to the effect that the hospital was going to be closed. He therefore asked for an update on this.

He was also aware that there was a proposal to develop a dialysis service in the Bridgend County Borough and he asked if this was intended to be Consultant or Nurse Practitioner led.

The Chief Executive, Cwm Taf assured the Member, that there was a commitment to the continued operation of the Maesteg Community Hospital and a range of health care services it provides there. These would be services that best serve the interests of both the Llynfi population as well as that of the needs of some of the wider County Borough residents.

The Chief Executive, Cwm Taf advised that discussions were ongoing with Swansea Bay Health Board who were providing dialysis support to people who required this in the Bridgend area through specialist health services. A number of options were presently on the table for Bridgend moving forward, namely an off-site Dialysis Unit separate to the Princess of Wales Hospital, as well as an Outpatients facility. The Unit would be nurse led but also be supported by a daily Consultant input, so basically a mixed model. AS this would be built by a private contractor, there was no firm information as of yet where this would be placed in the County Borough.

A Member noted that the Ty Llydiard CAMHS support service was a Tier 4. She asked what Tier 4 signified.

The Chief Executive, Cwm Taf confirmed that Tier 4 was the highest level of CAMHS patient in-care support and Ty Llydiard provided support for young people in South Wales to the edge of South West Wales, so it was therefore classed as a cross-regional high level support centre.

A Member confirmed that in 2019 he had met with the then Chairperson of Cwm Taf regarding the lack of primary care provision in the Valleys Gateway area (off Junction 36). He had confirmed that consultation would take place regarding a possible proposal to extend Tyn-y-Coed Surgery in Sarn, to take account of the lack of this provision and in view of the fact that this area of the County Borough had increased in terms of its growth in population.

In view of the fact that the Member had contacted Cwm Taf directly on this matter, the Chief Executive of Cwm Taf confirmed that he would speak to the Councillor on this issue, outside of the meeting.

A Member asked if people who were classed as housebound would have their Covid booster jab administered at home by a Nurse Practitioner.

The Chief Executive, Cwm Taf advised that all housebound people in the County Borough would receive their booster jab by the end of December, through home visits, either from GP's or Nurse Practitioners. However, priority would be given to those that were actually housebound in the true sense of the word, as in some cases individuals

who claimed to be housebound, were in fact able through the support of others, to visit their GP practice or centres such as the one in Ravenscourt for the booster.

The Leader concluded debate on this important topic, by thanking the Chief Executive and his colleagues for accepting the invite to today's meeting and providing such an informative and comprehensive update on the work of Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. These sentiments were echoed by the Mayor, prior to the guests retiring from the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That the report of the Chief Executive and the presentation given by representatives of Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, be noted.

613. **TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION FROM: COUNCILLOR T THOMAS TO THE CABINET MEMBER COMMUNITIES**

What percentage of local roads and highways are unadopted?

**Response**

Based on the calculation of the total length of unadopted roads as compared to the overall Highway network linear measurement the percentage of unadopted roads in Bridgend is less than 1% (0.08%).

Please bear in mind that this figure is based on data compiled in 2018 and is a very high-level calculation, however, what is clear is that in comparison to the overall highway network is very low.

**Supplementary Question by Councillor T Thomas**

There does remain a small percentage of unadopted roads that give rise to certain issues for residents living in these areas. I'm aware that in the Pencoed location of the Valleys Gateway area, there are roads that have been unadopted for decades. Therefore, what is the Strategy of the Council for adopting these long term unadopted roads, especially in areas where site developers are no longer trading, due to perhaps having gone into liquidation or possibly for other reasons.

**Response**

The Cabinet Member – Communities advised that he had been working with our two MP's and the local Member for Bryncoch, looking at the issue of unadopted roads, including in the Valleys Gateway areas. However, it remains a requirement of the site developer to ensure roads are brought up to an adoptable standard, as if this falls onto the BCBC, then the stretch of road in question, becomes the liability of the local authority. Welsh Government have introduced an Unadopted Road Fund and BCBC have been successful in bidding for an apportionment of these monies, resulting in works being carried out at a street in Porthcawl, to bring this up to an adoptable standard then subsequently being adopted by the Council. Unfortunately, the level of funding that is available is not going to be able to financially support the adoption of the number of unadopted roads that there are in the BCB, nor Wales as a whole, so the Council are going to have to consider how best to address the issue of unadopted roads in its overall area. Should Members have any queries with regards to unadopted roads within their Wards, he urged them to approach him personally with regards to these.

The Corporate Director – Communities made the point that there were only a small number of classed highways in the County Borough that had not been brought up to an adoptable standard. There did remain quite a number of unadopted roads, however,

these were in the main areas that did not front housing developments, but were more side or rear lanes etc, as opposed to main roads, where there was not any significant flow of vehicular traffic. She reiterated the fact that we do have Welsh Government funding to adopt unadopted roads and to introduce these areas into the main highway network and trials have begun in respect of this. There were instances where site developers were developing housing estates within different areas of the County Borough, however, the roads serving these developments could not be brought forward for adopting, until such time that the developments were fully completed with the roads serving them being of an adoptable standard. She wished to stress however, that these areas were small when compared to the overall length collectively of roads that linked up all areas within Bridgend and its wider areas, which were regarded as maintainable. It was not a large percentage in comparison. It was important to ensure that all roads that served a high level of traffic were adopted, in order to ensure a smooth and effective flow of vehicles travelling throughout the County Borough. The Council would also continue she added, to bring up to adoption some residential streets, out of the Welsh Government funding allocation.

614. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 17:00