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**Date: 16th June 2021**

Dear Sir/Madam,

A digital meeting of the **Cabinet** will be held via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday, 23rd June, 2021** at **10.30 am** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so.

This meeting will be recorded and made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. Therefore the images/audio of those individuals present and/or speaking at Cabinet will be publicly available to all via the recording on the Council website at [www.caerphilly.gov.uk](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk)

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chrissy', enclosed in a large, loopy oval shape.

**Christina Harrhy**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## A G E N D A

- |   | Pages                             |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | To receive apologies for absence. |  |
| 2 | Declarations of Interest.         |  |

Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on the agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.

**A greener place Man gwyrddach**



To approve and sign the following minutes: -

3 Cabinet held on 9th June 2021. 1 - 8

To note the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

4 Cabinet Forward Work Programme. 9 - 10

To receive and consider the following reports on which executive decisions are required: -

5 Regeneration Board - Project Proposals. 11 - 16

6 Cwm Ifor Solar Farm. 17 - 48

7 Audit Wales Financial Sustainability Assessment - Caerphilly County Borough Council. 49 - 70

8 Provisional Capital Outturn 2020/21. 71 - 76

9 Delivering Good Governance Review: Caerphilly CBC. 77 - 120

10 Gwent Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan. 121 - 202

**Circulation:**

Councillors S. Cook, N. George, C.J. Gordon, P.A. Marsden, L. Phipps, Mrs E. Stenner, A. Whitcombe and R. Whiting

And Appropriate Officers

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# Agenda Item 3



## CABINET

### MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 9TH JUNE 2021 AT 10.30 A.M.

#### PRESENT:

Councillor P. Marsden (Leader) - Chair

#### Councillors:

S. Cook (Social Care), N. George (Waste, Public Protection and Street Scene), C. Gordon (Corporate Services), L. Phipps (Housing), E. Stenner (Customer, Performance and Property Services), R. Whiting (Learning and Leisure) and A. Whitcombe (Sustainability, Planning and Fleet).

#### Together with:

C. Harry (Chief Executive), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services), D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services and Housing), and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment).

#### Also in Attendance:

A. Cullinane (Senior Policy Officer), S. Foley (Regional Community Cohesion Officer), L. Lucas (Head of Customer and Digital Services), J. Lougher (Sport and Leisure Development Manager), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), S. Pugh (Communications Manager), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer), M. Harris (Committee Services Support Officer/Chauffeur) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

Councillors C. Mann

## RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Leader reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed but would not be live streamed, however a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here To View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from S. Morgan (Economy and Enterprise and Infrastructure) and S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer).

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

**3. CABINET – 21ST APRIL 2021**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st April 2021 were approved as a correct record.

**4. SPECIAL CABINET – 19TH MAY 2021**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the special meeting held on 19th May 2021 were approved as a correct record.

**5. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE**

Cabinet were provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports for 21st July 2021. Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and therefore subject to change. As a result, Cabinet agreed that the Provisional Revenue Report scheduled for 23rd June 2021 be deferred to be 7th July 2021.

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.

**6. PROPOSED ICT STRATEGY**

The report presented Cabinet with the draft Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy and associated delivery roadmap.

It was noted that the Digital Services draft ICT Strategy (the Strategy) as attached to the Officers report provided the roadmap, direction, and guidance for ICT developments within Caerphilly County Borough Council for the next five (5) years.

The Strategy outlined how Digital Services will develop its service to support the Authority's Customer and Digital Strategy through innovative technologies that will transform service delivery and highlighted how Digital Services will aspire to provide a good customer experience across all council services by putting customers at the heart of the organisation.

The Strategy has been developed in partnership with support partner RedCortex, who engaged with colleagues from across the Authority to develop the key themes and strategic principles.

The Strategy sets out its vision for the Authority by defining the transformational journey for the next five (5) years by:

- Enabling the Authority to meet its current and future priorities.
- Enabling and encouraging flexible working patterns.
- Providing a better experience and level of customer care for all customers.
- Migrating a modern, more cost efficient and environmentally friendly technologies and devices
- Providing a secure, resilient infrastructure environment which we can build upon in the future.
- Migrating to modern solutions that improve customer experience, enable better use of information, and deliver improved services.

Cabinet thanked the Officer and Cabinet Member for the report and discussion ensued. Members noted a number of projects within the report and thanked the Officers for their hard work.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report: -

- i) The proposed ICT Strategy for taking ICT and Digital forward as a strategic enabler be approved;
- ii) The financial implications as detailed in section 8 of the report be noted;
- iii) That £320k of the £1.482m WG Covid-19 Hardship Fund digital transformation funding allocated to Caerphilly CBC be agreed to be set aside in an earmarked reserve to fund projected one-off revenue costs to support delivery of the strategy.

## **7. WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021**

The report informed Members and sought their endorsement of the progress made during the financial year 2020-2021 against four specific areas of Welsh language work, as required under the regulatory framework for implementing the Welsh Language Standards.

The report will then be published online by the deadline date of 30th June 2021, as required by Welsh Language Standard 158.

It was noted that the Council has a statutory duty to produce an annual monitoring report on implementing Welsh language issues under current legislation and in compliance with Standard 158.

The information required for 2020-2021 covers four required key areas.

### **Complaints from the Public**

The annual report must include the number of complaints that you received during that year which related to your compliance with the standards with which you were under a duty to comply. Standard number and sub clause - 147, 148, 149,156, 158(2), 162, 164(2), 168(a), 170(2)(d)

### **Staff Language Skills**

The number of employees who have Welsh language skills at the end of the year in question (on the basis of the records kept in accordance with standard 151); Standard number and sub clause- 170(2)(a), 151

### **Welsh Medium Training Provision**

The number of members of staff who attended training courses you offered in Welsh during the year (on the basis of the records you kept in accordance with standard 152);

If a Welsh version of a course was offered by you during that year, the percentage of the total number of staff attending the course who attended the Welsh version (on the basis of the records you kept in accordance with standard 152). Standard number and sub clause - 170(2)(b), 170(2)(c), 152

### **Recruiting to Empty Posts**

The number of new and vacant posts that you advertised during the year which were categorised as posts where:

- (i) Welsh language skills were essential
- (ii) Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post
- (iii) Welsh language skills were desirable,
- (iv) Welsh language skills were not necessary (on the basis of the records you kept in accordance with standard 154); Standard number and sub clause - 170(2)(ch), 154

The report provided an update to Members on the Council's current position in relation to the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 statutory requirements.

The report outlined the good progress made by service areas in embedding arrangements for delivering services through the medium of Welsh and increasing the Welsh language skills capacity of the workforce.

It was noted that it is evident from the content of the report that the work done to date is moving in the right direction. The good progress and momentum will be maintained by continuing to work with partners and responding to help, advice, and best practice from the Welsh Language Commissioner and other regional and national bodies.

Cabinet thanked the Officer and Cabinet Member for the report and discussion ensued.

Members discussed several points within the report, in particular one of the complaints received during the Caerphilly Local Lockdown. Officers assured the Cabinet that the correspondence the complaint referred to was in relation to communications issued in response to the Pandemic and weekly updates issued. Members were assured that the Council were not in breach of any standards because of S46 which provides an exemption when issuing statements to the press during an emergency. Cabinet noted however, that the Welsh translation of the correspondence was provided as soon as possible following issue of information.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report the content of the annual report be noted and publication of the information be endorsed as a record of progress towards, and compliance with, the relevant Welsh Language Standards.

## **8. EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING SCHEME**

The report, which was considered by Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 25th May 2021 sought the views of Cabinet on the proposed Employee Volunteering Scheme and sought Cabinet approval to implement the Scheme with a review carried out at 12- months on the uptake and benefits of the Scheme.

It was noted that the Employee Volunteering Scheme aims to increase volunteering opportunities for employees at Caerphilly County Borough Council, with the benefit of releasing the capacity of employees in supporting local communities and the associated benefits to employee well-being.

The proposed Scheme includes volunteering for a day/part day event or volunteering on a longer-term basis. Employees who have volunteered on a longer-term basis will be able to apply for a maximum of two days leave of absence per year.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussions ensued.

Cabinet were provided with comments from the Scrutiny Committee and Officers assured Members that, where possible any barriers employees may experience would be mitigated to offer maximum opportunities to access the scheme.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report that the Employee Volunteering Scheme (attached at appendix 1) be approved the Scheme be implemented with a review to be carried out in 12 months on the uptake and benefits of the Scheme.

## **9. INVESTMENT AT VIRGINIA PARK / 2ND SATELLITE AT ST CENYDD FOR TRINITY FIELDS**

The report provided Cabinet with details of 2 proposed building investments, the development of Virginia Park in Caerphilly for both the Youth Service and EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) provision and; investment to provide a 2<sup>nd</sup> satellite class for Trinity Fields on the St Cenydd High School site.

The report provided Members with details of proposed building related investments at the 2 sites detailed in para 1.1 of the Officers report. This investment will provide an increased capacity to support some of most vulnerable learners. The Virginia Park site has provided an opportunity to create a base in the Caerphilly Basin for the Youth Service, whilst also expanding in-house capacity for some of our EOTAS pupils.

The proposed investment was supported by Education Scrutiny Committee, details provided in the Budget Monitoring Report presented to Scrutiny on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued.

Members were provided with additional information from Officers on the possibilities and additional projects and support the scheme can offer to vulnerable young people, including those at risk of homelessness, sexual exploitation, and mental health. It was noted that the scheme will assist to align the EOTAS Strategy and the Inclusion Strategy and support the aims within.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report that the use of £472k of Corporate Services Capital Earmarked Reserves be supported for the development of Virginia Park and for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Satellite Class for Trinity Fields at St Cenydd High School.

## **10. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL ATHLETICS HUB PRICING POLICY**

The report sought Cabinet agreement on the pricing policy for the new Caerphilly County Borough Council (Caerphilly CBC) Athletics Hub in Oakdale.

It was noted that at the end of November 2018 Welsh Government (WG) announced a £15million Community Hub Grant. This grant was accessible to all Local Authorities and Further Education establishments via a bidding process.

Officers submitted a Business Case to Welsh Government to access this grant which was successful for the construction of an athletics hub to serve the borough.

Cabinet were pleased to note that the construction of the athletics hub on the school fields located at Rhiw Syr Dafydd Primary School consisting of a 300m x 6 lane plus 6 lane sprint straight is now complete. This also includes a flood lit synthetic running track area, a fan for off field events e.g. high jump, long jump, shot put, javelin and discus. The amount of the works totalled £755k.

Members noted that to fully maximise the new athletics hub provision, officers have sought expressions of interest in relation to the usage of the hub. Prior to allocations of any bookings based on expressions of interest, Members are asked to agree a pricing structure to implement as part of this proposal.

In order to develop a pricing structure, officers have undertaken a bench marking exercise across Wales for provision of a similar nature, to ensure transparency and fairness in compiling a local Caerphilly pricing structure fit for the dimensions of the sporting offer for the County Borough. The information gathered has been included as appendix 1 to this report.

The pricing structure proposed was included in section 5 of the Officers Report.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued and Members thanked officers for the extensive work to provide the facility and were excited for the many benefits it would bring to the local communities.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report: -

- i) The pricing structure as outlined in the report for implementation from 1 July 2021 be approved;
- ii) The pricing structure be reviewed every 12 months and any new prices be set by the Corporate Director in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member and Section 151 Officer.

## **EXECUTIVE DECISIONS THAT ARE NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN**

### **11. YOUTH SERVICE REMOVAL FROM LEASE AND USE OF CRUMLIN INSTITUTE**

The Monitoring Officer provided Cabinet with details of the urgency of the item. The report outlined that the disposal of Crumlin is the most pressing in building asset terms and there are time limitations attached to the process. Should the necessary actions not be completed within the time-frame, by 25th June 2021, the service will be tied to the current lease arrangements for a minimum of a further 5 years.

The report detailed the rationale for service withdrawal from a building leased from a private owner. The building is the Crumlin Institute, in Crumlin, a former Workingmen's hall leased by the Community Education Service. Crumlin Institute is occupied via a 25-year lease which commenced on 25th December 2011. Prior to 2011, the building was leased on a peppercorn' rental amount. The report recommended to Members that Cabinet approve the withdrawal forthwith, in order to meet the coming lease withdrawal deadline of 25th June 2021.

It was noted that a current lease arrangement would not represent value for money and the retention of the building is not required for the purpose of service continuity.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued.

Members sought clarification on whether the rent was previously reviewed before the last renewal of the lease. Officers explained that at the time of the last renewal, it was becoming clearer that the building may not be required in the coming years, this has been exacerbated during the ongoing pandemic. It was therefore felt that the consultation and view of stakeholders was a priority on the future of the lease of the premises.

Following consideration and discussion and subject to an additional recommendation at *iii*), it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report and subject to an additional recommendation at *iii*): -

- i) The proposed withdrawal from the lease arrangement be approved;
- ii) That Legal Services issue the correct notice to the property's managing agents Llanover Estates, following Cabinet approval and no later than 25th June 2021.
- iii) *It be agreed that the dilapidation costs currently estimated at between £185k and £195k be funded from the Education and Lifelong Learning reserves.*

The meeting closed at 11.24 am

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 23rd June 2021.

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CHAIR

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Cabinet Forward Work Programme

23/06/2021 10:30	Regeneration Board Project Update	To seek approval for the allocation of up to £107k Regeneration Project Board Development Fund and note the allocation of Licence to Innovate Funding for Coffi Vista, Caerphilly. To consider the allocation of additional funding for the Regeneration Project Board	Kyte, Rhian;	Cllr. Marsden, Philippa;
23/06/2021 10:30	Financial Sustainability Assessment 2020/21 – Caerphilly County Borough Council	To present the Audit Wales report on the findings of the 2020/21 Financial Sustainability Assessment for Caerphilly CBC. Presenting Officer – Gareth Jones (Audit Wales).	Harris, Stephen R;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
23/06/2021 10:30	Provisional Capital Outturn for 2020/21	To provide Cabinet with details of the provisional capital outturn for the 2020/21 financial year prior to the annual external audit of the accounts by Audit Wales.	Harris, Stephen R;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
23/06/2021 10:30	Delivering Good Governance – Caerphilly County Borough Council	To present the Audit Wales report on the findings of the Delivering Good Governance review for Caerphilly CBC. Presenting Officer – Gareth Jones (Audit Wales).	Harris, Stephen R;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
23/06/2021 10:30	Solar Farm Proposal	To seek approval to allocate funds to progress the project in accordance with the agreed next steps.	Camp, Victoria; Williams, Mark S;	Cllr. Marsden, Philippa;
23/06/2021 10:30	C-19 Prevention and Response Plan	Cabinet are asked to endorse the Gwent Covid 19 multi-agency Prevention and Response Plan.	Hartshorn, Robert;	Cllr. George, Nigel;
07/07/2021 10:30	Social Value Policy	To seek approval of the Social Value Policy and the adoption of the Themes, Outcomes and Measures Framework.	Evans, Ian;	Cllr. Gordon, Colin J;
07/07/2021 10:30	Provisional Revenue Outturn for 2020/21	To provide Cabinet with details of the provisional revenue budget outturn for the 2020/21 financial year prior to the annual external audit of the accounts by Audit Wales.	Harris, Stephen R;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
07/07/2021 10:30	House Naming Charges	To consider the introduction of a nominal charge for house naming service.	Kyte, Rhian;	Cllr. Marsden, Philippa;

Cabinet Forward Work Programme

07/07/2021 10:30	Kickstart Scheme	To outline the key elements of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Kickstart scheme and seek approval to engage with the scheme.	Kyte, Rhian; Williams, Mark S;	Cllr. Marsden, Philippa;
07/07/2021 10:30	Home Office Asylum Dispersal Scheme	To highlight to members the key aspects of becoming an asylum dispersal area and to seek associated approval.	Richards, Sue; Peters, Kathryn;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
07/07/2021 10:30	New Community facility at Ty Sign	Cabinet are asked to consider whether to provide in principle support for a proposal received from Agape Community Church, Ty Sign to build a new community resource centre on land at Holly Road, Tŷ Sign which is in the ownership of the Housing Revenue Account.	Hartshorn, Robert;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
21/07/2021 10:30	Inclusion Strategy	To seek approval associated with well-being, behaviour and exclusion for schools.	Cole, Keri;	Cllr. Whiting, Ross;
21/07/2021 10:30	Proposals for the operation of the Community Empowerment Fund	To seek approval of the fund criteria and grant management of the community empowerment fund	Richards, Sue; Peters, Kathryn;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
21/07/2021 10:30	NEETS Strategy	To update Cabinet on the identification and engagement of young people at risk of NEET – issues and methodology. To identify the key actions necessary to reduce the number of NEET young people in the County Borough	Warren, Paul;	Cllr. Whiting, Ross;



## CABINET – 23RD JUNE 2021

**SUBJECT: REGENERATION BOARD – PROJECT PROPOSALS**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To note the allocation of £10,000 Licence to Innovate Funding towards the provision of A Feasibility Study for Accommodation at Llancaiach Fawr Manor and the allocation of a further £10,000 for a 12 month commercial training plan.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 At the meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018, Cabinet agreed that a Regeneration Project Board would be set up with a cross-party political representation of Councillors plus key officers. This group is supported by a Regeneration Assessment Panel consisting of officers from a range of service areas. An initial sum of £300,000 was allocated to the Project Board.
- 2.2 The Regeneration Assessment Panel have met on numerous occasions to consider the prioritised list of capital projects, which have been identified by the Board to move to the Assessment Stage. Following subsequent Cabinet Approvals, since February 2019 numerous projects have been endorsed with financial assistance provided (where necessary) from the Regeneration Project Board Development Funds.
- 2.3 During January 2019 Cabinet resolved to release £1.2m of reserves for the Regeneration Board prioritised projects. This was further supplemented in April 2021 when the Cabinet resolved to allocate an additional £1m to the Development Fund budget bringing the total allocation to £2.5m. To date, £1,499,200 has been allocated towards prioritised capital regeneration schemes, across the County Borough.
- 2.4 In December 2020 Cabinet resolved to allocate £50,000 seed money to the Regeneration Board for 2020/21 to progress concepts and ideas under the Licence to Innovate Initiative.
- 2.5 This report asks Cabinet to note the £10,000 Licence to Innovate Funding for a feasibility Study for accommodation at Llancaiach Fawr Manor and an allocation of £10,000 for a Commercial Training plan.
- 2.6 The above request would leave an active Licence to Innovate Fund of £9,311

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That Cabinet note that £10,000 Licence to Innovate Funding has been allocated to prepare the feasibility study for accommodation at Llancaiach Fawr and £10,000 has been allocated for the provision of a commercial training plan, as approved by the Regeneration Project Board.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To facilitate the delivery of accommodation at Llancaiach Fawr Manor and the provision of a commercial training plan through the Licence to Innovate Fund, as approved by the Regeneration Project Board.

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 On the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018, Cabinet agreed that a Regeneration Project Board be set up. The Terms of Reference of the Board were approved by Cabinet at the same meeting.
- 5.2 At the subsequent June 2018 Board meeting a Project Prioritisation Toolkit was approved for the Board to prioritise projects and this was subsequently agreed by Council on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2018. An Assessment Panel has been set up to assess each of the projects using this toolkit. The Assessment Panel is an internal Officer panel from a wide range of Service Areas set up specifically to assess prioritised strategic physical regeneration schemes.
- 5.3 The Assessment Panel has met several times to consider a list of previously prioritised capital projects. These, for the most part, have been evaluated and considered by the Regeneration Project Board before being presented to Cabinet for endorsement and funding (where required) from the available Development Funds.
- 5.4 Initial funding of £300k was allocated to the Regeneration Board Development Fund in 2018. In January 2019 Cabinet resolved to release £1.2m of reserves for Regeneration Board Projects and then in April 2021 the cabinet resolved to allocated a further £1m to the fund bringing the total Development Fund budget allocation to **£2.5m**. This has allowed additional projects to be considered for development support, prioritisation and funding.
- 5.5 In December 2020 Cabinet approved the Council's Commercial and Investment Strategy and resolved that a further £50,000 from the Education and Corporate Services reserves be approved to progress Licence to Innovate ideas via the Regeneration Project Board. A Transformation Assessment Panel comprising relevant officers has been set up to vet projects prior to their formal consideration by the Board and thereafter Cabinet.
- 5.6 At the Regeneration Board Meeting held on 30 March 2021 a further tranche of schemes was considered by the Board. A summary of each project and the Regeneration Project Board's recommendations are set out below.

#### **(A): Licence to Innovate Initiative – Llancaiach Fawr Accommodation Feasibility Study**

- Total Project Cost Estimate (£):10,000
- Licence to Innovate Funds (Secured): £0
- Current Request for funding: £10,000

5.7 In February 2021, the Licence to Innovate Assessment Panel considered a proposal to locate a number of bell tents and provide a site for self-contained touring caravans at Llancaiach Fawr Manor (LFM). The aim was to take advantage of the imminent increase in staycation demand (research published by Welsh Government Jan 2021 shows that there is an expectation that staycations will increase by 70% as families remain unable to travel abroad). The proposal would also to support the existing demand for wedding venues, such as LFM, by providing accommodation on site for guests. Whilst the panel was supportive of the principle of providing accommodation on site, some concern was expressed that the tents and caravans might not be sympathetic to the look, feel and ethos of LFM. Therefore, panel members proposed that a feasibility study should be undertaken to assess the viability of a range of options. The study would focus on:

1. Ascertaining local provision
2. Investigating attractions/improved offers that could stimulate more demand for accommodation
3. Using this to ascertain demand and potential future demand – based on information gathered and opportunities that present themselves at LFM
4. Identifying opportunities for investment at LFM to cater for this demand.

5.8 In 2019, consultants were appointed to provide a high-level opinion on potential future options for the operation and site that would reduce, or remove, the annual subsidy support. This included a number of options, including enhancements to the venue by providing accommodation, such as a hotel at one extreme and glamping tents at the other extreme of investment required. This report contains useful information to provide a starting point for the study.

5.9 The decision to undertake a new feasibility study will enable the Council to look at a wide range of longer-term options for accommodation at LFM as well as likely revenue streams, set up costs, sustainability and market research. This proposal sits well within the Commercial & Investment Strategy supporting new and innovative ways of working to develop revenue and taking a risk balanced approach to ensuring that the right decisions are made with supporting evidence

**RPB Decision: Project Approved. It was agreed that £10,000 be allocated towards the project from the Licence to Innovate Fund.**

**(B): Licence to Innovate Initiative – Commercial Training**

- Total Project Cost Estimate (£):10,000
- Licence to Innovate Funds (Secured): £0
- Current Request for funding: £10,000

5.10 The Commercial & Investment Strategy sets out high level actions to provide staff with training and upskilling to help support strategy aims. The commercial training plan will focus on 2 key areas for 12 months as follows:

- commercial coaching for management and leadership; and

- hackathons/commercial training for delivery staff in 3 key areas.

