



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 30TH JULY 2020 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor P. Marsden – Chair

Councillors:

C. Cuss (Social Care and Wellbeing), N. George (Environment and Neighbourhood Services), C.J. Gordon (Corporate Services), Mrs B.A. Jones (Education and Achievement), S. Morgan (Regeneration, Transportation and Sustainability), L. Phipps (Homes, Places and Tourism) and E. Stenner (Finance, Performance and Planning).

Together with:

C. Harry (Chief Executive), D. Street (Corporate Director - Social Services and Housing), and R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services).

Also in Attendance:

R. Tranter (Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal Services), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), S. Harris (Interim Head of Business Improvement Services and S. 151 Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager) and A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from M. S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director - Communities).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer) declared an interest in relation to Agenda Item 4 - Gwent Contact Tracing Service, in that his wife is currently working for Torfaen Track and Trace Service. As he is not a decision-maker he did not leave the meeting when the report was presented

3. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Cabinet were provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports from 30th July 2020 to 30th September 2020. Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and therefore subject to change.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the Forward Work Programme be noted. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme be noted.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

4. GWENT CONTACT TRACING SERVICE

URGENT ITEM - NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN

In accordance with the Council's Constitution the Mayor had agreed that the decision proposed was reasonable in all the circumstances and should be treated as a matter of urgency and therefore exempt from Call-in.

Members were asked to note that the report was deemed urgent as the staff currently providing this service were redeployed from other local authority services. As the lockdown is eased they will be required to return to their substantive roles. It was therefore necessary to agree the operational delivery structure, governance and finance arrangements to allow recruitment of staff into the Gwent Contract Tracing Service so that it is properly resourced and able to respond to any increase in Covid 19 cases.

Members were advised that Contact Tracing is a key element of Welsh Government's Test, Trace, Protect strategy and response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Welsh Government has asked Local Authorities and Health Boards to jointly put in place contact tracing services in their regions. In Gwent, contact tracing has been in place since the beginning of June of this year undertaken by staff redeployed into local contact tracing teams within the 5 Local Authorities and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Welsh Government has now confirmed funding arrangements for contact tracing services through to the end of the financial year.

The report sets out proposals for the next phase for the Gwent Contact Tracing Service moving from a redeployed workforce to a fully employed model to ensure that there is capacity for successful delivery. From the 1st of June to the 15th July 2020, 109 cases have been referred into the service, 108 have been successfully contacted generating 316 contacts. As the lockdown is eased services are being reintroduced and the redeployed staff will be required to return to their substantive roles. Whilst coronavirus cases in the region are currently relatively low, it is proposed to recruit and train the staff needed to ensure that the Service is able to meet the demands of any potential increase in cases.

Cabinet were referred to the draft Business Case (appended to the report) which sets out the proposed operational delivery structure, governance, and finance arrangements for the service. The 5 Local Authorities together with the Health Board will each employ local contact tracing teams consisting of Contact Tracers, and Contact Advisors. The service operates 7 days a week and local contact tracing teams are supported by local authority Environmental Health Officers across the region and by Clinical Leads, Consultants in Health Protection, and Consultants in Communicable Disease from ABUHB and Public Health Wales.

It is proposed that G10 will be the Strategic Board for the service. G10 is a voluntary collective of public sector organisations providing a strategic leadership forum to achieve better outcomes for the people of Gwent. It was noted that the Leader and Chief Executive are the Council's representatives. It is recognised the Service must be very responsive should community transmission increase and be able to be scaled up quickly and effectively to ensure successful and effective contact tracing. When fully staffed the service would consist of approximately 350 staff in Gwent of which approximately 100 would be working in the Caerphilly team.

Cabinet considered the report and further clarification was sought in relation to redeployed staff within Caerphilly County Borough Council returning to their substantive posts. Officers advised that there are approximately 30 staff currently redeployed and there is no pressure in their service areas for them to return. It is intended that some staff will return to their roles throughout September. An example was provided of some staff within Leisure Services being retained within the Contact Tracing Service subject to the Welsh Government announcement on reopening of Leisure Centres. Managers within Leisure Services are satisfied that Leisure Centres can reopen in a measured way whilst staff remain redeployed in the Contact Tracing Service. Members were assured that subject to Cabinet approval, recruitment would be undertaken immediately, and training would be carried out over the next month or so.