- 5.11 Hackathons are a tried and tested method of bringing teams together to provide training but also to work on ideas and bring them to presentable format in a fast and agile manner. The training programme would run during the course of 12 months and offer the opportunity for 3 Hackathons, for tourism, catering and leisure all areas which have identified commercial opportunities. The Hackathons would have two broad aims, specifically: to provide training to staff on commercial acumen; marketing, business planning, customer focus; and also to deliver ideas which are progress able via the CCBC governance routes for commercial ideas within those service areas.
- 5.12 The commercial coaching for leadership would help align managers and leaders to this new way of thinking and how to support staff whilst developing ideas and creating a more commercial culture within the organisation.
- 5.13 The training programmes will all be pilot in nature with a view to gaining feedback and evaluation on delivery, outcomes and success. The outcomes from these pilots will feed into the final training offer as part of the wider learning and development framework incorporated as part of the Workforce Development Strategy. The training elements offered will help Council staff explore new ideas and receive training and skills in order to progress these ideas using robust methodology. We will also be trailing various training methods which align to improving the way we work and exploring how we can become more entrepreneurial with the hopes of developing a strategic partnership with training providers as part of the Workforce Development Strategy.

**RPB Decision: Project Approved. It was agreed that £10,000 be allocated towards the project from the Licence to Innovate Fund.**

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 This report assumes that the identified projects, once supported by Cabinet, will be developed further and where applicable implemented, with assistance from appropriate sourced and secured external funding.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The recommendations contained in the report have a neutral overall impact, however schemes supported through the board will all have varying impacts and will all be subject of full IIA.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 An overall project Development Fund of £2.5m has been previously approved to allow a project team of officers to develop projects ready for implementation when funding becomes available.
- 8.2 A Licence to Innovate budget of £50,000 has previously been approved, of which £40,689 has now been allocated by the Regeneration Board. This leaves a residual balance of £9,311.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There will be a requirement for Officers from Regeneration & Planning, Transportation & Infrastructure, Corporate Policy, Housing and Corporate Services Divisions within the Authority to dedicate human resources to the project activities outlined in order to progress them, the level of which depends on the status of each project. Otherwise, there are no personnel implications arising from this report.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 All consultation responses are reflected in the report.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 11.2 The Local Government Acts 1998 and 2003.
- 11.3 Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Author: Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration & Planning

Consultees: Cllr Sean Morgan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy, Enterprise and Infrastructure (*and Chair of the Regeneration Project Board*)  
Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Customer, Performance and Property Service  
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director for Economy & Environment  
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services & Section 151 Officer.  
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure  
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer  
Sue Richards, Head of Education Strategy & Finance (Interim Head of Transformation)  
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services  
Allan Dallimore, Regeneration Services Manager  
Paul Hudson, Business, Enterprise & Renewal Team Manager  
Local Ward Members (Penyrheol and Aber Valley)

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## CABINET - 23RD JUNE 2021

**SUBJECT: CWM IFOR SOLAR FARM**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT**

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

- 1.1 This report outlines the recommendations made to Cabinet by the Regeneration Board at its meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021 to allocate £434,000 development funding to the Cwm lfor Solar Farm project. The report sets out in detail the progress on the proposal to date and identifies the next steps and investment required to take the project forward and seeks Cabinet endorsement to proceed.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Cwm lfor Solar Farm proposal is a significant project requiring additional investment in order to progress to the position where there is a full business case for approval. The investment sought will enable: the preparation of a planning application, including all supplementary consultants work and reports and stakeholder engagement; procurement documentation and options for construction; and specific financial modelling to enable Cabinet to make a decision on the future construction of the solar farm in early 2022.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked by the Regeneration Board to agree the allocation of funds totalling £434,000 in order that officers can progress the Cwm lfor Solar Farm project to final business case at which time a further report will be brought forward for Cabinet consideration.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To progress feasibility, development and delivery stage works in relation to the Cwm lfor Solar Farm to allow it stay on programme.
- 4.2 To start the consultation and engagement work with the community in relation to this project.
- 4.3 To enable officers to acquire additional information and undertake thorough options analysis so that a full and final business case can be presented in 2022 for Cabinet consideration.

## 5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 On 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020 the Cabinet agreed the Commercial & Investment Strategy which set out as part of the strategic action plan a commitment to investigate commercial opportunities when presented.
- 5.2 On 4<sup>th</sup> June 2019 the Cabinet declared a Climate Emergency which was subsequently followed by the approval of The Decarbonisation Strategy along with two supporting documents – the Action Plan and the Energy Prospectus by Cabinet on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The documents propose a series of interventions under the 4 main headings of Reduce, Produce, Offset and Buy.
- 5.3 On 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021 Cabinet agreed to the Well Being and Place Shaping Framework and this project is identified as a potential investment under objective WB04.
- 5.4 On March 16<sup>th</sup> the Regeneration Assessment Panel reviewed the Cwm Ifor Solar Farm project proposal. The Assessment Panel recommended that the Regeneration Project Board support the project as the project scored highly on both deliverability and strategic fit to the Council corporate objectives.
- 5.5 Subsequently on March 30<sup>th</sup> the Regeneration Project Board reviewed the project and supported it unanimously. The project is now being referred to Cabinet for consideration and final approval.
- 5.6 The Cwm Ifor Solar Farm is a proposal to develop a 20MW solar farm to the north of Caerphilly town centre, detailed maps are attached at Appendix 1. The key aspects of the project are as follows;
- Potential to be the largest public authority owned solar farm in Wales.
  - Development Costs - £12 million (not including costs of borrowing).
  - Life span of Development – 35 years.
  - Expected Investment Rate of Return (IRR) – 4.15% (annually between £50k and £500k during life of project).
  - Estimated 40 green jobs created as a result during lifetime of scheme.
  - Estimated life-time CO<sub>2</sub> savings\* (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) are 55,300, approximately 1580/year which is enough to power approximately 6000 homes.
  - CCBC currently purchases 28 MW annually at a cost of just over £4 million, this solar farm will be able to produce 20 MW (for a sense of scale) .
  - Development of National Significance meaning that WG will need to make the necessary planning decision not CCBC.
  - If planning application is successful the solar farm will be a commercially viable product to sell on the open market the Council can either proceed to construction or decide not to proceed with the development itself. It is anticipated that the majority of costs incurred could be recovered should a sale be the preferred option.
  - Revenues would be generated from the solar farm via a Power Purchase Agreement with Western Power.
- 5.7 Under the joint working arrangement between the Transformation Team and the Regeneration Team some key milestones have already been accomplished during this project. These include:
- Grid connection secured from Western Power via a novation in April 2020. This connection includes the proposed solar farm site as being last in line for switch

- off providing additional surety for the developer on revenue streams.
- £49k secured from Regeneration Project Board to progress to the next phase and to close out 2 of the 3 remaining risks; the final outstanding minor risk one is in relation to a communications tower requirements which is being investigated currently with WPD.
- Heads of Terms negotiated with land owner – including retaining CCBC Covenant on the land for the duration.
- Initial Land Studies completed with no major concerns noted.
- Team Caerphilly in full swing with ongoing engagement in project team from procurement, finance, legal, planning, energy team, comms, policy team, county ecologist and landscape architects as well as ward members.
- Partnership working with Welsh Government Energy Service, (WGES) and Welsh Government.
- Project currently being delivered on time, in scope and within budget with a full project timeline and budget regularly reviewed – including risk management.
- Full engagement with ward members has been ongoing throughout the project and Community Councils are now being including as part of consultation.

5.8 The initial funding from the Regeneration Project Board enabled the project to close down two potential risks to delivery of the project: land and access. Using internal expertise, officers have negotiated terms on the land agreement, and established that there are no significant access issues.

5.9 Next steps for the project will include focussing on the following key areas:

**Planning Application** – Expert consultants will be procured to help finalise designs for the solar farm and submit a planning application to Welsh Government. Planning consultants will also progress the consultation and engagement exercises required to ensure that all statutory requirements are adhered to.

**Consultation & Engagement** – The project will seek to go beyond the statutory requirements as part of our commitment to the Consultation and Engagement Framework previously agreed by Cabinet. There are more details about the community benefits element of this project listed below. There will also be a separate work stream on consultation and engagement for those residents that may experience some disruption during the construction phase of the project.

**Finance Options** – the next phase of work will centre around potential funding streams for the development together with the implications on the yield and community benefits of those options. The Council will look to partners, community options, Development Bank of Wales, UK Government and any other funding streams to leverage in funding to help deliver this project. This workstream will also look at the power purchase agreement and the implications of this on the Council's current energy purchasing and carbon accounting.

**Procurement** – officers will work with internal procurement and external legal advisers to draw up the suite of documents required to procure construction, operations and maintenance of the site should a full and final business case be approved.

**Community Benefits** – there are a range of potential community benefits that this project could support and below are listed some potential options. The focus of the consultation and engagement exercise will be to identify which are the preferred options from the community and then build these into the project plan including any financial commitments, one off or revenue, and the impact of those on the financial modelling of the scheme. Below is a snap shot of some of the community benefit

schemes that have been used on other renewable projects and we hope to use as a starting point for our conversations and engagement with the community.

- Electric vehicle demo days – information about reducing use of cars – cycle to work/walking days etc.
- Home insulation and heating decarb grant support
- Bio-diversity enhancements & Greening measures – to include improving or maintaining hedgerows at the proposed site.
- Fuel poverty measures – link to local groups supporting those in poverty.
- Investment/Repairs to local community
- Additional planning protection in neighbouring areas
- Employers scheme – funding to help support companies to recruit into green job apprentices
- Education and Youth Opportunities – linking up with local schools/colleges throughout construction and development.
- Community Bond Funding – consider this as a funding scheme and gifting shares/bonds to local groups
- Job creation/apprentices – looking into this as part of procurement processes.

### **Conclusion**

- 5.10 This project has the potential to deliver against a number of key strategic plans the Council has adopted including making a significant impact towards delivery of the Council's decarbonisation objectives.
- 5.11 The investment now being sought would be largely recoverable if Cabinet decide not to proceed as developer.
- 5.12 The additional investment would enable the project to prepare a planning application, further clarity on the financial options and implications, full consultation and engagement with the public, which will in turn enable Cabinet to make an informed and robust decision when presented with the final business case.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 This report assumes that the identified project, if supported by Cabinet, will be developed further and where applicable and desirable will be reviewed in detail as part of the full business case for final determination.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

This proposal and the associated community benefits have the opportunity to make significant positive impacts across a number of key areas as identified within the IAA; collaboration, employment, low carbon, education, long term thinking. The challenge will be as officers develop the FBC to ensure that those benefits are achievable and aligned to the priorities of both the WG, legislation, corporate priorities and the needs and wants of the community.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 An overall Regeneration Project Board Development Fund of £2.5m has been

previously approved to allow officers to develop projects ready for implementation when funding becomes available.

- 8.2 Development Funds of £1,499,200 have previously been approved and allocated to projects. If the solar farm allocation is approved by Cabinet, then £566,800 remains from the total budget allocation for funding future projects. Additional details on other Regeneration Project Board projects coming forward will be reported to Cabinet periodically.
- 8.3 The current estimate for construction and development of the solar farm is £12.5 million. It is anticipated at this point this will be funded via a variety of means and those options and implications will be explored as part of the next phase of work. There are borrowing options available to the Council, potential for investment partners, grant money as well as looking to Development Bank of Wales and the potential National Infrastructure Bank. The current financial model assumes Public Works Loan Board borrowing based on our existing terms, any changes to this will be factored into the updated financial model.
- 8.4 The current cost of development is approximately £12.5 million and based on the current modelling and assumptions this delivers a payback period of 19.4 years with a likely annual revenue income between £50 and £500k during the 35-year lifetime of the project. All financial models and assumptions will be further clarified as part of the Final Business Case.
- 8.5 The financial model is provided by Welsh Government Energy Service (WGES) as part of their support to the public sector to develop renewable energy. Assumptions within the current model include interest rates, inflation, power prices and energy yield.
- 8.6 The development & construction costs within the model are based on WGES standard assumptions for previous similar projects supported by WGES. However, as all projects are unique, this is an indicative early stage financial model to help gauge the potential profitability of the investment. WGES recommend that a bespoke model specifically for the project is designed if the development stage goes ahead. The costs for this model are included within the development costs.
- 8.7 The current investment required in order to proceed to final business case would be almost entirely recoverable if Cabinet decide not to proceed as we would have a viable product to sell on the open market and indications of interested parties. Current estimates are that we could achieve a sale price for the development in the region of £400k.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 Any views expressed by consultees have been included in the report.

## 11. STATUTORY POWER

### 11.1 Local Governments Act 1998 and 2003

Author: Victoria Camp, Transformation Manager – Commercial & Investment,  
campv@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Cllr Sean Morgan, Commercial Champion Cabinet Member for Economy  
Enterprise & Infrastructure  
Cllr John Ridgewell, Chair of Regen & Housing Scrutiny  
Cllr Mike Adams, Vice Chair  
Cllr Jon Taylor – Ward member Aber Valley  
Cllr Jon Roberts – Ward member Aber Valley  
Cllr Steve Skivens – Ward member Penyrheol  
Cllr Margaret Sargent – Ward member Penyrheol  
Cllr Lindsay Whittle – Ward member Penyrheol  
Cllr Jon Sriven – Ward member Penyrheol  
Mark S Williams – Corporate Director for Economy & Environment  
Rob Tranter – Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer  
Stephen Harris – Head of Financial Services and section 151 Officer  
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration  
Sue Richards, Interim Head of Transformation  
Allan Dallimore, Regeneration Services Manager  
Paul Cooke, Policy Manager  
Richard Bryan, County Landscape Architect  
Margaret Iles, County Ecologist  
Martin Woodyear, Legal Services,  
Derek Morris, Contracts Manager

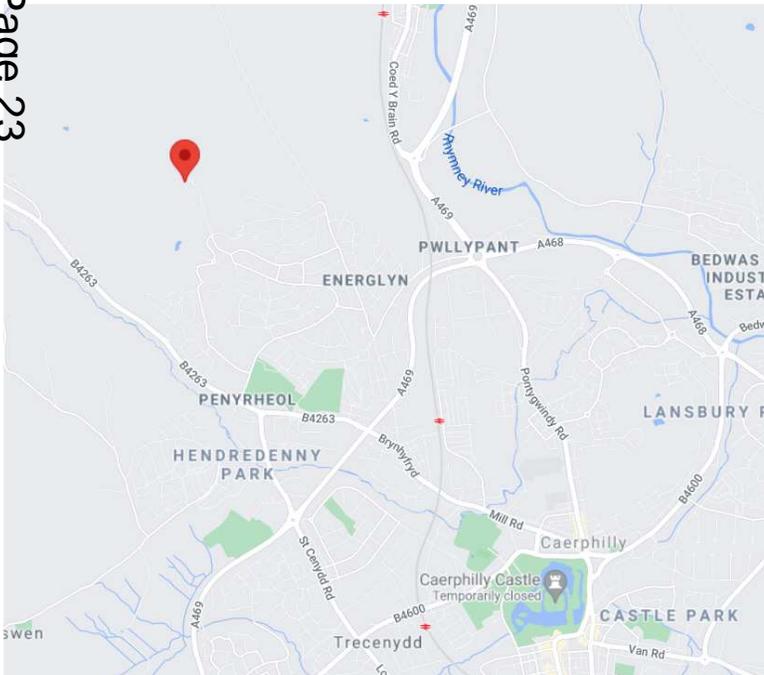
Background Papers:

Appendices:

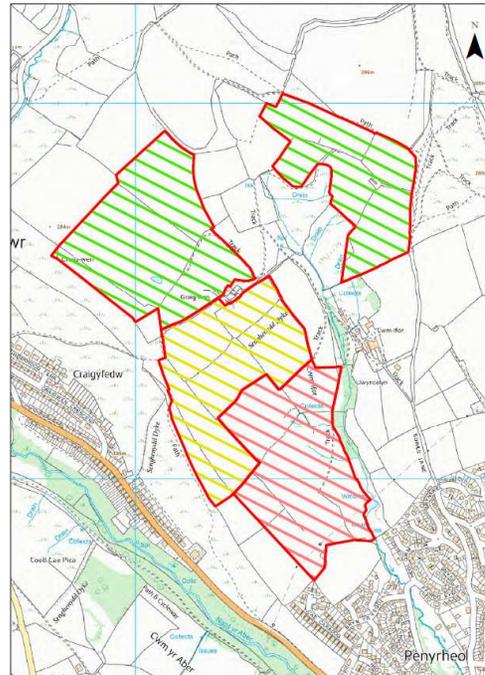
Appendix 1 Solar Farm Maps & Sample Community Benefits  
Appendix 2 Integrated Impact Assessment

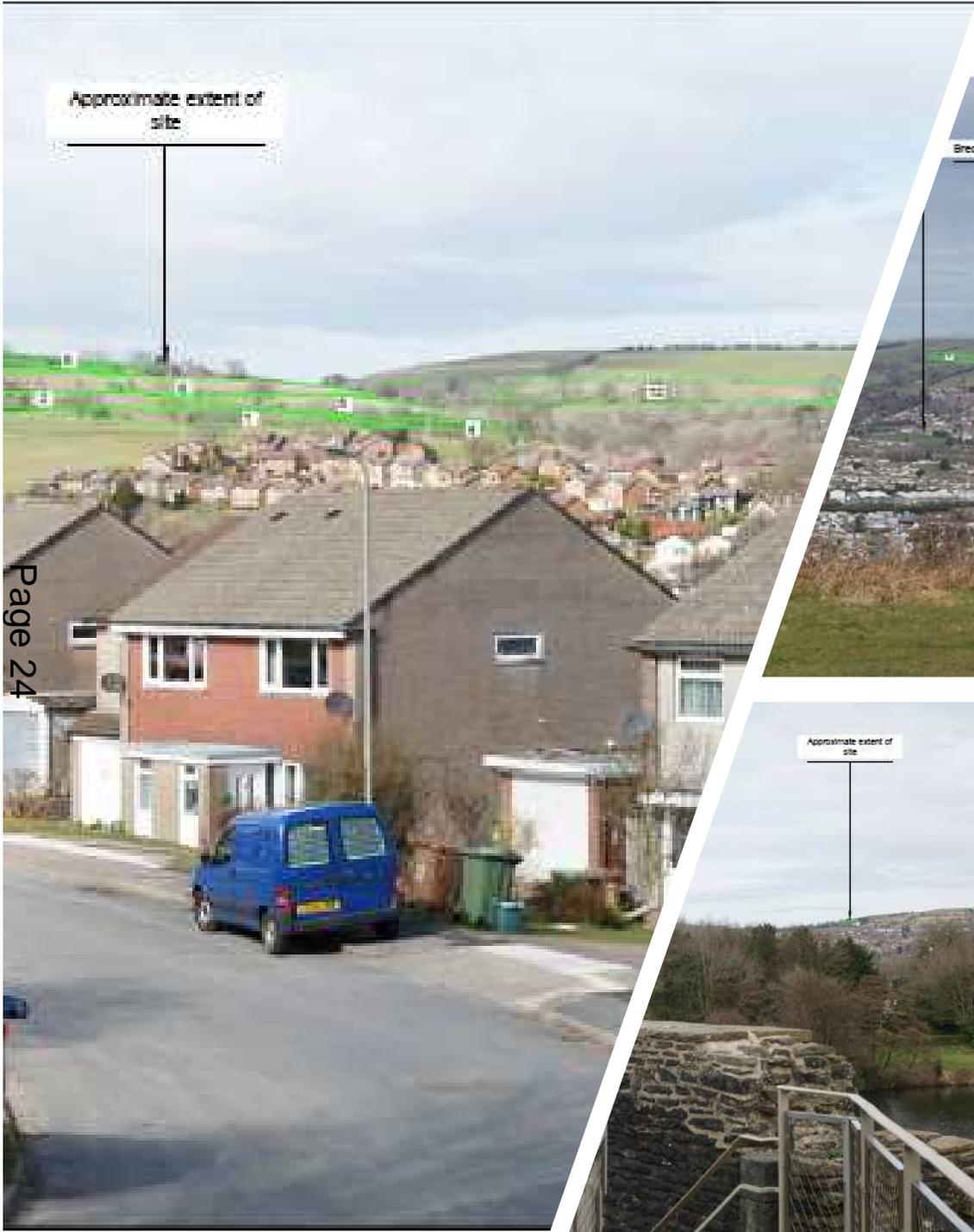
# Where is the Cwm Ifor Solar Farm likely to be located?

MAP 1



MAPs 2 and 3





Page 24



# Cwm Ifor Solar Farm – Potential Community Benefits

Electric Vehicle Demo days where we could explore the benefits of owning an electric vehicle.

Home insulation and heating decarbonisation support for home owners

Fuel Poverty Measures for example providing some money to Age Concern for winter fuel vouchers.

Repairs to local community buildings.

Bio-diversity enhancements which are enhancement to the local area wildlife which could include planting new types of

Flowers and plants, and making hedgerows look better.

We could look at additional planning protection for the neighboring areas to maintain the look of the area.

A community lottery fund where we could set aside a pot of money for the community to bid into for projects.

We could invest into local community buildings with decarbonisation or fuel efficiency measures.

We hope to link up with local schools and colleges to provide information about the solar farm and ecological findings.

We could even consider gifting money to the local community to buy into the development of the scheme with a really low entrance rate.

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## Caerphilly County Borough Council - Integrated Impact Assessment

This integrated impact assessment (IIA) has been designed to help support the Council in making informed and effective decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Statutory Consultation v Doctrine of Legitimate Expectation and Gunning Principles

**PLEASE NOTE:** Section 3 *Socio-economic Duty* only needs to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. See page 6 of the Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance.

1. Proposal Details				
Lead Officer	Head of Service	Service Area & Department	Date	
Victoria Camp	Rhian Kyte	Regeneration	21.05.2021	
Is this proposal a...	(please tick relevant box)			
Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy / Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Practice <input type="checkbox"/>	Procedure <input type="checkbox"/>	Restructure <input type="checkbox"/>

**What is the proposal to be assessed? *Provide brief details of the proposal and provide a link to any relevant report or documents.***

The proposal is an outline business case for the development of a 20MW solar farm in the South West of the County. The solar farm, if approved, will go a long way to reducing the council's carbon emissions and we hope will deliver some long-term community benefits for the County Borough. Link to Outline Business Case for more details.

## 2. Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

*(The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups). Please note that an individual may have more than one protected characteristic.*

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics and how?	If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Age <i>(people of all ages)</i>	NO		As this is an outline business case the final business case will require a revised IIA once more details are known.
Disability <i>(people with disabilities/ long term conditions)</i>	NO		As this is an outline business case the final business case will require a revised IIA once more details are known.
Gender Reassignment <i>(anybody who’s gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth)</i>	NO		As this is an outline business case the final business case will require a revised IIA once more details are known.
Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	NO		As this is an outline business case the final business case will require a revised IIA once more details are known.

<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b> <i>(women who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave)</i>	<b>NO</b>		<b>As this is an outline business case the final business case will require a revised IIA once more details are known.</b>
<b>Race</b> <i>(people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and different racial backgrounds)</i>	<b>NO</b>		<b>As this is an outline business case the final business case will require a revised IIA once more details are known.</b>
<b><u>Protected Characteristics</u></b>	<b>Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics and how?</b>	<b>If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?</b>	<b>What evidence has been used to support this view?</b>
<b>Religion or Belief</b> <i>(people with different religions and beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>	<b>NO</b>		<b>As this is an outline business case the final business case will require a revised IIA once more details are known.</b>

<b>Sex</b> (women and men, girls and boys and those who self-identify their gender)	<b>NO</b>		<b>As this is an outline business case the final business case will require a revised IIA once more details are known.</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b> (lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual)	<b>NO</b>		<b>As this is an outline business case the final business case will require a revised IIA once more details are known.</b>

### 3. Socio-economic Duty (Strategic Decisions Only)

*(The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. Socio-economic disadvantage means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services)*

**Please consider these additional vulnerable groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Single parents and vulnerable families</li> <li>➤ People with low literacy/numeracy</li> <li>➤ Pensioners</li> <li>➤ Looked after children</li> <li>➤ Homeless people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Carers</li> <li>➤ Armed Forces Community</li> <li>➤ Students</li> <li>➤ Single adult households</li> <li>➤ People misusing substances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ People who have experienced the asylum system</li> <li>➤ People of all ages leaving a care setting</li> <li>➤ People living in the most deprived areas in Wales (WIMD)</li> <li>➤ People involved in the criminal justice system</li> </ul>
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<u>Socio-economic Disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?	If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<b>Low Income / Income Poverty</b> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular</i>	<b>Yes, potentially positive as some of the community benefits being scoped could include a range of</b>		<b>We have received advise from Welsh Government Energy Service on the types of community</b>

<p><i>payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i></p>	<p>options that would tackle fuel poverty, education and employment. There might also be a range of measures for people to retrofit their homes for fuel efficiency.</p>		<p>benefits schemes, as well as desk top based research on other renewable schemes. Further details on the specifics of the benefits and measures available will be done with engagement and consultation with the local community prior to FBC.</p>
<p><b><u>Socio-economic Disadvantage</u></b></p>	<p>Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?</p>	<p>If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?</p>	<p>What evidence has been used to support this view?</p>
<p><b>Low and/or No Wealth</b> (<i>enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future</i>)</p>	<p>Yes, potentially positive as some of the community benefits being scoped could include a range of options that would tackle fuel poverty, education and employment. There might also be a range of measures for people to retrofit their homes for fuel efficiency.</p>		<p>We have received advise from Welsh Government Energy Service on the types of community benefits schemes, as well as desk top based research on other renewable schemes. Further details on the specifics of the benefits and measures available will be done with engagement and consultation with the local community prior to FBC.</p>
<p><b>Material Deprivation</b> (<i>unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.</i>)</p>	<p>Yes, potentially positive as some of the community benefits being scoped could include a range of options that would tackle fuel poverty and/or access to employment or education</p>		<p>We have received advise from Welsh Government Energy Service on the types of community benefits schemes, as well as desk top based research on other renewable schemes.</p>

	opportunities in the low carbon sector.		Further details on the specifics of the benefits and measures available will be done with engagement and consultation with the local community prior to FBC.
<b>Area Deprivation</b> ( <i>where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport)</i> )	<b>Yes, potentially positive as some of the community benefits being scoped could include a range of options that would tackle fuel poverty and/or access to employment or education opportunities in the low carbon sector.</b>		<b>We have received advise from Welsh Government Energy Service on the types of community benefits schemes, as well as desk top based research on other renewable schemes.</b>
<b>Socio-economic Background</b> ( <i>social class i.e. parents education, employment and income</i> )	<b>Yes, potentially positive as some of the community benefits being scoped could include a range of options that would tackle fuel poverty and/or access to employment or education opportunities in the low carbon sector.</b>		<b>We have received advise from Welsh Government Energy Service on the types of community benefits schemes, as well as desk top based research on other renewable schemes.</b>

<p><b>Socio-economic Disadvantage</b>  <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>	<p>It is hoped that the cumulative effect would be far reaching and positive on people or groups identified within this category however until the specific benefits schemes are determined, with the community, we will be unsure as to the specific impact. More detail to follow with the FBC.</p>		<p>We have received advise from Welsh Government Energy Service on the types of community benefits schemes, as well as desk top based research on other renewable schemes.</p>
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**4. Corporate Plan – Council’s Well-being Objectives**

*(How does your proposal deliver against any/all of the Council’s Well-being Objectives? Which in turn support the national well-being goals for Wales as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Are there any impacts (positive, negative or neutral? If there are negative impacts how have these been mitigated?)* Well-being Objectives

<p><b>Objective 1</b> - Improve education opportunities for all</p>	<p>It is hoped that through procurement, using the social value TOMS methodology, and by delivering the solar farm ourselves we will be able to secure education opportunities both as part of the construction and ongoing in relation to low carbon education opportunities – site visits, EV demo days, working with local schools as part of the development of the solar farm.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2</b> - Enabling employment</p>	<p>Current estimates from WGES indicate that the development of this solar farm will generate approximately 30 employment opportunities during the life of the farm.</p>

<b>Objective 3</b> - Address the availability, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people’s well-being	There is the potential to include a grant scheme for residents to upgrade their homes to increase the fuel efficiency which will in turn lead to better condition homes.
<b>Objective 4</b> - Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impact on the environment	Potential for EV charging points as part of community benefits.
<b>Objective 5</b> - Creating a county borough that supports healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development principle with in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015	Reducing fuel poverty can help improve health and lifestyle.
<b>Objective 6</b> - Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being	Link to above Obj 5.

<b>4a. Links to any other relevant Council Policy</b> <i>(How does your proposal deliver against any other relevant Council Policy?)</i>
Commercial & Investment Strategy Transformation Strategy Decarbonisation Strategy & Energy Prospectus

**5. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – The Five Ways of Working (ICLIP)**

*(Also known as the sustainable development principles. The Act requires the Council to consider how any proposal improves the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales using the five ways of working as a baseline)*

<u>Ways of Working</u>	How have you used the Sustainable Development Principles in forming the proposal?
<p><b>Long Term</b></p> 	<p>This is a 25-35 year long project which will delivery long term community benefits and income for the local authority. We are also hoping that through the construction and development phases we will be able to make some landscape and ecology enhancements which will likewise help demonstrate our commitment to the long term carbon reductions measures, and ensuring out impact on the local landscape is well managed.</p>
<p><b>Prevention</b></p> 	<p><b>This project will enable the Council to make huge in roads towards reducing carbon emissions, which will help prevent the need for more fossil fuel energy in the future.</b></p>
<p><b>Integration</b></p> 	<p><b>Welsh Government targets around low carbon economy, making best use of our natural resources and working alongside our communities are all integral to this project. The consultation and engagement plans are detailed and include heavy lead from the community about the benefits they would like to see arise if this project is delivered.</b></p>
<p><b>Collaboration</b></p> 	<p>Collaboration with WGES has been ongoing throughout the project, we will also be working with NRW and CADW as part of design of the site and pre-planning conversations.</p>

<p><b>Involvement</b></p> 	<p>This will be considered as part of the communications and engagement plan. As the project progresses we have a detailed communication and engagement strategy in place which aligns with the Consultation and Engagement framework and which details how we intend to collaborate with external stakeholders. Internally we have held regular member briefings and project group meetings engaging with internal departments when required.</p>
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**6. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

<u>Well-being Goals</u>	<b>Does the proposal maximise our contribution to the Well-being Goal and how?</b>
<p><b>A Prosperous Wales</b>  <i>An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work</i></p>	<p>This proposal links directly to low carbon society and one in which helps to develop a skilled population as well as generating green employment opportunities.</p>
<p><b>A Resilient Wales</b>  <i>A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for climate change)</i></p>	<p>Engagement with ecologists and landscape architects to ensure biodiversity is not affected or improved</p>
<p><b>A Healthier Wales</b>  <i>A society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood</i></p>	<p>Fuel Poverty</p>
<p><b>A More Equal Wales</b>  <i>A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances)</i></p>	<p>Fuel poverty and opportunity for education, employment. - Socio economic</p>

<u>Well-being Goals</u>	<b>Does the proposal maximise our contribution to the Well-being Goal and how?</b>
<b>A Wales of Cohesive Communities</b> <i>Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities</i>	Potential to build community cohesion through consultation and engagement work and the longer-term community benefits. People will hopefully feel they have a stake in local community through this work.
<b>A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language</b> <i>A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation</i>	Consultation will be done in dual languages to ensure promotion of Welsh Language. Education and employment opportunities will be made available in the medium of Welsh.
<b>A Globally Responsible Wales</b> <i>A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being</i>	Renewable energy commitments

## 7. Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards

*(The Welsh Language Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards require the Council to have 'due regard' for the positive or negative impact a proposal may have on opportunities to use the Welsh language and ensuring the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language) insert link to WL Commissioners Policy Making Standards Guidance*



<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?</b>	<b>If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?</b>	<b>What evidence has been used to support this view?</b> <i>e.g the WESP, TAN20, LDP, Pupil Level Annual School Census</i>
<b>Links with Welsh Government's <a href="#">Cymraeg 2050 Strategy</a> and CCBC's <a href="#">Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2017-2022 and the Language Profile</a></b>	Neutral		The project will ensure compliance with standards at consultation points and will actively promote opportunities through medium of Welsh.
<b>Compliance with the <a href="#">Welsh Language Standards</a>.</b> <i>Specifically Standards 88 - 93</i>	Neutral		The project will ensure compliance with standards at consultation points and will actively promote

			opportunities through medium of Welsh.
<b>Opportunities to promote the Welsh language</b> <i>e.g. status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work / community</i>	Neutral		The project will ensure compliance with standards at consultation points and will actively promote opportunities through medium of Welsh.
<b>Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language</b> <i>e.g. staff, residents and visitors</i>	Neutral		The project will ensure compliance with standards at consultation points and will actively promote opportunities through medium of Welsh.
<b>Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language</b>	Neutral		The project will ensure compliance with standards at consultation points and will actively promote opportunities through medium of Welsh.

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**7a. Having considered the impacts above, how has the proposal been developed so that there are positive effects, or increased positive effects on (a) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and b) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.**

Not relevant at this stage but more information as part of FBC

## 8. Data and Information

*(What data or other evidence has been used to inform the development of the proposal? Evidence may include the outcome of previous consultations, existing databases, pilot projects, review of customer complaints and compliments and or other service user feedback, national and regional data, academic publications and consultants' reports etc.)*

<b>Data/evidence</b> <i>(Please provide link to report if appropriate)</i>	<b>Key relevant findings</b>	<b>How has the data/evidence informed this proposal?</b>
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<p>Advice and data from WG experts on the development of solar farms</p> <p><b>Advice from other local authorities in relation to their own renewable schemes.</b></p> <p><b>Advice from internal colleagues in designing the consultation and engagement framework.</b></p>	<p>What were the key findings? What did the data / evidence used tell you? There were many lessons learned from other previous projects – including time take for procurement, breaking the project down into steps and early engagement. We have also quickly recognised areas where we do not have internal expertise or capacity and have built acquiring this into the project plan.</p>	<p>How has the data / evidence available helped inform the proposal? Did it support the proposal and how? If the data / evidence didn't support the proposal why was this? All the learning has been incorporated into our project plans.</p>
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**Were there any gaps identified in the evidence and data used to develop this proposal and how will these gaps be filled?**

*Details of further consultation can be included in Section 9.*

Are there any gaps in the existing data and how will you go about filling these gaps?

**No gaps currently identified.**

**9. Consultation**

*(In some instances, there is a legal requirement to consult. In others, even where there is no legal obligation, there may be a legitimate expectation from people that a consultation will take place. Where it has been determined that consultation is required, The Gunning Principles must be adhered to. Consider the Consultation and Engagement Framework. Please note that this may need to be updated as the proposal develops and to strengthen the assessment.*

**Briefly describe any recent or planned consultations paying particular attention to evidencing the Gunning Principles.**

Who was consulted?

**Ward members, cabinet members, community councils and relevant staff. A wider consultation and engagement plan is included as part of the overall project plan and will be implemented should cabinet approval be gained.**

**VC to add plans.**

When were they consulted did the consultation take place at the formative stage and was adequate time given for consultees to consider and respond?

**Engagement has been with project lead on a 4-6 weekly basis throughout the project.**

Was sufficient information provided to consultees to allow them to make an informed decision on the proposal?

**Yes, we believe so, and information was provided in a timely fashion and where it was not possible to provide information owing to sensitive nature of the project we have been clear in explaining this to our key stakeholders.**

What were the key findings?

**Broad support for the project and some additional stakeholders identified eg Commoners Association**

How have the consultation findings been taken into account?

**Yes very much so.**

<b>10. Monitoring and Review</b>	
<b>How will the implementation and the impact of the proposal be monitored, including implementation of any amendments?</b>	Formative stages and until business case is signed off we will not implement monitoring measures until such time as we have sign off. Impact assessment to be reviewed monthly. <b>This will all be monitored by the project group as part of the FBC development which will also include details about how the ongoing community benefits will be monitored once we have clarity on what those will be.</b>
<b>What are the practical arrangements for monitoring?</b>	For example, who will put this in place? When will it start? <b>Transformation manager regular meetings with project team, head of service and cabinet member.</b>
<b>How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?</b>	<b>All the updates and learning are being shared across the project team and will be incorporated into any further renewable energy projects we might decide to explore.</b>
<b>When is the proposal due to be reviewed?</b>	<b>Every week until FBC approval.</b>
<b>Who is responsible for ensuring this happens?</b>	<b>Victoria Camp, Transformation Manager.</b>

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<b>11. Recommendation and Reasoning</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implement proposal with no amendments
<input type="checkbox"/>	Implement proposal taking account of the mitigating actions outlined
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reject the proposal due to disproportionate impact on equality, poverty and socio-economic disadvantage

<b>Have you contacted relevant officers for advice and guidance?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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## 12.Reason(s) for Recommendation

*(Provide below a summary of the Integrated Impact Assessment. This summary should be included in the “Summary of Integrated Impact Assessment” section of the Corporate Report Template. The Integrated Impact Assessment should be published alongside the Report proposal).*

Include here a conclusion to your IIA. What is it telling you? How has the data/ evidence used helped you to make the decision for Section 11 above? Mention any significant impacts (positive, negative, or neutral) if any negative ones identified, how have they been mitigated to lessen the impact? The summary you provide here will be copied into your report going forward for a decision through the committee process, therefore this section must be concise but informative.

This proposal and the associated community benefits have the opportunity to make significant positive impacts across a number of key areas as identified within this IIA; collaboration, employment, low carbon, education, long term thinking. The challenge will be as we develop the FBC to ensure that those benefits are achievable and aligned to the priorities of both the WG, legislation, corporate priorities and the needs and wants of the community.

## 13.Version Control

(The IIA should be used in the early stages of the proposal development process. The IIA can be strengthened as time progresses to help shape the proposal. The Version Control section will act as an audit trail to evidence how the IIA has been developed over time)

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Version No.	Author	Brief description of the amendments/update	Revision Date
1	Victoria Camp	Initial draft created with project group	18.02.2021
2	Victoria Camp	Minor amendments and updates made in readiness for Cabinet	21.05.2021

## Integrated Impact Assessment Author

<b>Name:</b>	Victoria Camp
<b>Job Title:</b>	Transformation Manager – Commercial & Investment
<b>Date:</b>	21.05.2021

## Head of Service Approval

<b>Name:</b>	Rhian Kyte
<b>Job Title:</b>	Head of Regeneration & Planning

<b>Signature:</b>	<i>Rhe Kyle</i>	<b>Date:</b>	26.05.2021
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## CABINET – 23RD JUNE 2021

**SUBJECT:       AUDIT WALES FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT –  
CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT BY:   CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE  
SERVICES**

### 1.       PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1       To present Cabinet with the Audit Wales report on its latest financial sustainability assessment of Caerphilly CBC.

### 2.       SUMMARY

- 2.1       Audit Wales has undertaken its assessment of financial sustainability as this continues to be a risk to councils putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources. A similar project was undertaken for 2019/20, before the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall conclusion of the 2019/20 review for Caerphilly CBC was that: -

***The Council has a strong financial position, with an increasingly high level of usable reserves, a relatively stable level of borrowing, and significant budget underspends in recent years.***

- 2.2       The Audit Wales 2020/21 assessment of councils' financial sustainability was in two phases. Phase 1 was a baseline assessment of the initial impact of COVID-19 on local councils' financial positions. This phase drew on the year-end position for 2019/20, the position at the end of quarter 1 for 2020/21, and projections for quarter 2 for 2020/21. Following Phase 1, in October 2020 Audit Wales published a national summary report – **Financial Sustainability of Local Government as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic**. This found that councils and the Welsh Government have worked well together to mitigate the impact of the pandemic to date, but the future sustainability of the sector is an ongoing challenge.
- 2.3       The pandemic has had an immediate and profound effect on public sector finances as a whole and, as a consequence, on councils' financial positions. The summary report set a high-level baseline position, including the reserves position of local councils before the pandemic. It also set out the initial financial implications of the pandemic for local councils and the scale of the anticipated challenge going forward.
- 2.4       The report attached at Appendix 1 has been produced by Audit Wales following the conclusion of Phase 2 of its financial sustainability assessment work during 2020/21. A report is being produced for each of the 22 principal councils in Wales.
- 2.5       A member of staff from Audit Wales will attend the Cabinet meeting to present the Caerphilly CBC report.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Cabinet is asked to: -

3.1.1 Consider and comment upon the content of the Audit Wales report.

3.1.2 Note that the Audit Wales proposals for improvement have been accepted by Officers and will be addressed as part of the Sustainable Financial Planning Corporate Review.

### 4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To ensure that Cabinet is aware of the review work undertaken by Audit Wales and the resultant findings, conclusion, and proposals for improvement.

### 5. THE REPORT

5.1 The Audit Wales report on the outcome of Phase 2 of the financial sustainability assessment for Caerphilly CBC is attached at Appendix 1. Overall, the report concludes that: -

***The Council continues to have a strong financial position, although its current medium-term financial plan is underdeveloped.***

5.2 The report contains the following proposals for improvement: -

**Proposal for improvement: strengthening the medium-term financial planning.**

**P1** - The Council should develop and implement a more comprehensive MTFP.

**Proposal for improvement: setting the annual revenue and capital budgets.**

**P2** - The Council should examine the processes in place for its annual budget setting, and for its in-year budget revisions and outturn reporting. As part of the review, given the significant underspends that the Council has experienced in recent years, it should assess whether the process needs strengthening. The Council should then identify and implement any actions for improvement.

**Proposal for improvement: to help address the funding gap identified in the MTFP, develop a programme of financial benefits from the Transformation Programme activities.**

**P3** - In further developing its Transformation Programme, the Council should ensure that the intended financial benefits arising are clearly defined and communicated. The Council should monitor its progress with achieving the intended benefits and regularly report the outcomes to elected members.

5.3 The proposals for improvement have been accepted by Officers and align with the outcomes already agreed for the Sustainable Financial Planning Review, which is one of ten Corporate Reviews included in the Strengthening Team Caerphilly report that was approved by Cabinet on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020. The outcomes are as follows: -

- The Council has a long-term and viable financial plan that supports the delivery of Council services and the development of new and improved service models.

- The Council has a sustainable investment strategy that enables us to turn on and turn off services as required.
- Outcome based budgeting – matching our budget to the specific needs of the community.
- Effective and efficient spend control.

5.4 A project team has been established to focus on these outcomes, and progress on the ten Corporate Reviews is being monitored by the Team Caerphilly Project Board. As part of the agreed governance framework for the Council's Transformation Programme progress reports will also be presented periodically to the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

5.5 Progress on all Audit Wales proposals for improvement is also reported to and monitored by the Governance & Audit Committee.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 It is assumed that the financial outlook will remaining challenging for Local Government, which underlines the need for strong financial management.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process does not need to be applied.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2003.

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(Email: [stenne@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:stenne@caerphilly.gov.uk))

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Audit Wales Report, Financial Sustainability Assessment, Caerphilly CBC, June 2021

Background Papers:

[Cabinet \(22/07/20\) – Strengthening Team Caerphilly.](#)

[Audit Committee \(21/10/20\) – Audit Wales Report, Financial Sustainability Assessment, Caerphilly CBC, March 2020.](#)

[Audit Committee \(21/10/20\) – Audit Wales Report, Financial Sustainability of Local Government as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, October 2020.](#)

## Financial Sustainability Assessment – Caerphilly County Borough Council

Audit year: 2020-21

Month issued: June 2021

Document reference: 2451A2021-22

This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and section 18 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. It may also inform a study for improving value for money under section 41 of the 2004 Act, and/or an examination undertaken by the Auditor General under section 15 of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

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We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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# Summary report

## What we looked at and why

- 1 We undertook this assessment as financial sustainability continues to be a risk to councils putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources. In part, this was informed by experiences of some councils in England, our knowledge of the financial situation in councils in Wales, and the general trend of decreasing resources for local government combined with rising demand for some services. We undertook a similar project for 2019-20<sup>1</sup>, before the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2 Our 2020-21 assessment on councils' financial sustainability was in two phases. Phase 1 was a baseline assessment of the initial impact of COVID-19 on local councils' financial position. Phase 1 drew on: the year-end position for 2019-20; the position at the end of quarter 1 for 2020-21; and projections for quarter 2 for 2020-21. Following Phase 1, in October 2020 we published a national summary report – **Financial Sustainability of Local Government as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic**<sup>2</sup>. We found that councils and the Welsh Government have worked well together to mitigate the impact of the pandemic to date, but the future sustainability of the sector is an ongoing challenge.
- 3 The pandemic has had an immediate and profound effect on public sector finances as a whole and, as a consequence, on councils' financial positions. The summary report set a high-level baseline position, including the reserves position of local councils before the pandemic. It also set out the initial financial implications of the pandemic for local councils and the scale of the anticipated challenge going forward.
- 4 This report concludes phase two of our financial sustainability assessment work during 2020-21. As part of this we are producing a local report for each of the 22 principal councils in Wales.
- 5 We undertook this assessment during March and April 2021.

<sup>1</sup> Audit Wales, [Financial Sustainability Assessment, Caerphilly County Borough Council](#), March 2020

<sup>2</sup> Audit Wales, [Financial Sustainability of Local Government as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), October 2020

# Proposals for improvement

## Exhibit 1: proposals for improvement

The table below sets out the proposals for improvement that we have identified following this review.