Councillor P. Marsden placed on record her thanks to the Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services for the Strategic Role he and his Team have taken in setting up this fantastic brand-new service in such a short space of time, across the Gwent area.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report:

- (i) the operational delivery structure, governance, and finance for the Gwent Contact Tracing Service as detailed in the report and draft Business Case at Appendix 1, subject to an agreed Memorandum of Understanding, be approved;
- (ii) the Interim Corporate Director for Communities to agree any amendments to the draft Business Case subject to consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Neighbourhood Services, Legal Services, and the Section 151 Officer, be authorised;
- (iii) the Interim Corporate Director for Communities to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the Gwent Contact Tracing Service subject to Consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Neighbourhood Services, Legal Services, and the Section 151 Officer, be authorised;
- (iv) the Leader and Chief Executive are the Council's representatives at G10 and that deputies are the Cabinet Member and Corporate Director respectively, be noted.

5. COMMUNITY RESPONSE - COMMUNITY CONNECTION - BUDDY SCHEME

The report provided Cabinet with an update on the community response to the COVID crisis, focussing on the Council's buddy scheme to support older and vulnerable residents to stay safe at home by providing extra help where they have no support network. The report sets out the next steps for the scheme and how the Council can use its positive legacy to support some of the most vulnerable residents over the longer term.

The operation of the buddy scheme in action has been publicised via the Council's social media channels and two Cabinet Members have been acting as 'buddies' in their local communities. It was explained that the staff's response to the request to support people has been phenomenal, with 385 stepping up immediately to volunteer, and later, services offering up staff to be redeployed in the buddy role. At its peak 1560 vulnerable people were being supported and 590 staff were helping with food shopping, picking up prescriptions and general friendly support. Cabinet were referred to Appendices 1 and 2 of the report which summarise the benefits to the staff, and the supported people have gained from the buddy scheme. Councillor E. Stenner extended her personal thanks to all those involved, and this sentiment

was echoed by Cabinet.

Cabinet noted that the situation for older and vulnerable residents is now much better than it was in the early stages when food shortages and queues were the norm. Many people registered on the scheme have since been able to arrange their own access to food and medicines. However, the scale of the request for support highlights the numbers of vulnerable people in the community who do not have a support network around them.

The report makes a number of proposals to transition the scheme to a support network 'closer to communities' so that it can become a longer-term sustainable project to alleviate loneliness and isolation. Part of this will be working more closely with the many established community support groups and establishing a cohort of community volunteers working in partnership with the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO).

The report makes a recommendation to establish a Corporate Volunteering scheme, by allowing staff to continue in the buddy role as part of the leave of absence scheme with an expectation that they will commit at least an equivalent amount of their own time. A further report will be provided evaluating the scheme after six months with a view to establishing a wider Corporate Volunteering scheme to benefit the communities in the County Borough. The proposal is to transition the scheme from the Corporate Policy Unit to the Community Regeneration Team with a recommendation to fund two posts from Social Services reserves for a period of two years.

Cabinet discussed the content of the report and a Member sought clarification in respect of the approximately 100 school based staff currently involved with the scheme and asked if those members of Staff would be likely to continue to provide volunteering support. Members were referred to a recent report brought to Cabinet where Officers will be shortly considering a Corporate Review. The Corporate Volunteering Scheme is one strand that will form part of the review, where school-based staff could be considered by the established body as part of the Corporate Volunteering Scheme throughout the Authority. It is unlikely at this stage that the school-based staff will be able to continue providing the service. In terms of working with Community Groups, Officers feel this is an exciting opportunity to go further than the 'buddy scheme' which has been established due to the Covid crisis. It is hoped when the infrastructure is in place this will provide wider opportunities of working with community groups.

Members provided individual accounts of the gratitude shown from residents within their communities from the services provided to them by the Council and the volunteers undertaking the service.

Councillor P. Marsden emphasised that sustainability is key, and this situation symbolises what Local Authorities need to do in terms of helping and supporting communities and added that this is a fantastic opportunity for the Community Regeneration Team. She thanked all staff involved and Councillor S. Morgan and Councillor L. Phipps for taking part in the 'buddy scheme'. The benefits associated with both the Community and the Volunteers involved were also noted.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the reasons contained in the Officer's Report: -

- (i) the information contained within the report, be noted;
- (ii) the allocation of £130,262 of funding from Social Services earmarked reserves, as outlined in the financial implication 10.1 to 10.6 in the report, be agreed. This budget would cover the proposed appointments for a period of 2 years;

- (iii) a precursor be established for Corporate Volunteering, building on the goodwill evidenced in Appendix 1, by supporting staff to continue in the buddy role by adding a category to the Leave of Absence Policy of up to 2 days per annum in hours, pro rata. The expectation being that this would be matched with an equivalent period of their own time. Evaluate the results after 6 months by surveying the staff and managers involved with a view to establishing a wider Corporate Volunteering Scheme;
- (iv) a further report will be presented relating to the Corporate Review on Corporate Volunteering.

6. EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL (EOTAS) STRATEGY

The strategy, appended to the main report, had been considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee on the 24th February 2020. The views of the Scrutiny Committee were set out in covering report. Cabinet were advised that the strategy has been developed in consultation with schools and will be aligned to the Service Improvements Plan and other strategic documents. The aim is to provide a good quality service to young people, with an ambition that they should feel important and safe within their learning environment.

The strategy contains a Passport and Guidebook for each child to support them to obtain both their formal qualifications and also ensure they have emotional and wellbeing support. The ambition is to provide these children with the same outcomes as any other child. There is already a good provision with a range of options from the Learning Centre, Home Schooling, Innovate Bases at Blackwood and Rhymney as well as the Learning Progress Centres based at Heolddu Comprehensive and Lewis School Pengam. The strategy outlines a collaborative approach with schools through outreach work and a Centre for Vulnerable Learners Hub and spoke Model.

Cabinet were advised that Caerphilly Council is committed to ensuring that all learners have equality of opportunity and recognise the right of all children and young people to receive high quality education. The Council are ambitious on behalf of learners and Officers would like to see the Education Other Than At School provision across Wales giving pupils the same access to education entitlements as their peers. Offices want to ensure that even where children may require access to provision outside of schools this is of a high standard and that links are maintained with schools and communities as a means of ensuring that children continue to feel that they belong. .

Councillor Mrs B. A. Jones emphasised that the Authority must seek to build on the existing good practice and develop the right provision to secure this vision. This means ensuring a range of appropriate, high quality opportunities are available for children and young people across Caerphilly based on their needs. The centre for vulnerable learners will be at the heart of this vision and will be supported by a range of satellite provisions that are developed to support children with specific needs. This will enable the Council to respond to the individual children and young people with a focus on their wellbeing and mental health, as well as developing their access to the highest quality formal learning opportunities. The approach will also involve developing the workforce to ensure that they have the appropriate skills and training opportunities to meet these needs, and, promoting collaborative working with other agencies.

Cabinet wholly supported the strategy and agreed that providing equality for all learners both inside and outside of the school environment is essential. Some children have experienced some difficult and challenging experiences and it is important that the Authority support these individuals and to support the future ambitions of this area. Cabinet thanked Officers for their hard work and support in working collaboratively and developing this Strategy. This is a new

era for Caerphilly with outreach work and the strategy encompasses all the strands that have come together. Caerphilly acknowledges the changes that are happening in society.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the reasons contained in the Officer's Report, the Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Strategy at appendix 1, be agreed.

7. LEARNING CATCH UP

The report sought Cabinet approval to equip all pupils in Years 10 and 11 with core textbooks and revision guides for English or Welsh, Maths and Science. This will enable learners to make sustained progress, as well as mitigating against any potential impact on providing these physical resources will enable around 4000 learners who are at a key stage in their education to regain some of the ground lost to the pandemic.

While schools are scheduled to return in September, the further impact of COVID-19 over the coming months cannot be predicted with any certainty. Should schools be required to close their doors again, either in response to a local or regional lockdown, the Council wishes to be in the strongest position possible to ensure learners are not further disadvantaged. Having a full set of textbooks and revision guides available for each pupil will ensure that learners can continue their education even if physical access to schools has to be restricted at any point in the future.

It was explained that these resources can also be tailored to meet specific learner levels and need, ensuring that no learner is disadvantaged. The textbooks will sit alongside online and digital resources to provide blended learning in a more resilient manner. Making the resources available will also positively impact on teacher workload and provide a huge boost to schools and learners at a key time.

Cabinet fully supported the report and Officers confirmed that it is vital that the Council prepare for the months ahead. Work in ongoing with Welsh Government in relation to Ed Tech in allowing learners to access online resources, using devices. This blended learning will provide learners with the best possible opportunities, which they deserve.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the reasons contained in the Officer's Report, the use of £302k of one-off funding from the Education and Corporate Services Retained Underspend Reserve to provide every year 10 and year 11 Learner across Caerphilly with a suite of core textbooks and revision guides, be agreed.

The meeting closed at 11.15am.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 9th September 2020.

CHAIR