<b>Proposals for improvement</b>	
<b>Proposal for improvement: strengthening the medium-term financial planning</b>	
P1	The Council should develop and implement a more comprehensive MTFP.
<b>Proposal for improvement: setting the annual revenue and capital budgets</b>	
P2	<p>The Council should examine the processes in place for its annual budget setting, and for its in-year budget revisions and outturn reporting.</p> <p>As part of the review, given the significant underspends that the Council has experienced in recent years, it should assess whether the process needs strengthening.</p> <p>The Council should then identify and implement any actions for improvement.</p>
<b>Proposal for improvement: to help address the funding gap identified in the MTFP, develop a programme of financial benefits from the Transformation Programme activities</b>	
P3	In further developing its Transformation Programme, the Council should ensure that the intended financial benefits arising are clearly defined and communicated. The Council should monitor its progress with achieving the intended benefits and regularly report the outcomes to elected members.

# Detailed report

The Council continues to have a strong financial position, although its current medium-term financial plan is underdeveloped

**The impact of COVID-19 on the Council's 2020-21 finances was largely assisted by additional Welsh Government funding, with similar additional funding currently extended to September 2021**

- 6 This section sets out the impact that COVID-19 has had to date on the Council's financial position and the extent to which this has been mitigated by additional funding from the Welsh Government.

## What we found

- To help mitigate the financial pressures of COVID-19, in July 2020 the Council established an earmarked reserve of £2.7 million to meet potential unfunded additional costs and lost income arising from the pandemic.
- In past years the Council had forecast and experienced a surplus against its budgeted council tax collections. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 and the Council's anticipated fall in the collection of council tax, it did not forecast a collection surplus for 2020-21.
- At the time of this review, although the Council had recognised that COVID-19 is likely to adversely affect its medium-term financial planning, it has determined that it was too early to identify and quantify the main financial impacts.
- In developing the 2021-22 budget the Council had recognised the risk of the Welsh Government's hardship fund not continuing into 2021-22. However, that risk was subsequently reduced by the Welsh Government's confirmation to all councils that it would be retaining the hardship fund for an additional six months, to 30 September 2021.
- **Exhibit 2** shows the level of additional expenditure and lost income that the Council has reported that it has faced because of COVID-19. The exhibit also shows the extent to which the Council's financial losses have been assisted by additional Welsh Government funding, through its local government hardship fund.

## Exhibit 2: the reported cost to the Council of COVID-19 over 2020-21<sup>3</sup>

The table below shows the Council's additional expenditure and lost income over 2020-21 because of COVID-19, and how much of this was mitigated by extra funding from the Welsh Government.

The additional amount the Council spent as a result of COVID-19 over 2020-21.	£26.3 million
The amount of income the Council lost as a result of COVID-19 over 2020-21.	£7.7 million
The amount of additional funding the Council received from the Welsh Government over 2020-21 to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.	£32.8 million
The cost to the Council of COVID-19 over 2020-21, taking account of the extra funding provided by the Welsh Government.	£1.2 million

## The Council's medium-term financial plan is underdeveloped

### Why strategic financial planning is important

- 7 A clear and robust financial strategy is important to identify the likely level of funding available to a council, as well as the anticipated level of demand for, and cost of, providing services. Given the recent and anticipated funding pressures facing all councils it is also important to identify how it intends to respond to those pressures, and particularly how they will meet projected funding gaps.

### What we found

- In March 2020 we reported that the Council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) did not fully reflect its record of significant underspending nor fully reflect its transformation plans. We had also reported that for many years the Council had significantly underspent its revenue and capital budgets, which had contributed to its increasingly high level of usable reserves.

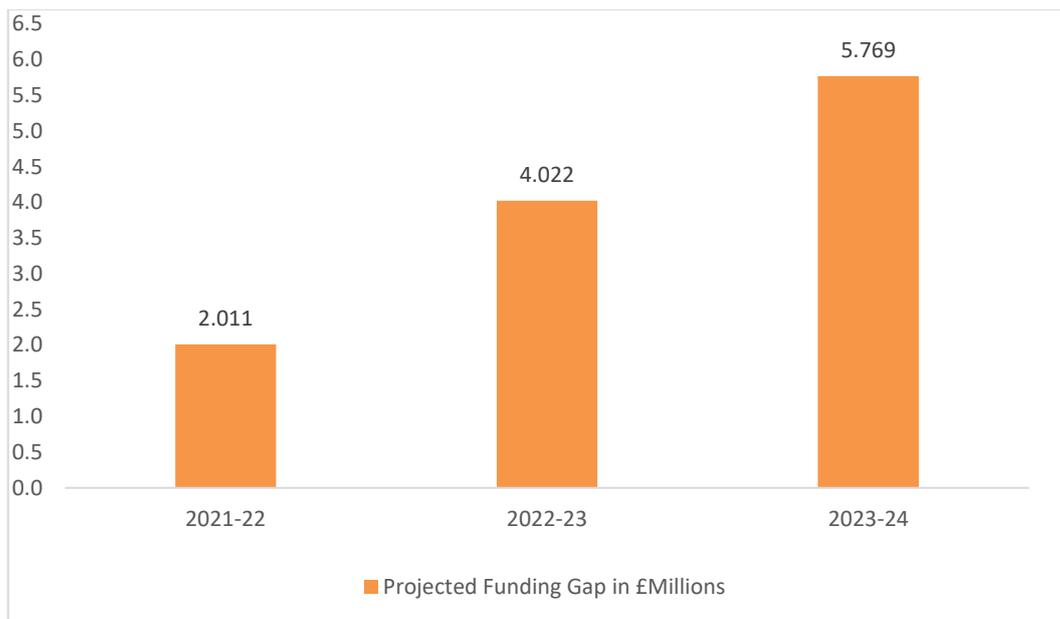
<sup>3</sup> The Council's unaudited management accounts.

- For 2020-21 the Council is reporting further revenue and capital underspends.
- Last year we also reported that whilst the Council's 'Transformation Programme' had been published in June 2019, it contained only high-level links with the MTFP.
- At the time of last year's audit review, Council officers told us that the Transformation Programme would be developed further during 2020 and early 2021 to include more detailed and meaningful information within the Council's 2022-23 to 2025-26 MTFP.
- The Council has not made its planned improvements to this year's MTFP. We acknowledge and understand the Council's reason for not doing so, with the need to urgently tackle the impact of COVID-19 since March 2020.
- The Council's MTFP<sup>4</sup> published in February 2021 forecasts a £21.1 million funding gap, after taking account of a series of assumptions relating to income and expenditure for the four-year period 2022-23 to 2025-26. **Exhibit 3** shows the Council's reported funding gap for the three year period 2021-22 to 2023-24.

<sup>4</sup> Caerphilly County Borough Council, Indicative Medium-Term Financial Plan – 2022/23 to 2025/26, Council 24 February 2021

**Exhibit 3: the Council has a total projected funding gap for the three years 2021-22 to 2023-24 of £11.8 million<sup>5</sup>**

This graph shows the funding gap that the Council has reported for the three years to March 2024.



- To inform financial planning and identify their projected funding gaps, all councils make assumptions about factors that will impact on the amount of funding they will have available in future years. The Council's main underlying assumptions in the MTFP were reasonably consistent with other Welsh Councils.
- The current MTFP also assumes a tapered increase in non-pay inflation, rising to the Bank of England's target of 2% by 2025-26.
- While the Council's MTFP includes estimates such as those above, some other aspects remain underdeveloped. For example, the plan is brief and provides limited information around future demand pressures beyond schools and social services; does not reflect the ambitious transformation plans; and does not clearly identify potential risks to the Council's financial resilience in the coming years.
- The Council's MTFP does provide an overview of the sensitivity of the assumptions within its forecast to the end of 2025-26. For example, the

<sup>5</sup> Sources:

For 2021-22 Budget Proposals for 2020/21 and Medium Term Outlook, Council 20 February 2020

For years 2022-23 and 2032-24 Caerphilly County Borough Council, Indicative Medium-Term Financial Plan - 2022/23 to 2025/26, Council 24 February 2021

MTFP states that a 2% increase in Welsh Government funding per annum would reduce the four-year potential savings requirement to £9.2 million from £21.1 million. Conversely, the MTFP states that a 'cash flat' position would increase the potential savings requirement to £32.7 million.

- During the past year the Council has widened the scope of its Transformation Programme to reflect the changes brought about by COVID-19. The Programme now includes ten corporate reviews<sup>6</sup> which focus on fundamentally changing how the Council operates and delivers its services.
- At the time of our fieldwork, the Council recognised that while the initial stages of the Programme are now underway, its outcomes and benefits, including the financial benefits, are yet to be fully developed. The Council plans to develop them by Autumn 2021. The potential financial benefits arising from the Programme may contribute to the Council's aim to close its identified funding gap.

## The Council's usable reserves have increased further in the past year and remain at a high level

### Why sustainable management of reserves is important

- 8 Healthy levels of usable reserves are an important safety net to support financial sustainability. As well as being available to fund unexpected funding pressures, usable reserves can also be an important funding source to support 'invest to save' initiatives designed to reduce the ongoing cost of providing services. Councils that show a pattern of unplanned use of reserves to plug gaps in their revenue budget, that result in reductions of reserve balances, reduce their resilience to fund unforeseen budget pressures in future years.

### What we found

- Last year we reported that the Council had an increasingly high level of usable reserves. Since then, over the past year the Council's usable reserves have increased further. **Exhibit 4** shows that as at 31 March 2020 the Council had usable reserves of £100.5 million, representing 25.3% of the its 2019-20 'net cost of services'. This percentage was the third highest for Welsh councils for 2019-20.
- In February 2021 the Council published its Place Shaping and Wellbeing Framework. This framework is the Council's capital strategy that sets out its intended capital investments. The Council has earmarked some £30 million

<sup>6</sup> Source: Strengthening Team Caerphilly, presented to the Council's Cabinet on 22 July 2020.

of its usable reserves for the investments that, with external finance, could potentially total £231 million from 2021-23 and potentially beyond.

- The Council's 2021-22 budget also makes strategic use of £0.368 million from a £1.8 million reserve, previously earmarked by the Council for delivery of the MTFP, to appoint four fixed-term project managers. Council officers told us that those appointments are critical to increasing the pace of delivery of its Transformation Programme and Place Shaping and Wellbeing Framework.

#### Exhibit 4: analysis of annual usable-reserves and net cost of services

This exhibit shows the amount of usable reserves the Council had for the four years up to 2019-20, as a proportion of its net cost of services.

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Net Cost of Services in £ millions <sup>7</sup>	362.7	388.9	421.3	397.6
Total Usable Reserves in £ millions <sup>8</sup>	82.4	87.0	90.9	100.5
Total Usable Reserves as a % of net cost of services	22.7	22.4	21.6	25.3
Comparison ranking across all Welsh councils <sup>9</sup>	5th	5th	5th	3rd

- The Council expects to report that its usable reserves will increase to £108 million at the end of 2020-21.

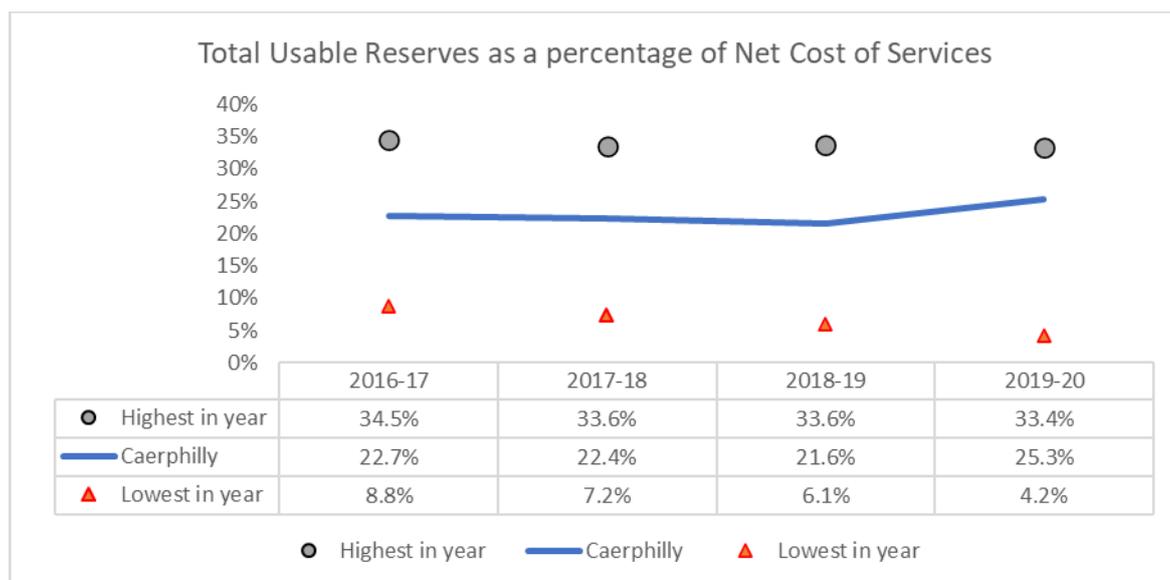
<sup>7</sup> Source: annual audited statement of accounts. The figures are based on the net cost of services, excluding the housing revenue account figures, and adding precepts, levies & debt interest.

<sup>8</sup> Source: annual audited statement of accounts.

<sup>9</sup> 1st being the highest percentage for Wales.

## Exhibit 5: usable reserves as a percentage of net cost of services

This graph shows the Council's usable reserves as a percentage of net cost of services compared to the other Councils in Wales.



## The Council continues to underspend against its revenue and capital budgets

### Why accurately forecasting expenditure is important

- 9 It is important that overspending and underspending are kept under control and that actual expenditure is as close to the levels planned as possible. A council that is unable to accurately forecast and plan expenditure runs the risk of creating unforeseen financial pressures that may compromise the ability to set a balanced budget. Significant patterns of underspending may be reducing the ability of a council to deliver its key objectives or meet its statutory responsibilities.

### What we found

- Last year we reported that the Council had significantly underspent both its revenue and capital budgets for many years, to 2019-20.
- Based on the Council's provisional outturn for 2020-21, the Council is reporting an underspend of £36.8 million against its 2020-21 revenue budget of £356 million, representing a 10.3% underspend<sup>10</sup>. Officers told us that a

<sup>10</sup> Source – provisional outturn to be reported to Cabinet on 7 July 2021.

proportion of this underspend results from additional Covid related grant funding.

- The Council's provisional capital outturn position for 2020-21 is an underspend of £28.8 million<sup>11</sup>.
- **Exhibit 6** shows that for the five financial years to 2020-21 the Council has underspent its revenue budgets by £79.8 million.

### Exhibit 6: amount of overspend/underspend relative to total net revenue budget

The following exhibit shows the amount of overspend or underspend for the Council's overall net revenue budget for the last five years.

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 <sup>12</sup>
Original Net Revenue Budget £ millions <sup>13</sup>	324.4	325.4	332.0	337.7	356.1
Actual Net Revenue Outturn <sup>14</sup> £ millions	313.7	316.7	320.3	325.8	319.3
Amount of underspend £ millions	10.7	8.7	11.7	11.9	36.8
Percentage difference from net revenue budget	3.3	2.7	3.5	3.5	10.3

## While the Council has a good track record of delivering its planned savings, it has no further planned savings within its current medium-term financial plan

### Why the ability to identify and deliver savings plans is important

- 10 The ability to identify areas where specific financial savings can be made, and to subsequently make those savings, is a key aspect of ensuring ongoing financial sustainability against a backdrop of increasing financial pressures. Where savings plans are not delivered this can result in overspends that require the use of limited reserves while increasing the level of savings required in future years to compensate for this. Where savings plans are not delivered and service areas are required to make unplanned savings, this increases the risk either of savings not

<sup>11</sup> Source: provisional capital outturn to be reported to Cabinet on 23 June 2021, excluding the Housing Revenue Account capital underspend of £9.3 million.

<sup>12</sup> Source – provisional outturn to be reported to the Cabinet on 23 June 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Source: the narrative report to the annual statement of accounts.

<sup>14</sup> Source: the narrative report to the annual statement of accounts.

being aligned to the Council's priorities, or of 'short-term' solutions that are not sustainable over the medium-term.

## What we found

- Last year we reported that the Council had delivered most of its planned savings in the previous two years and it expected to do so again for 2019-20.
- For 2019-20 the Council achieved £12.7 million (91%) of its planned savings of £13.9 million.
- For 2020-21 the Council's funding gap was £1.076 million, however, the Council agreed planned savings totalling £3.007 million which created savings in advance of £1.931 million. The Council also identified additional savings in advance during 2020-21 creating a total of £2.011 million of savings in advance.
- During 2020-21, the Council's achievement of its planned savings was considerably constrained by COVID-19. **Exhibit 7** shows that the Council expected to achieve £1.671 million (55.6%) of its £3.007 million planned savings. The shortfalls have not been problematic for the Council due to its ongoing budget underspends, and, if they had been necessary, its high level of usable reserves.
- The Council used the £2.011 million savings in advance from 2020-21 to help determine its 2021-22 budget, which therefore negated the need for any planned savings for 2021-22.
- The Council's current MTFP, however, does not include any planned savings to address the Council's reported funding gap of £11.8 million to the end of 2023-24.

## Exhibit 7: savings delivered as a percentage of planned savings

The following exhibit sets how much money the Council intended to save from its savings plans during 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 and how much of it actually saved, as well as its estimated figures for 2020-21.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 estimate <sup>15</sup>
Total planned savings in £ millions <sup>16</sup>	9	6.8	13.9	3.007
Planned savings achieved in £ millions <sup>17</sup>	8.95	6.4	12.7	1.671
Planned savings not achieved in £ millions	0.05	0.4	1.2	1.336
Percentage of savings achieved	98.5	94.3	91.4	55.6

## The Council has maintained a strong liquidity position for many years

### Why the Council's liquidity position is important

- 11 Why gauging current assets to current liabilities (liquidity, or the working capital ratio) is important:
- an indicator of how a council manages its short-term finances.
  - while it is commonly used to examine whether organisations can pay their debts in the short term, this is unlikely to be a risk for councils given their ability to take short-term borrowing. It does, however, act as an indicator of how a council manages its short-term finances.
  - councils with low liquidity ratios should ensure they have sound arrangements in place to meet their liabilities.
  - there may be additional costs for councils that rely on short-term borrowing to pay debts.
  - councils with very high liquidity ratios should consider whether they are managing their current assets in the most effective way.

<sup>15</sup> Council estimate.

<sup>16</sup> Source: Statement of Accounts.

<sup>17</sup> Source: Statement of Accounts.

## What we found

- **Exhibit 8** provides analysis of the Council's liquidity since 2015-16. The analysis shows that the Council's liquidity is strong, with each financial year-end having a ratio of 1.5 or higher. A liquidity ratio above 1.0 means that a council has more current assets, at that point in time, than current liabilities.
- The analysis shows that for the three-year period to 31 March 2019, the liquidity ratio had decreased from 2.4 to 1.5. A key reason for the decrease is that, over those three years, the Council's short-term investments had decreased by some £31 million, alongside its long-term investments increasing by some £17 million.
- The Council forecasts its liquidity to remain strong at a ratio of 2.2 as at 31 March 2021.

### Exhibit 8: liquidity ratios for 2015-16 to 2020-21

The following exhibit shows the Council's level of current assets and liabilities as of 31 March in each year from 2016 to 2021 as well as its liquidity/ working capital ratio.

	31 March 2016	31 March 2017	31 March 2018	31 March 2019	31 March 2020	31 March 2021 <sup>18</sup> estimate
Current Assets £millions <sup>19</sup>	163	134.9	119.5	90.2	134.8	201.3
Current Liabilities <sup>20</sup>	67.4	68.4	71	61.4	87.6	89.9
Liquidity / Working Capital Ratio	2.4	2.0	1.7	1.5	1.5	2.2

<sup>18</sup> Unaudited balance sheet position as at 2 June 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Source: annual audited statement of accounts (except for 2020-21).

<sup>20</sup> Source: annual audited statement of accounts (except for 2020-21).





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Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saeneg.



## CABINET – 23RD JUNE 2021

**SUBJECT: PROVISIONAL CAPITAL OUTTURN 2020/21**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

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

- 1.1 To provide information to Cabinet relating to the provisional capital outturn for the 2020/21 financial year.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The report provides details of actual capital expenditure for the 2020/21 financial year and slippage that has been requested to be carried forward into 2021/22.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Cabinet are asked to note the contents of this report.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To ensure that Cabinet is informed of the provisional outturn of the 2020/21 Capital Programme prior to the annual external audit of the accounts by Audit Wales.

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 The approved core Capital Programme for the 2020/21 financial year totalled £41.042m, consisting of £11.363m for the General Fund and £29.679m for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). During the year specific grants, slippage and contributions were received for various service areas taking the total available capital resources for 2020/21 to £111.278m. This is summarised in the table below: -

	<b>General Fund £000s</b>	<b>HRA £000s</b>	<b>Total £000s</b>
<b>Approved 2020/21 Budget</b>	<b>11,363</b>	<b>29,679</b>	<b>41,042</b>
Slippage Brought Forward from 2019/20	43,163		43,163
In Year Grants, Contributions	23,245		23,245
S106 Funding	235		235
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO)	1,609		1,609
Other Funding	1,984		1,984
<b>Total: -</b>	<b>81,599</b>	<b>29,679</b>	<b>111,278</b>

5.2 £21.291m of the available Capital Programme is for the Council's Wellbeing & Place Shaping Framework, and this sum was transferred to a specific earmarked reserve during the 2020/21 financial year. This sum has been excluded from the estimated target spend in the table in paragraph 5.3 below on the basis that the funding has not been allocated to specific projects as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. As a result, the estimated target spend is reduced from £111.278m to £89.987m.

5.3 The following table provides a summary of the 2020/21 provisional outturn against each service area: -

<b>Capital Programme</b>	<b>Revised Estimated Target Spend £000s</b>	<b>Outturn Capital Spend £000s</b>	<b>Variance £000s</b>
Community & Leisure Services	2,268	1,273	995
Corporate Finance	2,768	-	2,768
Corporate Services	5,223	4,192	1,031
Business Enterprise Renewal Team	7,491	7,088	403
Education	12,701	5,272	7,429
Infrastructure	15,481	10,040	5,441
Private Housing	6,094	564	5,530
Property Services	2,107	936	1,171
Public Protection	1,943	1,212	731
Social Services	4,232	970	3,262
<b>General Fund Total: -</b>	<b>60,308</b>	<b>31,547</b>	<b>28,761</b>
<b>HRA Total: -</b>	<b>29,679</b>	<b>20,385</b>	<b>9,294</b>
<b>Total Capital Programme: -</b>	<b>89,987</b>	<b>51,932</b>	<b>38,055</b>

5.4 The 2020/21 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) underspend of £9.294m will be carried forward into the 2021/22 financial year to fund the completion of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Programme.

- 5.5 The General Fund variance of £28.761m can be split between schemes that are ongoing or have been delayed in 2020/21 (slippage) and ring-fenced budgets.
- 5.6 **Slippage:** Schemes to the value of £13.908m have been slipped into the 2021/22 financial year as a result of an ongoing program of works and delays in contractual arrangements. Appendix 1 sets out the schemes where slippage has occurred.
- 5.7 **Ring-fenced budgets:** As at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, a number of ring-fenced budgets remained unspent to the value of £14.853m. These budgets relate to specific grants, contributions and Section 106 monies or earmarked revenue funding transferred to a capital reserve. Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of the £14.853m.

## 6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The details set out in the report are based on actual expenditure that has been incurred between the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 and the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

## 7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process does not need to be applied.

## 8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 As detailed throughout the report.

## 9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.

## 11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2003.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – 2020/21 Slippage  
Appendix 2 – 2020/21 Ring-fenced Budgets

Background Papers:

2020/21 Capital Expenditure Monitoring Report (Period 9)  
Appendix 1 – Capital Monitoring 2020/21

Capital Outturn Report 2019/20

## Appendix 1: 2020/21 Slippage

Service Area	Scheme	Outturn Position 31/03/2021 £000s	Comments
Community & Leisure Services	Various Capital Schemes	712	Ongoing delivery of programme (Sports pitches and Countryside)
Corporate Services	Various Capital Schemes	416	Ongoing delivery of programme (IT Services and Customer Services)
Business Enterprise Renewal Team	Various Capital Schemes	403	Ongoing delivery of programme
Education	Various Capital Schemes	879	Ongoing delivery of programme
Infrastructure	Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal	642	Ongoing delivery of programme
Infrastructure	Bridge Strengthening	375	Ongoing delivery of programme
Infrastructure	Corporate Maintenance – Tips, Mines and Spoils	816	Scheme delayed, to commence in 21-22.
Infrastructure	Various Capital Schemes	532	Ongoing delivery of programme
Private Housing	Disabled Facility Grants	1,605	Grant programme impacted by Covid restrictions
Private Housing	Home Improvement Grants/Miscellaneous.	737	Grant programme impacted by Covid restrictions
Private Housing	Home Repair Grant	1,757	Grant programme impacted by Covid restrictions
Property Services	Corporate Asset Management	208	Ongoing delivery of core capital budget
Property Services	Demolition Pontllanfraith and Oakdale Schools	833	Ongoing delivery of programme
Public Protection	Various Capital Schemes	220	Ongoing delivery of programme
Public Protection	Ty Llwyd Landfill Site	200	Scheme at design stage
Public Protection	Kitchen Refurbishments	311	Ongoing delivery of programme
Social Services	Children's Centre Complex Needs	3,069	Suitable site to be identified.
Social Services	Various Capital Schemes	193	Ongoing delivery of programme
<b>Total General Fund Slippage 2020/21: -</b>		<b>13,908</b>	

## **Appendix 2: 2020/21 Ring-fenced Budgets**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Outturn Position 31/03/2021 £000s</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Community & Leisure Services	Playground Reinstatement	283	S106 carried forward
Education	Asset Management (s106)	188	S106 carried forward
Infrastructure	Various s106 Schemes	363	S106 carried forward
Corporate Finance	Earmarked capital budgets	2,768	Earmarked funding for future schemes
Corporate Services	Edtech	615	Funding to be spent in 2021/22
Education	Asset Management	6,362	Additional Capital Grant received has displaced 2020/21 expenditure. This is to be carried forward into 2021/22 to progress various schemes.
Infrastructure	Various Schemes	1,456	Earmarked funding for historical liabilities & grant funded schemes
Infrastructure	Ty Duffryn	769	Scheme not to progress. Alternative use of monies being considered.
Infrastructure	Various Schemes	488	S106 carried forward
Private Housing	Home Improvement Loans	1,431	WG loan funding
Property Services	Penallta House Car Park Extension	130	Use of funding under consideration
<b>Total Ring-Fenced Budgets 2020/21: -</b>		<b>14,853</b>	



## CABINET – 23RD JUNE 2021

**SUBJECT: DELIVERING GOOD GOVERNANCE REVIEW: CAERPHILLY  
CBC**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE  
SERVICES**

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the Delivering Good Governance Review: Caerphilly County Borough Council together with the Council's proposed action plan for addressing the matters for consideration raised within the review.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In the Autumn of 2019, Audit Wales and Caerphilly CBC jointly agreed to carry out a review of the Council's Governance arrangements. The review was framed as a means of assessing whether the Council's existing arrangements were sufficiently well developed to support the ambitious TeamCaerphilly transformation journey.
- 2.2 The review was to include a self-evaluation by the Council's Corporate Governance Panel against the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework". The self-evaluation would then receive scrutiny and challenge from an external regulatory expert commissioned by the Council, before being subject to further review by Audit Wales.
- 2.3 In March 2020, and with the self-evaluation still incomplete, the Council and Audit Wales agreed to pause the review as a result of the immediate need to focus Council resources on the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- 2.4 In June that year, Audit Wales announced their intention to deploy their staff to support and challenge recovery planning in real-time. This was a decision taken to provide "assurance that recovery takes due account of the multitude of risks, but also that it grasps the opportunities for a different and sustainable future".
- 2.5 By August, and with the pandemic response showing no signs of coming to an end, it was clear that the previously undertaken self-evaluation work was becoming less and less reflective of the governance arrangements supporting the Council's new operating environment.

- 2.6 The Council and Audit Wales, however, remained committed to use the self-evaluation work as a basis of describing some potential enhancements to the Council's arrangements.
- 2.7 Appendix 2 of this report sets out a number of matters for consideration for the Council that have been identified by Audit Wales, while Appendix 3 includes the Council's proposed action plan for addressing the matters raised.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That Cabinet:
- 1) Note the contents of the Audit Wales Delivering Good Governance Review: Caerphilly County Borough Council
  - 2) Agrees the action plan attached at Appendix 3

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To ensure the matters for consideration raised by Audit Wales are adequately addressed and that that Council's arrangements are enhanced to better support the TeamCaerphilly programme.

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 In the Autumn of 2019, Audit Wales and Caerphilly CBC jointly agreed to carry out a review of the Council's Governance arrangements in accordance with the Project Brief set out in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 The review was framed as a means of assessing whether the Council's existing arrangements were sufficiently well developed to support the ambitious TeamCaerphilly transformation journey.
- 5.3 The review was to travel through three distinct stages:
- 5.3.1 A self-evaluation was to be undertaken by the Council's Corporate Governance Panel against the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework".
  - 5.3.2 The Council's self-evaluation would be subject to a period of scrutiny and challenge by an external regulatory expert commissioned by the Council and sourced through the WLGA
  - 5.3.3 The finalised self-evaluation would be further reviewed by Audit Wales with a view to identifying any improvements that would enable the Council's governance arrangements to better support the TeamCaerphilly Transformation programme.
- 5.4 Thereafter, Audit Wales would work alongside the Council to monitor the implementation of the improvement work.

- 5.5 The CIPFA Framework would see the Council's Governance Arrangements assessed against seven fundamental principles:
- A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, & respecting the rule of law.
  - B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
  - C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits
  - D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
  - E – Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
  - F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
  - G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability
- 5.6 The Self-Evaluation work intended to establish three core things in relation to those principles:
- a) Does the Council have in place the required 'deliverable measures'
  - b) How effective (or otherwise) are the Council's current arrangements (using Estyn descriptors to form a judgement)
  - c) What evidence exists to support that judgement (including hyperlinks to relevant documentation or narrative that describes relevant practices or policies)
- 5.7 In March 2020, the Council's self-evaluation work was nearing conclusion with a significant number of documents identified, initial judgements recorded and narrative descriptions in place. The external expert had been commissioned and had undertaken some initial discussions with the Council. At this stage, however, the self-evaluation work was not complete and had not been subject to any internal peer assessment or challenge from within the Corporate Governance Panel.
- 5.8 Later that Month, the Council and Audit Wales agreed to pause the review as a result of the immediate need to focus Council resources on the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- 5.9 Over the summer, and with the pandemic showing no signs of coming to an end, Audit Wales recognised that the governance arrangements supporting the Councils operating model throughout the response was very different to that which had been the subject of the self-evaluation. Through discussion with the Council, it was agreed that the work that had been paused should now cease.
- 5.10 Despite this, and as a result of the significant work undertaken to date, both the Council and Audit Wales remained committed to delivering some value from the Review. With this in mind it was agreed that the self-evaluation work, although incomplete and unchallenged, should be used as a basis of describing some potential enhancements to the Council's arrangements.
- 5.11 Appendix 2 attached to this report sets out a number of matters for the Council to consider that have been identified by Audit Wales. The underlying reasons for those matters being raised are contained within the main body of the Audit Wales report.
- 5.12 Having received the report and continued to work with Audit Wales over recent

months, the Council has developed a proposed action plan for addressing the matters raised which is attached at Appendix 3.

### **5.13 Conclusion**

While it was not possible to complete the review work initiated in November 2019, the need to ensure the Council's governance arrangements are strengthened in order to support the Council TeamCaerphilly Transformation programme is perhaps even more valid now. The pace, size and scale of change that the Council has witnessed in the last twelve months alone has demonstrated the need for robust but flexible governance arrangements and what can be achieved, safely, when the right balance is struck.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 None.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 This report is for information only at this stage,

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 The report has been received by Corporate Management Team and will also be received by the Council's Governance and Audit Committee following its presentation to Cabinet.

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Steve Harris, Head of Corporate Finance/s.151 officer  
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Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Audit Wales Project Brief 'Review of Good Governance: Caerphilly CBC'
- Appendix 2 Audit Wales Findings 'Review of Good Governance: Caerphilly CBC'
- Appendix 3 Caerphilly Action Plan: Review of Good Governance: Caerphilly CBC'

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WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
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# Project Brief – Delivering good governance: **Caerphilly County Borough Council**

Audit year: 2019-20

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This document was developed by Gareth Jones and Huw Lloyd Jones.

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## Project brief

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# Project brief

## Background

- 1 The Council's revised Code of Corporate Governance<sup>1</sup> is consistent with the CIPFA and SOLACE guidance and the Council sets out that its arrangements comprise:

'the framework of the policies, systems, procedures and structures that together determine and control the way in which a Council manages its business, determines its strategies and objectives and sets about delivering its services to meet those objectives.'
- 2 The Council's revised Code sets out that:

'the fundamental function of good governance is to ensure that it achieves its (the Council's) intended outcomes while acting in the public interest at all times. In doing so the Council has identified the following seven principles:

Acting in the public interest requires:

  1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
  2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

In addition, achieving good governance in the Council requires effective arrangements for:

  3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
  4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
  5. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
  6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
  7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.
- 3 Given the Council's ambition to transform at pace, as outlined in its Team Caerphilly, Stronger Together strategy, the Council recognises that strong corporate governance is crucial in order that good decisions are taken consistently across the Council. The Council has therefore decided to undertake a self-assessment of its governance arrangements in order to ensure that its procedures and policies are fit for purpose to support the transformation agenda. The Council has engaged an experienced consultant to challenge its self-assessment from an independent, external perspective.

<sup>1</sup> Caerphilly County Borough Council (2019) Code of Corporate Governance

- 4 We set out in our Annual Audit Letter in October 2019 that we would undertake a review of the Council's governance. In conducting our review, we will consider the content and robustness of the Council's self-assessment and the views of the external expert, as well as drawing, where relevant, on previous audit findings.

## Focus and Purpose of the review

- 5 Our review will comprise two phases. The focus and purpose of Phase 1 of our review is to consider whether the Council is improving its governance arrangements so that they support its transformation agenda. Subject to the outcome of Phase 1, our work during Phase 2 will monitor, support and challenge the Council in implementing some of the agreed improvement priorities identified through its self-assessment.

## Legislative basis for the review

- 6 This project is being undertaken to help discharge the Auditor General's duties under section 18 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act). It may also inform a study for improving value for money under section 41 of the 2004 Act, and/or an examination undertaken by the Auditor General under section 15 of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

## Main review question

### Exhibit 1: main review question

The table below sets out the main question we will seek to answer in undertaking this review.

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the Council improving its governance arrangements so that they support its transformation agenda?</li></ul> |
|--|

## Method

- 7 We will take a phased approach to undertaking this review. During the **first phase** we will review the Council's self-assessment, take evidence from the external expert commissioned by the Council, and consider that alongside key Council documents and our existing audit knowledge. We will then hold an initial workshop with the Corporate Governance Panel to explore the key findings of the self-assessment alongside our previous audit findings. In doing so, we will scope a **second phase** that identifies key actions and any other areas that may require

further monitoring, support or challenge. This iterative approach is designed to support the Council in real time and to seek assurance that the focus and pace of improvement is appropriate.

## Output

- 8 We will consider appropriate outputs from the review as we work through its phases and discuss these with the Council.

## Timetable

### Exhibit 2: timetable

The table below sets out a proposed timetable for the review.

Proposed timetable	
Project brief issued	January 2020
Phase 1 - Review of Council's self-assessment, Document review, & observations & initial workshop	February - March 2020
Phase 2 – identify actions and areas for more assessment, support or challenge	March 2020
Further support and challenge, conclusion and other output(s)	April 2020 – June 2020

## Fieldwork schedule

### Observations

Exhibit 3: the table below sets out the Committees and working groups that we may observe during this review

Observations
During the review, we may observe ongoing public meetings of the Cabinet, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committees and Full Council. We may also attend other internal meetings such as meetings of the Corporate Governance Panel, the Team Caerphilly Programme Board and the Caerphilly Programme Co-ordination Group.

### Fieldwork

Exhibit 4: the table below sets out potential interviewees for this review

The outcome of our phase 1 work is likely to determine the scope of our interview schedule. However, the table below indicates the most likely interviewees.

Interviewees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All members of Corporate Management Team</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members of the Corporate Governance Panel</li><li>• Section 151 Officer, Head of Corporate Finance &amp; Interim Head of Business Improvement Services</li><li>• Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer</li><li>• Head of Customer and Digital Services</li><li>• Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Governance</li><li>• Internal Audit Manager</li><li>• Chair of Audit Committee</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workshop with Corporate Governance Panel (see paragraph 7)</li></ul>
Focus groups with <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cabinet</li><li>• Staff who are authors of reports to Scrutiny and/ or Cabinet</li><li>• Chairs of Scrutiny</li><li>• Elected members</li></ul>

## Document request

The Council's self-assessment will largely determine which, if any, other documents we need. In conducting its self-assessment, it would be helpful if the Council referenced as appropriate any other documents supporting its judgements. We will discuss any further document requests following receipt of the Council's self-assessment.

Exhibit 5: the table below sets our initial document request

Document title
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Corporate Governance self-assessment and supporting evidence</li></ul>

## Wales Audit Office contacts

### Exhibit 6: Wales Audit Office contacts

The table below sets out the Wales Audit Office team that will be working on this review at the Council.

Name	Contact details
Engagement Director	Huw Rees Mobile: 07799 581886 <a href="mailto:Huw.Rees@audit.wales">Huw.Rees@audit.wales</a>
Audit Manager	Huw Lloyd Jones Mobile 07813 822017 <a href="mailto:Huw.LloydJones@audit.wales">Huw.LloydJones@audit.wales</a>
Audit Lead	Gareth Jones Mobile: 07970 737433 <a href="mailto:Gareth.Jones@audit.wales">Gareth.Jones@audit.wales</a>
Senior Auditor	Allison Rees Mobile: 07580 823820 <a href="mailto:Allison.rees@audit.wales">Allison.rees@audit.wales</a>
Other auditors	To be confirmed

# Appendix 1

## Fair Processing Notice

This privacy notice tells you about the potential collection of your personal information by the Auditor General for Wales (and by the Wales Audit Office on his behalf).

### Who we are and what we do

The Auditor General's work includes examining how public bodies manage and spend public money.

### The relevant laws

We process your personal data (including special category personal data) in accordance with data protection legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

This project is being undertaken to help discharge the Auditor General's examination duties under section 18 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. It may also inform work undertaken under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 and/ or a study for improving value for money under section 41 of the 2004 Act.

Under section 52 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, the Auditor General has a statutory right to information, assistance and explanation from any persons whom he thinks holds information that relates to a local government body. This right to information applies to information held by local government officers and we are obliged to set out that it is a criminal offence, punishable by a fine, for a person to fail to provide information required under section 52.

### What we will do with your information

We are collecting information to undertake an examination to help inform the Auditor General's conclusions in relation to his statutory duties, as outlined above.

We are asking for information and opinions about the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements. Some of this information may be information about identifiable individuals, which would make it personal information, even though the purpose of our work is not in itself to collect information about identifiable individuals.

The Auditor General and the review team from the Wales Audit Office will have access to the information you provide. We may share some information with senior staff of the Council and our report may include some information as outlined below.

The information that we share and publish will be anonymous and will be about the themes and trends that we identify. We will keep the information collected, including your personal data, for a period of 7 years (and 25 years in the case of any published report).

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Under data protection law you have the right to request a copy of the current personal information held about you and a right to raise an objection to data processing that causes unwarranted and substantial damage and distress.

If you wish to discuss any objections or concerns, or obtain a copy of the current personal information held about you, please write to: The Information Officer, Wales Audit Office, 24 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ or email [infoofficer@audit.wales](mailto:infoofficer@audit.wales)

### The Information Commissioner's Office

If you are require further information in relation to your rights under data protection law or are dissatisfied with how we are handling your personal data you may contact the Information Commissioner at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or email [casework@ico.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:casework@ico.gsi.gov.uk) or telephone 01625 545745.



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## Delivering Good Governance – Caerphilly County Borough Council

Audit year: 2019-20

Date issued: April 2021

Document reference: 2272A2021-22

This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions.

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We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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# Summary report

## Summary

### What we reviewed and why

- 1 Caerphilly County Borough Council (the Council) has developed a Transformation Strategy (the Strategy), '#Team Caerphilly – Better Together'. Cabinet approved the Strategy in June 2019. The Council describes the Strategy as, 'a new 'whole authority' operating model to ensure a resilient Caerphilly County Borough for the future'. In summarising its Strategy, the Council acknowledges that its delivery will require, 'a resetting of our culture and effective, purposeful political and officer leadership to drive the ambitious change agenda forward'.
- 2 The Strategy reflects the Council's ambition to transform at pace, and the Council has recognised that strong corporate governance is crucial in order that good decisions are taken consistently across the Council. The Council therefore decided to undertake a self-assessment of its governance arrangements in order to ensure that its procedures and policies are fit for purpose to support the transformation agenda. The Council structured its self-assessment using the seven principles set out in the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework' (the Framework)<sup>1</sup>.
- 3 We explained in our Annual Audit Letter in October 2019 that we would undertake a review of the Council's governance. In conducting our review, we said that we would consider the content and robustness of the Council's self-assessment, as well as drawing, where relevant, on previous audit findings. We had planned that our review would comprise two phases. The focus and purpose of Phase 1 would consider the extent to which the Council was improving its governance arrangements so that they support its transformation agenda. Subject to the outcome of Phase 1, we planned to use Phase 2 to monitor, support and challenge the Council in implementing some of the agreed improvement priorities identified through its self-assessment.
- 4 In March 2020, the need to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic disrupted the Council's self-assessment of its governance arrangements. We acknowledge that the Council's summary self-assessment process was never concluded; the supporting evidence was incomplete and there was no internal moderation of the initial judgements that officers had reached. The pandemic also disrupted the Council's original plans to commission an external challenge to its self-assessment.
- 5 Since March 2020, the Council has played a key role in mitigating the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. Many staff were initially redeployed to different roles and the Council's decision-making processes changed temporarily between May and

<sup>1</sup> Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework', Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy and SOLACE, 2016

June 2020. The Council has now begun to implement its Strategic Recovery Framework, which includes key parts of the Transformation Strategy. In particular, the Council plans to undertake a programme of corporate reviews, including a review of Decision-Making. The Decision-Making Review is due to be completed before the Council's Annual General meeting in May 2021.

- 6 This report represents the output of Phase 1 of our review. It reflects our views of the Council's incomplete self-assessment of its governance arrangements. Because the pandemic interrupted the Council's self-assessment work, we have not sought to evaluate the Council against each of the seven principles of the Framework. Instead, we have considered the Council's arrangements in the round, and also drawing on the context of other recent events and discussions. Our intention during Phase 2 of the project is to support and challenge the Council in the implementation of its Transformation Strategy and Strategic Recovery Framework, especially, its programme of corporate reviews.
- 7 We undertook the review during 2020 and early 2021.

## What we found

- 8 We had initially planned that our review should answer the question: '**Is the Council improving its governance arrangements so that they support its transformation agenda**'? However, because of the circumstances outlined in **paragraphs 5 and 6**, we have instead focused more narrowly on the robustness of the Council's arrangements for the delivery of its Transformation Strategy.
- 9 Overall, we found that aspects of the Council's arrangements are not yet sufficiently well developed to support the increasing scale of the Council's wide-ranging transformation programme. We reached this conclusion because:
  - the Council's incomplete assessment of its own arrangements focused too heavily on the existence of documents and processes rather than on their impact and effectiveness; and
  - the Council's ambition has increased, and aspects of its arrangements are not yet sufficiently well developed to ensure a rigorous and consistent focus on corporate priorities.

## Key matters for consideration

- 10 We set out in **Exhibit 1** below the most important matters that we believe the Council should consider in taking forward the ambitious agenda that it has set itself. During 2021-22, we will focus on these matters in our ongoing audit work, supporting and challenging the Council in the implementation of its Transformation Strategy and its Strategic Recovery Framework and, especially, its programme of corporate reviews.

## Exhibit 1: key matters for consideration

### Key matters for consideration

---

#### Consolidate the Council's priorities

P1 In order to create and maintain a collective shared focus, the Council should consolidate its priorities into a single, manageable, sequenced and agreed plan. The plan should span both the short and medium term and should specify, for each objective, the desired outcomes.

---

#### Assign responsibilities

P2 In order to broaden ownership of its priorities and increase accountability for their delivery, the Council should assign responsibility for each priority at both officer and political levels. Those responsible should include within their duties the need to engage thoroughly with relevant stakeholders.

---

#### Monitor progress and evaluate effectiveness

P3 In order to improve the quality of evaluation and subsequent decision-making, the Council should:

- make greater use of outcome data in its planning; and
- extend the use of both quantitative and qualitative analysis to evaluate the impact of the changes arising from the delivery of its priorities.

---

#### Plan the Cabinet's work

P4 In order to help ensure that both executive and non-executive members maintain a focus on its agreed priorities, the Council should:

- schedule key decisions well in advance in the Cabinet forward work programme; and
- consider how best to engage its scrutiny function in challenging constructively the Council's progress in delivering its objectives and in setting its direction of travel.

## Key matters for consideration

---

### Ensure that decision-making is seen to be transparent

P5 In order to increase the transparency of decision-making, papers that support decision-making should:

- include adequate discussion of alternative options; and
- make explicit the views of the Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer with regard to the recommended course of action.

# Detailed report

## Aspects of the Council's arrangements are not yet sufficiently well developed to support the increasing scale of the Council's wide-ranging transformation programme

### **The Council's incomplete assessment of its own arrangements focused too heavily on the existence of documents and processes rather than on their impact and effectiveness**

- 11 During late 2019 and early 2020, the Council began to produce a self-assessment of its governance based on the seven principles set out in the International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (the Framework). The purpose of the self-assessment was to provide assurance to the Council that its corporate governance was sufficiently effective and strong to support its ambitious #Team Caerphilly Transformation Strategy (the Strategy).
- 12 The Framework sets out that acting in the public interest demands:
- behaving with integrity; and
  - open and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- The Framework also requires that a well-governed public body should also have effective arrangements for:
- defining sustainable outcomes;
  - determining how to achieve the intended outcomes;
  - developing capacity;
  - managing risks and performance, including robust internal control and strong financial management; and
  - effective accountability for good governance.
- 13 The need to divert resources to address the Coronavirus pandemic meant that there was no opportunity for senior management to review or moderate the initial findings of the draft self-assessment as had been intended. Furthermore, it was not possible to arrange that an external expert should challenge the evaluations, as had been planned. The Council was therefore unable to complete the self-assessment process as rigorously as intended. At the point at which the Council had to stop the self-assessment process, we found that its part-completed self-assessment focused too heavily on the existence of arrangements and policies and gave too little weight to evaluating the impact and demonstrating the effectiveness of those arrangements.
- 14 The Council's key strategies and policies are generally in place, but they are of inconsistent quality. We found, for example, that the Communication and

Engagement strategy 2019-2022 provides a clear strategic approach to the challenge of ensuring that communities are involved in helping to shape future service design and delivery. However, we found that some other important policies and strategies are less helpful in guiding their potential users, with some in need of a refresh to ensure that they are up to date and aligned to the Council's wider policy framework and priorities. The Whistleblowing Policy, for example, has not been reviewed for some time and is less clear in places than it might be.

- 15 We also judged that, in the absence of the planned moderation process, the Council had been too generous in its evaluation of the quality of some of its policies and arrangements in the self-assessment. For example, the Council judged that its record of decision-making is excellent. However, we found that, in some cases, reports to members that underpin decision-making refer only to the preferred option. The Council's policy is to include options appraisals 'in a proportionate manner and where relevant to the matter under consideration and this may be based on the financial or strategic importance of a decision.' However, it is unclear how the Council determines 'proportionality'. Under these circumstances, there is a risk that decision-making may be perceived as lacking in transparency, and that those who disagree with a decision may feel that alternative options have been considered inadequately.
- 16 Officers drafting reports to elected members use a template that is helpful in developing a consistency of style and in ensuring that authors address key matters such as the financial, equalities and personnel implications and the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Where necessary, reports to members refer clearly to the legislation that is relevant to the decision and consult with the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer. However, the template does not require authors to make explicit the views of these statutory officers in relation to the proposed decisions and recommendations. Where these officers' views are omitted, there is a risk that decisions are perceived not to have been fully informed.
- 17 Outside the self-assessment, there are other examples where the Council is not explicit enough in acknowledging aspects of its arrangements that need to be improved. For example, the Council formally adopted a new Performance Management Framework in February 2020, and this framework includes a clear risk management policy. These are positive developments; the Council anticipates that the adoption of the framework will provide a basis for Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and senior leaders to monitor progress, manage performance and drive improvement. However, the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2019-20 describes the new arrangements in some detail, even though they were adopted only shortly before the end of the year to which the AGS relates. The AGS does not make clear enough how the new arrangements improve on what was in place beforehand.
- 18 The Council's Scrutiny Leadership Group has overseen changes to the structure of scrutiny since we published our report on 'Overview and Scrutiny - Fit for the

Future<sup>2</sup>?' in 2018. However, a members' survey and subsequent report to the Scrutiny Leadership Group in September 2020 focused too heavily on matters such as attendance rates, the duration of meetings and the number of agenda items rather than on the issues that contribute more directly to the quality and impact of the scrutiny function.

## **The Council's ambition has increased, and aspects of its arrangements are not yet sufficiently well developed to ensure a rigorous and consistent focus on corporate priorities**

### **The Council's growing ambition across a number of plans is not articulated clearly enough**

- 19 In June 2019, Cabinet agreed the Council's Transformation Strategy, '#Team Caerphilly – Better Together' (the Strategy). The Strategy is an ambitious and wide-ranging programme of change consisting of a suite of large but discrete projects, including a commercialisation and investment strategy, place-shaping and workforce-related developments. The successful delivery of the Strategy will result in significant changes in how the Council delivers its services as well as a significant programme of capital investment. The consistent implementation of these changes, some of which are cultural in nature, across a large and complex organisation will take time and will require relentless focus and considerable change management expertise.
- 20 A month after approving the Strategy, in July 2019, the Council approved its updated Corporate Plan covering the period 2018-23. As required, the Corporate Plan includes the Council's Well-being Objectives. It also includes a section about the Transformation Strategy, describing it as a, 'strategic programme of "whole authority" work', and outlining its scope in a diagram (see **Exhibit 2**).
- 21 The Corporate Plan sets out a list of seven elements of 'key work from the transformation programme'. The list reflects and is consistent with the Council's six Well-being Objectives; it includes, for example, three significant capital investment programmes to improve the Council's housing stock, its schools and its provision for vulnerable children and their families. However, only one of the seven elements listed (Delivering the Council's emerging Digital Strategy) relates clearly and directly to the nine components of the Transformation Strategy set out in **Exhibit 2**.
- 22 The Council's website includes a section dedicated to its 'Corporate strategies, plans and policies'. The Transformation Strategy and the associated action plan are easily accessible to the public from this section of the website. However, the action plan to deliver the Transformation Strategy makes no reference to the 'seven elements of key work' set out in the Corporate Plan.

<sup>2</sup> 'Overview and Scrutiny - Fit for the Future?': Wales Audit Office (2018)

23 Overall, therefore, the connections between the Corporate Plan and the Transformation Strategy are not sufficiently explicit. Furthermore, the Corporate Plan is located in a different section of the Council’s website from the Transformation Strategy. As a result, there is a risk that stakeholders will not understand the Council’s objectives clearly enough and be able to distinguish clearly between:

- **what** it intends to achieve in the short and medium term (as set out in its Well-being Objectives); and
- the changes in **how** it intends to deliver its Wellbeing Objectives (as set out in the Transformation Strategy).

**Exhibit 2: the transformation strategy, #Team Caerphilly – Better Together**



**Source:** Caerphilly CBC, Corporate Plan 2018-23, Revised and Updated for 2019-20

24 In November 2019, Cabinet and the Policy and Resources Scrutiny committee received the first six-monthly update on progress in the implementation of the Transformation Strategy action plan. The update report showed that there had been some early progress, but it also showed slippage against the initial anticipated timescales. A further update was scheduled for May 2020.

25 Between March and September 2020, the pandemic disrupted the usual pattern of the Council’s decision-making processes. The Cabinet resumed its decision-making responsibilities in June 2020, meeting remotely, but scrutiny committees did not reconvene until the end of September. The planned update on the implementation of the Transformation Strategy did not therefore occur as had been intended. However, in November 2020, the Policy and Resources Scrutiny

Committee agreed to the re-introduction of six-monthly updates on the delivery of the Strategy, and the introduction in early 2021 of six-monthly member workshops to coincide with the publication of future progress reports.

- 26 In July 2020, the Cabinet agreed a series of ten corporate reviews to strengthen the new approach embodied by the Transformation Strategy and to consolidate and develop further the considerable changes to service delivery that have emerged from the Council’s response to the pandemic. These changes include the increased digitalisation of service delivery, increased flexible working arrangements for staff and changes to the way in which residents engage face-to-face with Council services.
- 27 **Exhibit 3** shows the programme of ten corporate reviews.

**Exhibit 3: Ten corporate reviews, agreed in July 2020**

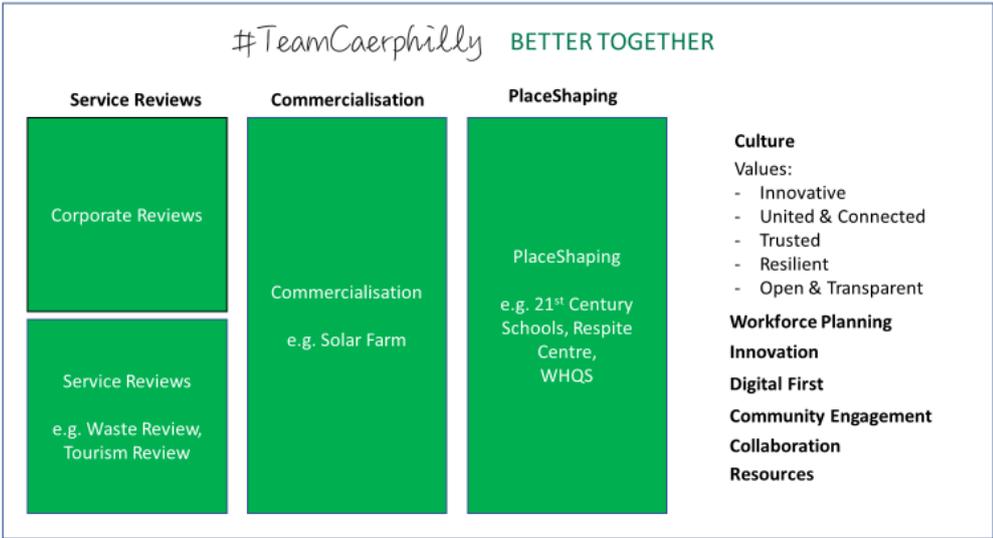
<b>1</b>	Walk in Services	<b>OneCouncil</b>	<b>Learning Organisation</b>
<b>2</b>	Remote Contact		
<b>3</b>	Front Line Delivery		
<b>4</b>	Support Services		
<b>5</b>	Flexible Working	<b>Workforce</b>	
<b>6</b>	Workforce Development		
<b>7</b>	Sustainable Financial Planning		
<b>8</b>	Information, Insight & Intelligence	<b>Resources</b>	
<b>9</b>	Volunteering		
<b>10</b>	Decision-Making		

**Source:** Caerphilly CBC ‘[Strengthening Team Caerphilly](#)’: Cabinet, 22 July 2020

- 28 The Council included the ten corporate reviews as part of its Transformation Strategy. **Exhibit 4** shows a clearer visualisation of the Strategy than shown on the Council’s website and in **Exhibit 2**. This model includes the place-shaping pillar

that was referenced in the Corporate Plan, and the 'commercialisation' pillar which is central to the Council's plans.

**Exhibit 4: The structure of the transformation strategy, June 2020**



Source: **Source:** Caerphilly CBC, 'Strengthening Team Caerphilly', Cabinet, 22 July 2020

- 29 **Exhibits 2 and 4** show that the Council's Transformation Strategy has evolved conceptually. However, the relative priority of the Transformation Strategy and those elements of the Corporate Plan that lie outside the Transformation Strategy are not yet clear enough to the public or among non-executive councillors. Partly because of the Coronavirus pandemic, councillors have devoted relatively little time to considering and taking ownership of the Transformation Strategy and playing their part in its communication within the Council and across the County Borough. The Council plans to introduce a series of member briefings but, at this early stage in the implementation of the Transformation Strategy, we question whether six-monthly progress updates are sufficient to generate and maintain the necessary understanding, support and momentum among elected members.
- 30 The Council has recently trialled a 'Joint Scrutiny Meeting' to discuss the place-shaping element of the Transformation Strategy. The accompanying paper did not locate the place-shaping strategy sufficiently clearly within the broader context of the Transformation Strategy. Nevertheless, this approach may help to engage the Council's scrutiny function with key corporate priorities.
- 31 In September 2020, in order to support the Council in recovering from the Coronavirus pandemic, the Cabinet agreed a Strategic Recovery Framework (SRF)<sup>3</sup>. The Council considers the SRF as an addendum to the delivery of the

<sup>3</sup> Caerphilly County Borough Council (2020) Strategic Recovery Framework

Corporate Plan, rather than as a separate document. The SRF is intended as an overarching plan, providing an initial focus and a means of building momentum as the Council and the Caerphilly community seek to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 32 The SRF sets out two recovery aims; it seeks to:
- 'reassure our communities and steady our economy to enable us to create together, a positive and vibrant future'; and
  - 'reshape the organisation to proactively respond to social, economic and environmental needs'.
- 33 Supporting the two recovery aims are five strategic principles. These are:
- Service Reintroduction;
  - Future Wave Preparation;
  - Supporting Businesses;
  - Caerphilly Cares; and
  - Service Transformation.
- 34 The Service Transformation principle aligns with part of the #TeamCaerphilly Transformation Strategy. Within the SRF, the Council's intention is, 'to reframe Council services based upon COVID learning and embed change through the principles and transformation plans set out in #TeamCaerphilly'. The ten corporate reviews shown in **Exhibit 3** will support the principle of Service Transformation.
- 35 However, the adoption of the SRF means that the Council's priorities are set out across three documents: the Corporate Plan; the Strategic Recovery Framework addendum to the Corporate Plan; and the Transformation Strategy. Further objectives are included within the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. We recognise that the SRF is new and has yet to be aligned fully with the Council's other strategic planning and its commitments with its regional partners. Aspects of each strategic document are consistent with one or more of the others, but overall, the Council's priorities are too numerous and are not set out concisely and clearly enough to generate the necessary public support and commitment within the Council.
- 36 The Council's priorities are, nevertheless, ambitious and potentially far-reaching, and the Council has begun to implement its Strategic Recovery Framework, which includes key parts of the Transformation Strategy. In particular, the Council has begun to undertake the programme of corporate reviews set out in **Exhibit 3**.

### **It is too early to judge whether the arrangements in place to deliver the Transformation Strategy are effective**

- 37 The Council has learned from previous change programmes. In order to deliver its plans, it has recognised the need for additional capacity and has appointed suitably experienced managers to lead the Transformation Strategy. In autumn 2019, the Council recruited three transformation managers on fixed-term contracts to bring relevant expertise to the Council's programme. The three managers' portfolios

focus on innovation, workforce planning and commercialisation. The Council's budget for 2021-22 includes further funding to appoint a permanent Head of Transformation, a Head of Prosperity and four project managers as well as making permanent the fixed-term posts appointed in 2019.

- 38 The Council has also introduced programme management arrangements to underpin the governance of the work. Since it reconvened in November 2020, the Programme Board's remit now includes the scoping and delivery of the ten corporate reviews. Robust programme management has the potential to ensure that the Council manages the complexity inherent in its plans and, in particular, the connections between the ten corporate reviews that form part of the Transformation Strategy. The Programme Board overseeing the delivery of #TeamCaerphilly comprises the Corporate Management Team and the Cabinet member for Performance and Customer Service, supported by the Programme Co-ordination Group that manages the delivery of the programme.
- 39 However, it is not yet clear that the Board is having the desired impact across the whole of the Transformation Strategy. At its November and December meetings, for example, the Programme Board did not consider a number of standing agenda items relating to key strands of the #TeamCaerphilly Transformation Strategy.
- 40 The Council is implementing a consistent methodology for scoping and delivering the ten corporate reviews. The reviews cut across traditional service boundaries and are not mutually exclusive; for example, the reviews of Flexible Working and Workforce Development are clearly linked. The methodology requires that any such links with other reviews are noted but it is too early to conclude that the programme management arrangements will ensure that dependencies and links between the reviews are managed effectively. The methodology also requires that risks are identified and recorded, but the Programme Board's terms of reference do not refer explicitly to the management of risks.
- 41 The Council recognises the scale and complexity of implementing change effectively across such a large organisation, and among both elected members and staff. Appropriately, the methodology adopted to undertake the ten corporate reviews requires leaders to engage with service users, staff and others. In November 2020 the Council launched its residents' survey, the 'Caerphilly Conversation'<sup>4</sup> which included asking residents for their views 'on public services and suggestions for where things could be improved in the future. The survey responses will be used in developing the ten corporate reviews. Nevertheless, there remains scope for the Council to extend its engagement as it develops the corporate reviews, in line with the involvement principle of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- 42 The last of the ten corporate reviews to get underway will consider the Council's Decision-Making. The Decision-Making Review is due for completion before the Council's Annual General meeting in May 2021. Our audit work has identified two aspects that the Council may wish to consider in reviewing its decision-making:

<sup>4</sup> [Caerphilly County Borough Council \(2020\) – Join the Caerphilly Conversation](#)

- the Cabinet lacks a well-planned, medium-term decision-making programme. At its meeting on 9 December 2020, for example, the Cabinet agreed only one item requiring a decision for its next meeting the following week. The 16 December meeting agreed no future items requiring a decision.
- the lack of a medium-term forward programme for Cabinet reflects the fact that, over time, the Council's priorities have increased in number and are no longer set out coherently in a single document. Furthermore, the lack of a forward programme means that the Council's scrutiny committees are unable to plan their work in advance and may therefore spend too much time discussing matters that are not Council priorities.





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Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.

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# CORPORATE GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Page 109

June 2021

Draft Action Plan

Audit Wales Matters for Consideration from Corporate Governance Output

P1 Consolidate the Council's priorities

P2 Assign responsibilities - in order to broaden ownership

P3 Monitor progress and evaluate effectiveness

P4 Plan the Cabinet's work

P5 Ensure that decision-making is seen to be transparent

## Matter for Consideration 1

Consolidate the Council's priorities - the Council should consolidate its priorities into a single, manageable, sequenced and agreed plan. The plan should span both the short and medium term and should specify, for each objective, the desired outcomes

**Position:** The Council is clear that the Well-being Objectives are outward facing long term objectives based on the most recent assessment of well-being and are set in consultation with the public. The next assessment will inform the 2023-2028 Corporate Plan. Team Caerphilly is an operating model intended to transform the Council to deliver differently, particularly in light of COVID. The adopted Strategic Recovery Framework is based on engagement with staff and communities and charts a response to the issues facing our communities.. The PSB well-being plan is a clear partnership community plan, to which we contribute. Plans are developed at different times for different purposes and it may not be helpful to the public to merge all of those into one specific plan as this could be 'unwieldy', attempting to serve many purposes and running on different planning timeframes. However, providing further clarity wherever possible is always useful, so the Council will:

	<b>Key Actions / Tasks</b>	<b>Owner &amp; Completion Date</b>	<b>Additional resource required?</b>	<b>Success Criteria</b>	<b>Progress update</b> Insert date of update
Page 110 1	Re-design and review the current schematic in the Corporate Plan to show how the plans fit together and what their purpose is.	RR	No	The new schematic will be clear and accessible as to how plans fit together. Options will be shared for feedback	
2	Use the 2021 review to make the schematic available to the public on the internet as well as in the revised Corporate Plan	RR	No	The reviewed Corporate Plan will clearly show how the plans fit together	There is already a schematic diagram, but it will be updated to include other plans.
3	Continue to promote to all staff the links between the plans and their relevance to the delivery of the Corporate Plan well-being objectives i.e. the what and the how.	KP			Team Caerphilly and Business Improvement staff are on the same groups to make the linkages.
4	Ensure that any future plans and strategies are drafted cognisant of the main Corporate Plan.	SR	No	There is a read across all plans and strategies	



## Matter for Consideration 2

Assign responsibilities – To broaden ownership of its priorities and increase accountability for deliver, the Council should assign responsibility for each priority at both officer and political levels. Those responsible should include within their duties the need to engage thoroughly with relevant stakeholders

Position: Cabinet collectively own the Well-being Objectives with individual Cabinet Members contributing to multiple Objectives. This is mirrored across Corporate Management Team and is considered beneficial as Cabinet Members and Directors must work together to progress the Council's ambition. The responsibility for the progression of specific aspects of each Well-being Objective is defined at a CMT/Cabinet workshop annually and are then published within Directorate Performance Assessments. Beyond this, each Cabinet member has a portfolio with stated responsibilities, attends relevant scrutiny meetings, receives transformation updates and are part of decision making in all areas. However, we will;

	<b>Key Actions / Tasks</b>	<b>Owner &amp; Completion Date</b>	<b>Additional resource required?</b>	<b>Success Criteria</b>	<b>Progress update</b> Insert date of update
Page 112 1	Publicise on the Council's website the Cabinet Member/ Members and Directors who contribute to each Well-Being Objective.	RR	No	Corporate Plan clearly shows ownership to clarify for the public.	
2	Following the annual Cabinet/CMT workshop add the agreed strategic objectives to the relevant DPAs and include details of the Cabinet Member	RR	No	The Public can clearly identify Cabinet Member priorities for a given year within the Corporate Plan Framework	
3					
4					

### Matter for Consideration 3

Monitor progress – evaluate effectiveness, to improve the quality of evaluation and subsequent decision-making.

Position: The Council uses data both qualitative and quantitatively to evaluate its performance as evidenced through the regular Corporate and Directorate Performance Assessments, however, to embed this further we will,

	<b>Key Actions / Tasks</b>	<b>Owner &amp; Completion Date</b>	<b>Additional resource required?</b>	<b>Success Criteria</b>	<b>Progress update</b> Insert date of update
1	Complete the Information, Insight and Intelligence Corporate Review and monitor progress through the Transformation board.	LL	Staff time	Review concludes and the Council enhances its approach to using data.	
2	Identify measurable outcomes for each Corporate Review so that workstreams can be evaluated for impact	KP & RR	Staff time	Each Review has clear outcomes so success can be evaluated	
3	The Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA) and Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) will continue to be embedded and evaluated at scrutiny and Cabinet as our 'self-assessment'	RR	Staff time	Each DPA and CPA will go to scrutiny and Cabinet twice a year and we will evaluate each time for effectiveness.	Each DPA has been to Scrutiny and CPA to Cabinet in 2020. There is an existing action plan to further implement the development of DPA & CPA as part of the Local Government and Elections Act.
4	Implement the performance aspects of the Local Government and Elections Act.	RR	Staff time	An effective learning system that can answer the question 'what difference has this made?'	There is an existing action plan and project team in place to deliver this.

**Matter for Consideration 4**

P4 Plan the Cabinet's work to help ensure that both executive and non-executive members maintain a focus on agreed priorities, and improve the quality of the scrutiny function

Position: This work has started as promoted by the CEO and headed up by the Director of Corporate Services and Education. A longer-term forward work programme is now in place, but work is underway to strengthen these processes and arrangements further:

	<b>Key Actions / Tasks</b>	<b>Owner &amp; Completion Date</b>	<b>Additional resource required?</b>	<b>Success Criteria</b>	<b>Progress update</b> Insert date of update
1	Continue to strengthen the connectivity and relationships between Cabinet Members and the Scrutiny function	RE	No		
2	Forward work programme management processes to be further developed for Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees to provide a longer term view and more efficient decision-making	RE	No	Cabinet and Scrutiny FWPs represent the level of decision-making required.	
3					
4					

**Matter for Consideration 5**

Ensure that decision-making is seen to be transparent - to increase the transparency of decision-making, papers that support decision-making.

Position: Currently all reports are sent to the relevant consultees which include the Head of Finance/Section 151, Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer and Head of People Services. The statutory officers review all reports and only comment if necessary. No comment is an indication of acceptance. The Council will, however, review the process and consider how best to make any nil feedback, which signifies approval, in a more 'explicit' manner.

	<b>Key Actions / Tasks</b>	<b>Owner &amp; Completion Date</b>	<b>Additional resource required?</b>	<b>Success Criteria</b>	<b>Progress update</b> Insert date of update
Page 115	<b>1</b> Work with the Statutory Officers to determine the most effective way to make explicit their views on key decision reports.	SR & KP	No	The views of Statutory Officers on key decisions are clear to the public.	
	<b>2</b> Update author guidance in the consultation section of reporting to highlight S151 and Monitoring Officer approval/comment.	KP & SH	No		
	<b>3</b> Ensure that officer recommendations, and where relevant, options are included at Policy Development Meetings so the evidence base which has determined the recommendations/options is available for discussion prior to Scrutiny or Cabinet decision.	RE	No		
<b>4</b>					

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## CABINET - 23RD JUNE 2021

**SUBJECT: GWENT COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PLAN**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR, ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT**

--

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

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the health protection and control measures that are in place across Gwent to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19 in our communities.
- 1.2 To seek Cabinet's endorsement of the updated Gwent Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 In July 2020 Welsh Government wrote to Local Authorities and Health Boards to ask that they prepare joint Local Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plans. The Guidance issued at that time has been revised and Welsh Government wrote to Local Authorities and Health Boards on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021 requesting that Plans be updated. The updated Gwent Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan is attached at Appendix A for Cabinet's consideration.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet consider and endorse the updated Gwent Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To seek Cabinet's endorsement of the updated Gwent Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 In July 2020 Welsh Government wrote to Local Authorities and Health Boards to ask that they prepare joint Local Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plans. The Gwent Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan was developed in August 2020, before the

second wave of coronavirus cases. As Welsh Government has eased restrictions and moved Wales out of lockdown there is a need to have revised plans to respond to cases, cluster, outbreaks and incident management over the coming six to nine months. Revised Guidance has been developed by Public Health Wales and Welsh Government wrote to Local Authorities and Health Boards on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021 requesting that Plans be updated and submitted by 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

5.2 The aim of the Gwent Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan is to prevent, detect and manage outbreaks of Covid-19 and to implement effective health protection and control measures across Gwent to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19 in our communities. The Gwent Plan has been developed in partnership by the organisations comprising the Gwent Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and is based on the following principles:

- the primary responsibility is to make the public safe
- build on public health expertise and use a systems approach
- be open with data and insight so everyone can protect themselves and others
- build consensus between decision-makers to secure trust, confidence and consent
- follow well-established communicable disease control and emergency management principles
- consider equality, economic, social and health-related impacts of decisions.

5.3 The Gwent Plan links to a number of other plans that are in place in the region and is cross-referenced with national plans including (but not limited to) the following:

- Coronavirus Control Plan: revised alert levels in Wales
- Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales
- Testing Strategy for Wales
- COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy
- Operational Guidance for Schools
- Conceptual Framework for Management of VAMC in Wales
- End-to-end Process Manual for responding to cases and clusters of VAMC

5.4 In accordance with the Guidance the updated Gwent Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan describes organisational structures that are in place across the region, together with roles and responsibilities. It sets out the role of surveillance, and also sampling and testing arrangements. The Plan addresses preventative measures including communication and engagement with our communities to promote adherence to aspects such as social distancing or self isolation when necessary. This also includes our approach to enforcement, the vaccination programme, and arriving travellers. A number of higher risk settings are also identified within the plan and the relevant controls for these settings are described.

5.5 The Gwent Plan sets out the response to clusters, incidents, and outbreaks, and how decision-making is escalated locally, regionally, nationally, when these are increasing and there are wider impacts warranting a wider response. Leadership for the wider local or regional measures rests with Welsh Ministers, working in concert with local elected Leaders to coordinate local and regional responses.

## 5.6 **Conclusion**

The updated Gwent Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan is attached at Appendix

A for Cabinet's consideration.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 Modelling is regularly reviewed in line with actual data and easing of restrictions. Recent modelling by UK Government's Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M) and Swansea University suggest a third wave is highly likely, although the timing, scale and shape of this wave is not certain.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has not been carried out as this Report seeks Cabinet's endorsement of a submitted Plan.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 The consultees listed below have been consulted on this report and their views have been incorporated accordingly.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984.  
The Local Government Act 2000  
Welsh Ministers have passed a number of Regulations dealing with coronavirus restrictions and requirements and the latest details can be found here:  
[Welsh Government webpage - Coronavirus legislation: related legislation](#)

## **12. URGENCY**

- 12.1 The decision will be subject to the "call-in" procedure.

Author: Rob Hartshorn – Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services

Consultees: Mark S. Williams – Corporate Director, Economy and Environment  
Cllr Nigel George – Cabinet Member for Waste, Public Protection and Street Scene  
Councillor D.T Davies, Chair of Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor A. Hussey, Vice Chair of Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny

Committee

Rob Tranter - Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

Lynne Donovan – Head of People Services

Anwen Cullinane - Senior Policy Officer (Equalities, Welsh Language, and Consultation)

Steve Harris - Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer

Ceri Edwards, Environmental Health Manager

Jacqui Morgan, Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager

Ruth Betty, Contact Tracing Service Manager

Steve Pugh, Head of Communications

Background Papers:

Coronavirus Control Plan: revised alert levels in Wales

Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales

Testing Strategy for Wales

COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy

Operational Guidance for Schools

Appendices:

Appendix A: Gwent Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan

**G**went

**L**ocal

**R**esilience

**F**orum

# COVID-19 Prevention and Response Plan

Version Number: 3 – Live Working document

Issue Date: 28<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Review Date: June 2021



## Foreword

It is accepted this plan contains both prevent strategies and response elements to Covid. Monitoring data, local intelligence and modelling insights will be used to track the current rates of transmission and incidence. If the following triggers are met escalation to a Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) should be considered:

- Recommendations from the Gwent SBAR;
  - Recommendation from a local or Gwent IMT;
  - An increase in transmission, incidence and prevalence of the virus;
- NHS Capacity**
- Covid confirmed hospital occupancy increasing;
  - Covid confirmed critical care bed occupancy increasing;
  - Covid confirmed mortality rates increasing;
  - Emergence of Variants of Concern (VOC) affecting transmission rates;
  - Concerns around vaccination rates and data on the efficacy and effectiveness of the vaccines.

The SCG can be reconvened by any partner agency based on the triggers listed above, in line with the Wales Outbreak Control Plan and/or via the existing Partnership Groups (previously TCG's).

## Security Classification

These Procedures have been classified as **OFFICIAL SENSITIVE**; all information within this document should be treated as confidential and only accessed by those whose duties require it.

## Distribution

This framework is distributed to members of Gwent Local Resilience Forum and Gwent COVID-19 Strategic Coordinating Group, and members of all Tactical Groups

## Document Control

This plan will be subject to frequent review, and a Tactical planning group is in place.

Date	Author	Amendment	Approval	Version
6 <sup>th</sup> August 2020	Ian Morris	Initial working plan		1 draft
12 <sup>th</sup> August 2020	Ian Morris	Plan revised following stakeholder review		1 Final
7 <sup>th</sup> September 2020	Deanne Griffiths	Plan revised to incorporate Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales	SCG – Sept 2020	1.1 working document issued to SCG
12 <sup>th</sup> October 2020	Deanne Griffiths	Plan revised to incorporate Swansea model data, threshold measures and draft interventions, hyper-local restrictions	SCG – Oct 2020	2 Live working document
26 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	Deanne Griffiths	Whole document review		3 Live working document

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# 1 OVERVIEW

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## 1.1 Introduction

This COVID-19 Prevention and Response Plan has been developed in partnership and approved by the organisations comprising the Gwent Local Resilience Forum (LRF).

The Gwent Prevention and Response Plan is based on the following principles:

- the primary responsibility is to make the public safe
- build on public health expertise and use a systems approach
- be open with data and insight so everyone can protect themselves and others
- build consensus between decision-makers to secure trust, confidence and consent
- follow well-established communicable disease control and emergency management principles
- consider equality, economic, social and health-related impacts of decisions.

It is recognised that the Gwent Prevention and Response Plan will be updated as national guidance is updated and as such this should be regarded as an iterative, working document.

## 1.2 Aim

The aim of the Gwent Prevention and Response Plan is to prevent, detect and manage outbreaks of COVID-19 and to implement effective health protection and control measures across Gwent to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in our communities. The approach covers:

- Identification of prevention methods of the spread of COVID-19.
- Ensuring COVID-19 is contained by working with the public and local communities to understand the importance of national guidance (such as self-isolation, social distancing) to encourage compliance, improve access to testing, and participation in contact tracing processes.
- Enabling early identification and pro-active management of local incidents, clusters or outbreaks.
- Responding to incidents, clusters or outbreaks if and when confirmed positive COVID-19 cases are identified, in a timely manner.
- Monitoring activity and data surveillance.

This plan aligns with:

- The Communicable Disease outbreak plan for Wales
- Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales
- ABUHB Testing Strategy
- Organisational response plans

This plan covers the **response** to Covid-19 during both response phase – with SCG active, and recovery / transition phase – with SCG not active, it doesn't cover the recovery from Covid-19.

## 2 PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

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Modelling is regularly reviewed in line with actual data and easing of restrictions.

Recent modelling by SPI-M and Swansea University suggest a third wave is highly likely, although the timing, scale and shape of this wave is not certain. Overall modelled scenarios suggest it is likely cases, hospitalisations and deaths will increase in the second half of 2021 as restrictions are eased, although at a reduced level to previous waves. The main issues that could cause a significant resurgence of covid harms are widespread transmission of a vaccine escape and/or immune escape variant; a breakdown in social distancing behaviour; or to a lesser extent, a change in vaccine supply or significant drop in vaccine uptake.

Updated modelling from SPI-M (which considers components specific to the English roadmap, but which are also relevant to Wales), continues to suggest that a third wave is highly likely. There is uncertainty about the timing, scale and shape of this wave because there will be people in vulnerable groups who do not have direct protection (either because they have not been vaccinated, or because vaccination does not fully prevent infection or illness), and there is not sufficient indirect protection from wider population immunity (medium-high confidence). [technical-advisory-group-advice-for-22-april-restriction-review\\_0.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

Technical Advisory Cell papers, including planning assumptions (within the advice for restriction reviews) , can be found on [Technical Advisory Cell | GOV.WALES](#)

Planning assumption detail can be found on ResilienceDirect <https://collaborate.resilience.gov.uk/RDService/home/214393/GLRF-COVID-19-Planning>

## 3 STRUCTURES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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### 3.1 Gwent Test, Trace, Protect Service (GTTPS) –Contact Tracing

#### Aim

To protect our residents through breaking the chains of transmission of Covid-19 in our communities and places of work.

#### Objectives of the GTTPS

1. To **deliver** the national Test, Trace and Protect strategy
2. To **quickly** identify positive/symptomatic cases
3. To **sensitively** work with our residents to self-isolate and share details of their contacts
4. To **effectively** reach at risk contacts and advise appropriately
5. To **supportively** keep in touch with our at risk residents to **protect** the wider population
6. To **openly** communicate with our residents, to **reassure**, to **explain** their part in this endeavour and **instil confidence** in the Covid response strategy to seek their continued **support** and **commitment**

#### Roles and responsibilities

##### **G10 – Regional Board for GTTPS**

The G10 is a partnership of the 10 organisations that all sit on the local PSBs and work together to promote well-being and improvement in Gwent. The G10 has agreed to act as the Regional Board for GTTPS to lead and guide the service established in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The responsibilities are:

- Ensuring the GTTPS is delivering against its stated purpose, aims and objectives
- Ensuring the GTTPS is delivered against its stated principles
- Representing the interests of their respective organisations
- Strategic oversight of the establishment of the GTTPS
- Agreeing the financial framework of the GTTPS noting that commitment of additional resources (financial, human etc.) will be referred to organisations (where arrangements have not been made to delegate these functions to the partnership by the constituent bodies)
- Ensuring effective governance, leadership and management of the GTTPS
- Ensuring the effective planning and delivery of the GTTPS
- Scrutinising the performance of the GTTPS
- Ensuring effective decommissioning of and exit strategy for the GTTPS
- Ensuring the GTTPS is operating in alignment with and complimenting wider Covid-19 strategies
- Promoting the interests of the GTTPS to national partners, particularly Welsh Government and Public Health Wales.

The **Leadership Group** will be responsible for:

- Supporting the Board achieve its aims and purpose
- Supporting the Lead Organisation with recruitment and oversight of the Regional Coordinator
- Ensure their organisations participate fully in the partnership
- Monitor and scrutinise the implementation of the Action Plan
- Monitor and ensure all risks are mitigated and addressed

The **Lead Organisation** (Torfaen County Borough Council) will be responsible for

- the hosting and management of the **Coordination Unit, GTTPS** (previously known as the Programme Management Office, Torfaen CBC)
- Ensuring appropriate governance and effectiveness of the Coordination Unit, GTTPS and the wider service is reported to the Regional Board

The **Coordination Unit, GTTPS** will be responsible for:

- Administration and support of the Leadership Group, and G10 Update reports
- Liaison with partner organisations which have specific lead roles within the GTTPS
- Quality assurance and performance reporting and review in relation to Contact Tracing
- Working with the NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS) to develop improvements in CRM to aid Contact Tracing efficiency and effectiveness
- Communications strategy and implementation including stakeholder and engagement management, including specific responsibility for leading on BAME and Socially Vulnerable Groups engagement
- Risk monitoring and management (lead responsibility for strategic risks and operational risk for local tracing teams – liaising with the Regional Cell Delivery Programme on their specific risks)
- Training strategy, keeping training materials relevant and in line with latest SOPs, Scripts and national guidance/changes to CRM. Coordinating or delivering training for the Contact Tracing teams
- Strategic HR oversight, monitoring and supporting implementation of organisation specific workforce plans to deliver Contact Tracing and 'Protect' activity
- Liaising with NWIS and local teams to manage CRM functionality changes and update local teams
- Coordinating the response to complaints from members of the public, Members of the Senedd, Members of Parliament etc. and ensuring that lessons learnt influence the development of training materials and the Quality Assurance work by the Coordination Unit.
- Representing the Service nationally
- Generally support and coordinate the local authority Contact Tracing teams.

#### **ABUHB Partnership Role**

- Provision of Clinical Leads to support the local contact tracing teams
- Public Health Wales interface
- Ensuring effectiveness of testing service and its relationship to contact tracing
- Lead finance function for the service
- Represent the Service nationally

### **Regional Cell**

- Working pro-actively with settings (such as care homes, schools, large employers) identified as presenting specific risks and respond to small clusters, incidents and outbreaks within the region
- Use surveillance outputs to identify hotspots/clusters with high transmission rates (including sub-population groups) and mobilise regional response teams accordingly, as well as contribute data to the national dashboard
- The Regional Cell comprises of the **Regional Oversight Group** and **Regional Response Teams**. This group also has support from the Regional Operational Planning Group (a task and finish sub-group to the Regional Oversight Group) and the Data Cell. Additionally, the Regional Cell has a dedicated programme office, now called the **Regional Cell Delivery Programme**, formerly called the Regional Cell PMO.

### **Regional Oversight Group**

- To utilise the resource within the Regional Cell Delivery Programme (hosted by ABUHB) and GTTPS Coordination Unit (hosted by TCBC) to support the strategic decision making within the ROG
- To provide a strategic overview in the identification of mutual support where significant multiple issues arise in one or more LA areas
- To receive an overview of the issues in relation to operational delivery and management within complex or closed settings, such as education settings that are pertinent to ROG
- Interfacing and Representing Gwent region on Welsh Government TTP Task Group and interfacing with this group and PHW on specific issues and actions raised at ROG
- To capture and manage specific and relevant ROG risks for the effective management of the incident with Gwent
- To escalate issues and appropriate decisions to the ABUHB Testing lead, GTTPS Leadership Group and Gwent IMT and The GIMT Testing Sub-Group (where appropriate).
- To discuss and provide oversight on the wider impact of testing and testing approaches with respect to their impact on contact tracing
- To consider the Performance/efficiency of the GTTPS in the context of delivering its objectives and to agree any changes to the tracing process that would help minimise the spread of the virus through contacting cases and contacts as quickly as possible
- To provide quality oversight of the GTTPS supported by GTTPS – CU to implement a quality assurance framework
- To utilise the Regional Operational Planning Group to develop specific task and finish projects/activities to support the development of operational protocols and improvements to approaches

### **Regional Response Teams**

- Act as the Local Outbreak Control Teams (as per The Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales) on a LA specific basis

The **Regional Cell Delivery Programme** will be responsible for:

- Providing Programme Management planning and deliverables in support of the key Regional cell groups including the **Staff Well-Being Cell, Public Health Incident Practitioners, Data Cell and Care Homes Cell**
- Providing Programme support to ABUHB Finance Team around TTP Resourcing, with a specific focus on workforce planning
- Working with NWIS and the CU, GTTPS on specific projects to develop improvements in CRM and the tracing process/tools
- Continued support on and provision of the Workforce Modelling Tool developed by ABCi.
- Responding to TTP queries directed towards the Health Board from Stakeholders including, MPs and Members of the Senedd
- Liaising with external regulators such as Audit Wales in respect of TTP
- Providing TTP briefings and updates to the ABUHB Exec Board, Board and other internal Health Board stakeholders
- Support for the Gwent IMT and five Local IMT's
- Development of a Risk Register and Risk management for the Regional Cell and liaising with the CU, GTTPS on broader risks
- Support for Regional Oversight Group (ROG) including administrative support and provision of the Chair
- Development and monitoring of the Post Fire-Break Action Plan now called the GTTPS – Covid-19 Management Action Plan, with weekly updates shared with GIMT

### **Staff Well-Being Cell**

#### Key responsibilities

- Pre-tracing and tracing of all Health Board staff (including GP's and non-commercial Pharmacy staff) that are symptomatic and then a full trace if confirmed positive.
- Developing and delivering a Staff Well-Being training programme for HB Tracers and Advisors
- Escalation and liaison on specific issues in relation to potential Infection Control issues within the HB.
- Provision of Well-being Support /sign posting following a positive test for staff.
- The management and tracing of all Gwent citizens arriving from those countries with specific restrictions in relation to countries impacted by the Variant and Mutations of Concern, including arranging testing at citizen's homes to support their quarantine.

### **Public Health Incident Practitioners**

#### Key responsibilities

- Analysing positive cases for LA teams.
- Reporting on case data and providing rolling 7-day headline data around contacts, clusters etc.
- Collaborating and developing a standardised case analysis summary case review report for Gwent.
- Supporting the Care Homes Cell – providing the locality Care Home MDT meetings with status updates and working with EHOs and Complex Care Team to support cluster management actions.

- Attending all 5 local authority IMTs in support of ABUHB Consultants in Public Health and providing information and analysis to support decision-making as required.
- Attending the weekly national Contact Tracing Capacity Meeting.

### **Data Cell**

#### **Key responsibilities**

- Supporting the response to COVID-19 by responding to ad hoc data requests from Gwent TTP staff including Public Health Consultants, Incident Practitioners, Environmental Health Officers.
  - Developed and maintaining a 'line list' of inpatient cases to record accurate information.
  - Support ongoing prison surveillance through the maintenance of a prison 'line list' and disseminating information to PHW
  - Assisting with resolving queries regarding test results, including queries from external organisations, for example, Gwent Police
  - Developing bespoke CRM queries and CRM dashboards to collate and present data on cases/contacts and TTP activity.
- Supporting the implementation of a process for monitoring returnees from countries that are on the Watch list in relation to Variants and Mutations of Concern. This includes maintaining a line list and providing PHW with summary data.
- Delivering CRM advanced find training to the Local Authority Data Analysts to support with improving data capture and bespoke reporting for IMT meetings.
- Directly accessing the CRM TTP data via the data warehouse to enable the development of bespoke surveillance report through Power BI.
- Working collaboratively with CU, GTPPS to share knowledge, guidance, CRM expertise and bespoke analysis to assist with the TTP quality audit framework.
- Developing and delivering bespoke data analysis training
- Production of regular reports for the Regional Oversight Group, Strategic Coordinating Group and data for regular briefings including for Members of Parliament/ Members of the Senedd, ABUHB staff weekly newsletter etc.

### **Care Homes Cell (note that not all staff in the Care home cell are funded through the Welsh Governments TTP funding).**

#### **Key responsibilities**

- Chairing MDT Care homes meetings to review all incidents in care homes and other enclosed settings.
- Providing public health advice to additional multi-agency meetings in response to significant outbreaks in a number of Gwent Homes
- Arranging whole home testing for a number of older adult care homes and other enclosed settings
- Notifying EHOs, Complex Care and Commissioning Teams of new cases in care homes with ongoing outbreaks
- Arranging testing for newly symptomatic residents and staff.
- Arranging re-testing and risk assessments of asymptomatic care home workers in previously unaffected homes

- Contributing to specific risk assessments for individual resident’s learning disabilities settings to maintain meaningful contact with their families.
- Arranging testing for new admissions and transfers between care homes.
- Producing a daily status report and twice weekly SITREP for relevant agencies
- Providing situational updates to the LRF Community Care Sub-Group and Health Board Closed Settings Group
- Attending WG meetings regarding care home testing

**Every Partner will**

- Employ their local contact tracing teams and maintain staffing levels as agreed by the modelling and predictions
- Provide robust and timely data
- Sign up to and work in the partnership in line with the principles identified above

Participate fully at the Regional Oversight Group

The governance of the GTTPS and the wider groups involved is set out in the following framework

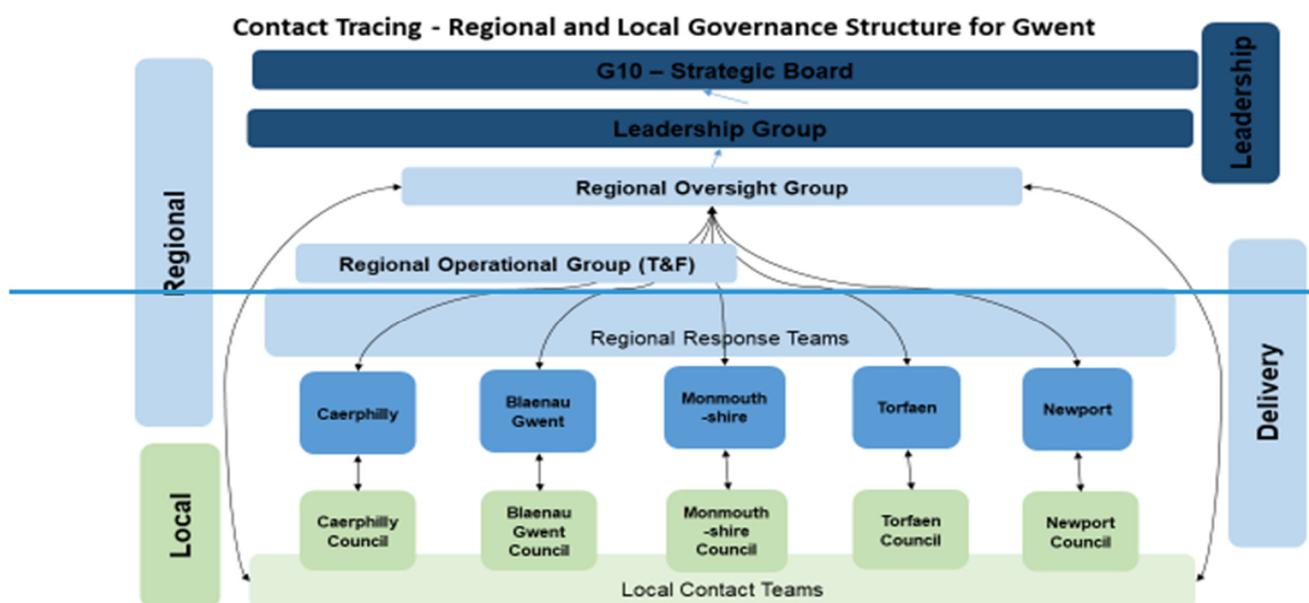


Figure 1 – Gwent Contact Tracing Structure

## 3.2 Incident Management Team (IMT)

There are clear roles and responsibilities for managing incidents, clusters and outbreaks, as defined in the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales, 2020<sup>1</sup>:

- Public Health Wales (PHW): statutory duty to provide service, support and expertise for the surveillance, prevention and control of communicable disease.
- Local Authorities: responsible for the control of notifiable infections, health and safety matters and incidents.
- Health Board: statutory responsibility for the health of local population and providing care and treatment.

Refer to [Appendix B](#) for further detail on roles and responsibilities.

It is recognised that civil contingencies arrangements are currently activated and the Gwent IMT will report to the Gwent Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) whilst it is in operation and Welsh Government in accordance with Part 7 of the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales 2020. The Plan states that where a SCG is convened to manage the strategic response to a communicable diseases outbreak, the IMT will represent a Tactical Coordination Group (Silver) sitting under the overall direction of the Strategic Coordination Group. The IMT has primacy over tactical matters to control the outbreak. The IMT will be represented at the SCG, typically by the IMT Chair or Vice Chair.

Gwent IMT is supported by local IMTs Chairs of the 5 local IMTs meeting in the Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen local authority areas provide feedback to Gwent IMT in support of regional decision-making and to inform the SBAR (Situation Background Assessment Recommendation report) that Gwent IMT submits to Welsh Government. The SBAR reports the various data sets requested by Welsh Government together with a summary of matters of regional significance. Gwent IMT is responsible for making decisions of a regional nature, and for considering deployment of regional resources. Gwent IMT may make recommendations to local IMTs, but decisions regarding the introduction of local restrictions, for example, are matters for local IMTs. An agreed terms of reference is in place for Gwent IMT.

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government. (2020a). *Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

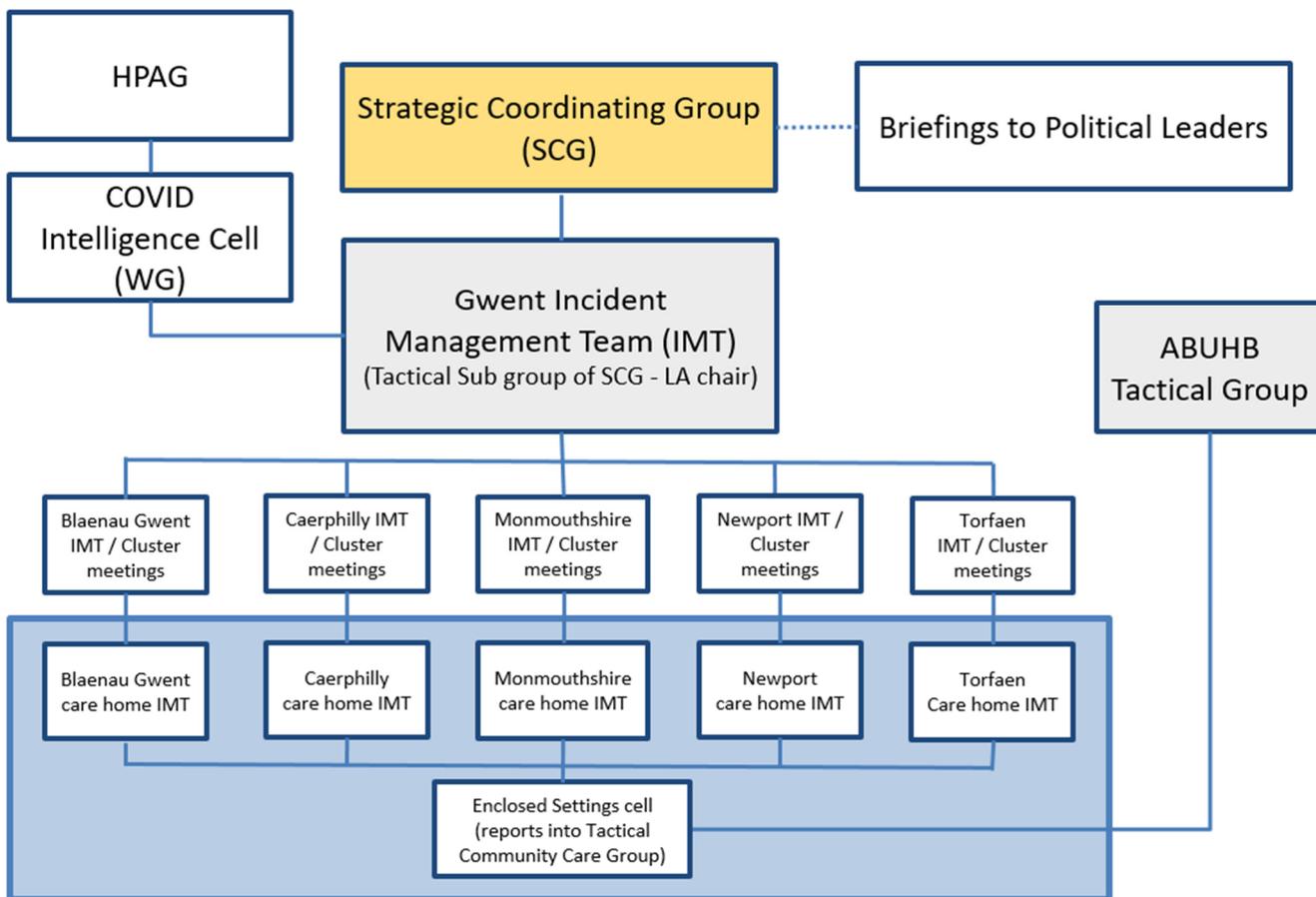


Figure 2 – Gwent IMT response structure when SCG is activated

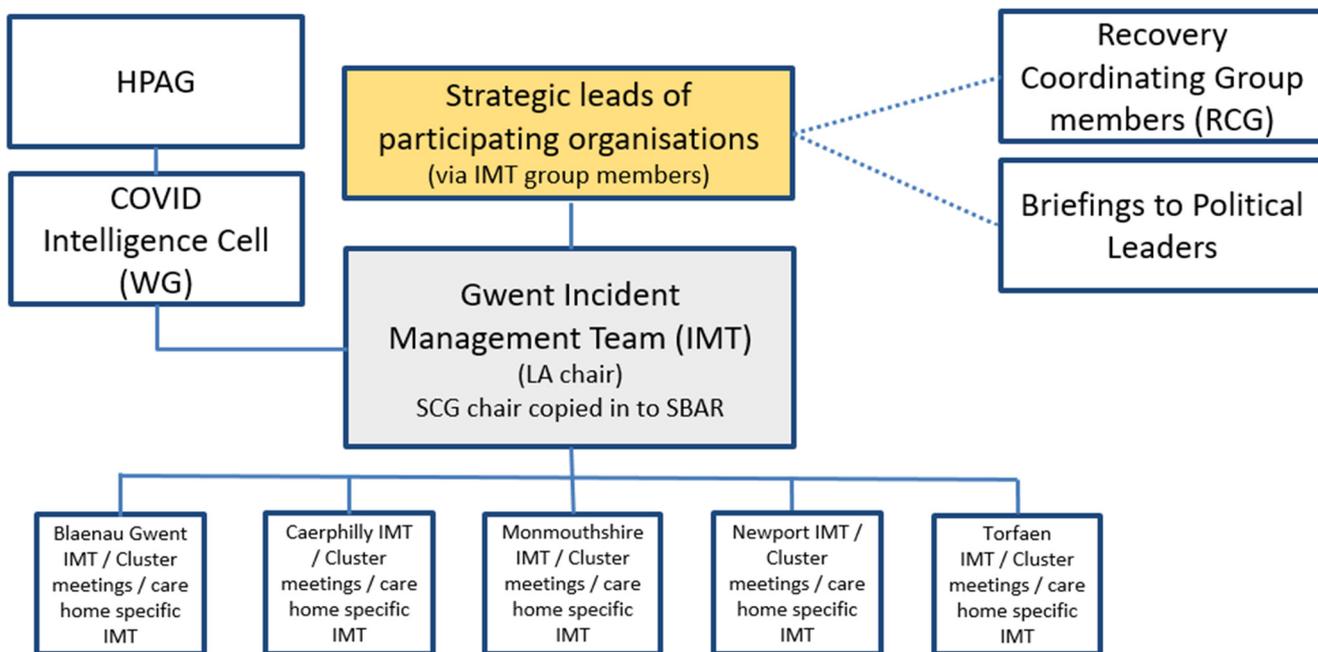


Figure 3 – Gwent IMT response structure when SCG is not in place

### 3.3 Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) / Tactical Sub Groups

The Gwent Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) is the local decision-making body for the delivery of the multi-agency COVID-19 response in the region. The overarching response aims are:

- Support the NHS and wider health and social care system
- Minimise the spread of the virus
- Protect our most vulnerable residents
- Maintain essential local public services.

The strategic objectives of the SCG are:

- To maximise the capacity to care for hospital inpatients and provide essential health services
- To minimise the risks in our care homes
- To support the Test, Trace and Protect service
- To support the mass vaccination service
- To ensure effective communications and engagement with all communities at all times - so that people are clear on what we are doing, what is required of them and why
- To enforce the Welsh Government Regulations in a fair and proportionate way
- To minimise the risks to other vulnerable people such as those with underlying medical conditions and BAME communities
- To identify and reduce community tensions
- To maximise the capacity to deal compassionately with excess deaths, in line with the new reasonable worst case scenario
- To minimise the risks to the health and safety of the public and our employees in the direction we provide

The SCG is supported by a number of sub groups to work collaboratively on elements of response (and also recovery) across the public sector, where possible recognising the pandemic response will continue for some time yet. Figure 4 shows the response structures for the Gwent COVID-19 response.

Strategic Leads of participating organisations are responsible for ensuring that the local and regional leadership, including Leaders and Executive Members, continue to be briefed and engaged in the ongoing situation.

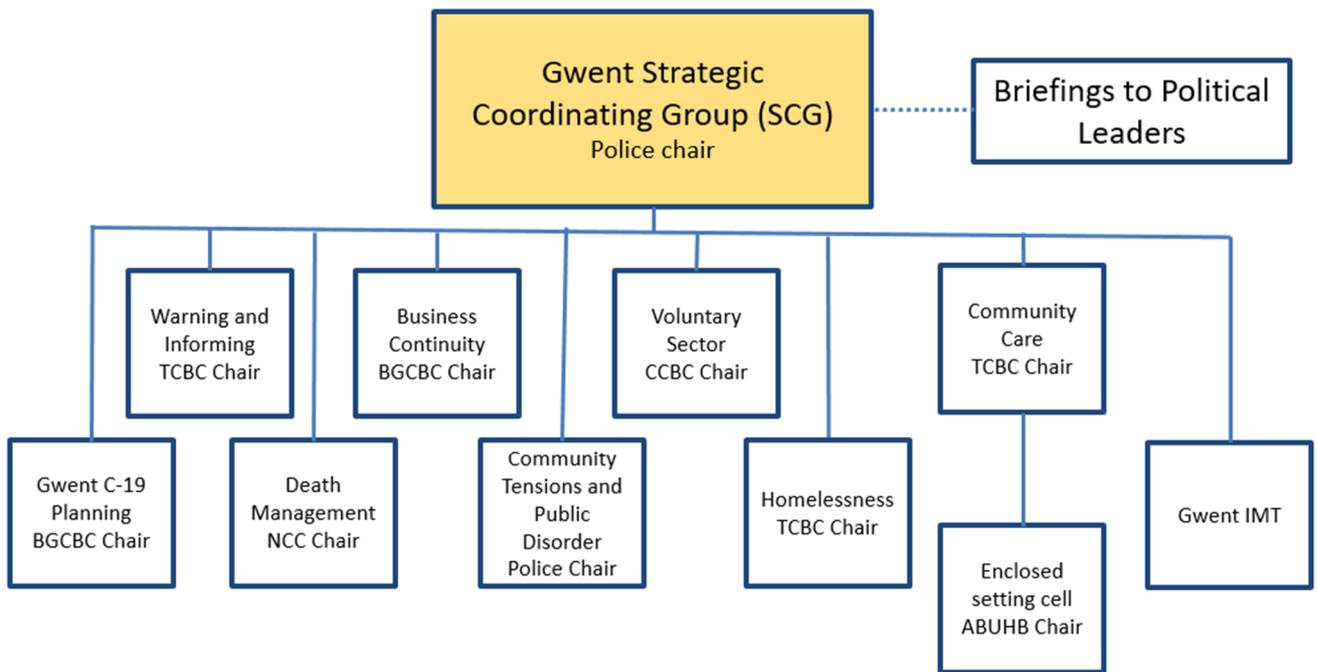


Figure 4 – SCG Response Structure (tactical groups activated as necessary)

If the SCG is not activated, any responding partnership groups that are still required to be active have the option of engaging the SCG chair if required by the prevailing circumstances and will report to the strategic members of participating organisations. The SCG can be quickly activated as necessary through normal channels.

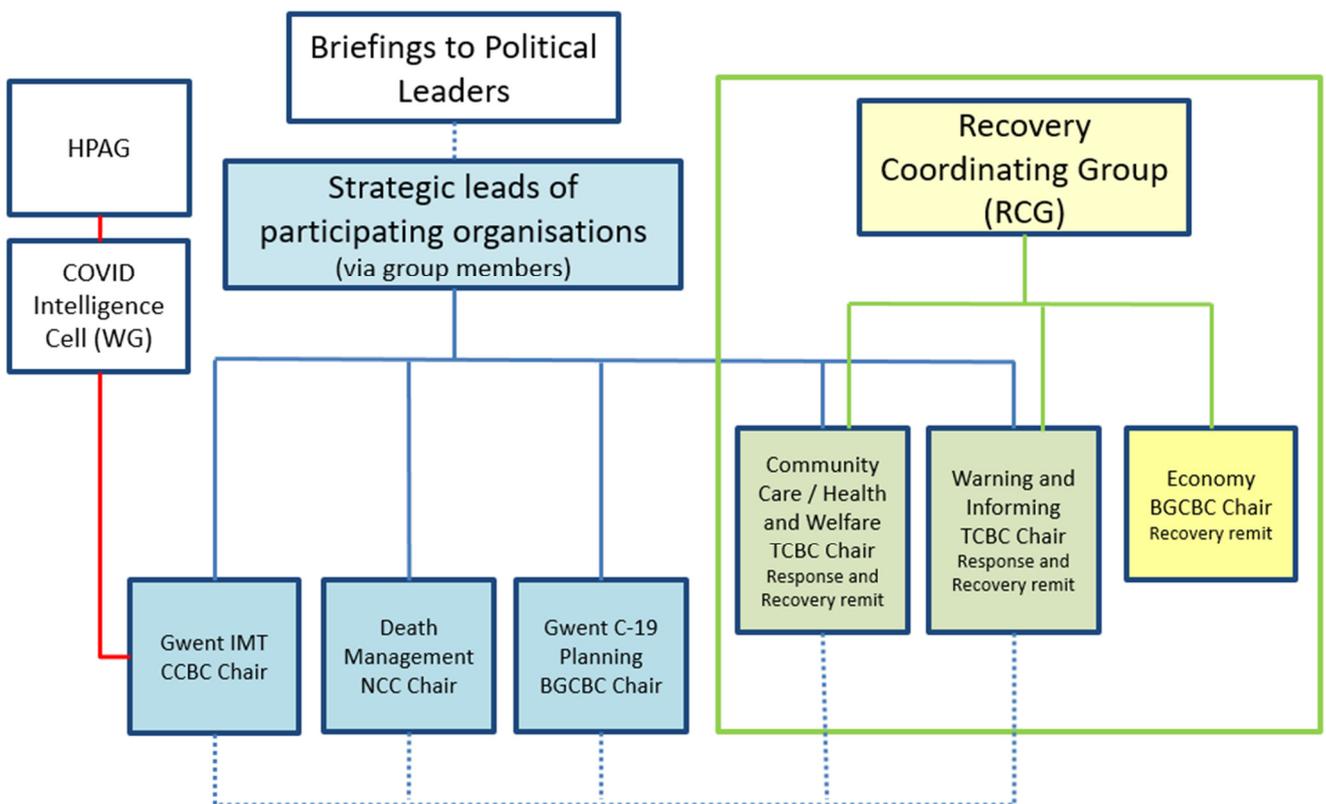


Figure 5 – Response Structure when SCG is not sitting

### 3.4 Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG)

The Gwent RCG has been established to return the Community and economy, as far as safely practicable, to a new state of normality whilst living with the Covid 19 pandemic so that the people, businesses and communities of Gwent feel safe and confident to live their lives and do business as they were before the pandemic. The work of the group will be linked to existing partnership activity to reduce duplication.

The Strategic Objectives of the RCG are:

- A co-ordinated, effective and proportionate return to *a new* normality based on WG guidance, intelligence and impact assessments collaboratively agreed with partners.
- Citizens feel safe to return too and play an active role in their local community
- A concise and balanced strategy identifying 'Recovery' indicators/milestones and Action Plan is agreed and delivered.
- Disrupted public services are restored to an agreed and acceptable safe standard of delivery.
- Effective channels for political involvement and liaison with Town Councils / Elected Members / WG are established and maintained.
- Consistent, timely and accurate information to the public, employees and to stakeholders in the Gwent RCG area is provided.
- Clear, purposeful civic leadership is provided which citizens have confidence in.
- To work in parallel with the SCG when still in situ and be cognisant of on going response activities.
- Identifying and taking action to implement lessons identified from a Recovery perspective and capture for future planning.
- To signpost regeneration, revitalisation and transformation issues to existing recognised channels.
- To agree a clear exit strategy to formally 'stand down' the RCG, transfer outstanding resilience/civil contingencies themes back to Gwent LRF structures and to continue to revise the aim / objectives as recovery progresses.

The RCG is supported by a number of sub groups to work collaboratively on elements of recovery across the public sector. Figure 5 shows the Recovery Structures established.

In relation to Covid-19 the risk to communities continues and there may be a need to escalate and reinstate the SCG to mitigate impacts and manage the wider consequences of non-pharmaceutical interventions in line with the over arching response aim as outlined above.

### 3.5 Pan Wales structure

Revised structures to be confirmed

### 3.6 Roles and responsibilities

The groups described above can be summarised as:

**Incident Management Team (IMT).** The IMT is a multi-agency team which shares responsibility for managing incidents between all the organisations who are members.

**Regional (Gwent) IMT** - The role of Gwent IMT is to provide oversight of the Local IMTs that protect public health by identifying the main determinants of transmission of Covid-19 across the region and implementing necessary measures to prevent further spread or recurrence of the infection.

**Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG).** Take overall responsibility for the multi-agency management of an emergency and establish the policy and strategic framework within which other actors will operate.

**Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG).** An RCG will oversee the process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency.

**Regional Teams.** Multi-disciplinary regional response teams will receive referrals or escalation of cases from local teams that require additional support. Each Health Board area will include a Strategic Regional TTP Oversight Group to provide situational awareness on emerging clusters and outbreaks to key partners and the COVID-19 Intelligence Cell.

**COVID-19 Intelligence Cell.** Oversight and understanding of the transmission dynamics of COVID-19 across Wales, through relevant, timely situational awareness, assessment and insight into cases of COVID-19 in Wales. It will provide a forum for the Regional Teams to discuss local intelligence acquired through contact tracing and highlight any risks identified. Reports directly to the Chief Medical Officer and to the Health Protection Advisory Group.

**Health Protection Advisory Group (HPAG).** National all-Wales level oversight of the Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales. Will advise and update Ministers on the incidence of COVID-19, the scale and nature of any local outbreaks and their management arrangements, including any arrangements to recognise cross-border risks. This could include recommendations for national intervention at a local, regional or an all-Wales basis.

**Wales Civil Contingencies Committee (WCCC).** The Wales Civil Contingencies Committee provides a multi-agency response that directly informs recommendations made by the HPAG to Ministers. This ensures that the wider implications of responses are fully considered and various actors are involved in the process and able to respond effectively. This might include, for example, the police who will enforce any restrictions, or local authorities who may need to respond to new demands or restrictions on essential public services.

## 4 SURVEILLANCE, INFORMATION & DATA

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The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines public health surveillance as “on-going, systematic collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of data regarding a health-related event for use in public health action to reduce morbidity and mortality and to improve health”<sup>2</sup>. This definition is very pertinent to coronavirus as the situation evolves, for example, due to the impact of new variants and mass vaccination. Therefore, systematic surveillance of COVID-19 is a central part of this plan.

### 4.1 Objectives

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has stated that the objectives of Covid-19 surveillance<sup>3</sup> are to:

- Monitor the intensity, geographic spread and severity of COVID-19 in the population in order to estimate the burden of disease, assess the direction of recent time trends, and inform appropriate mitigation measures.
- Monitor viral changes to inform drug and vaccine development, and to identify markers of severe infection.
- Monitor changes in which risk groups are most affected in order to better target prevention efforts.
- Monitor the epidemic’s impact on the healthcare system to predict the trajectory of the epidemic curve and inform resource allocation and mobilisation of surge capacity as well as external emergency support.
- Monitor the impact of any mitigation measures to inform authorities so they can adjust the choice of measures, as well as their timing and intensity
- Detect and contain nosocomial outbreaks to protect healthcare workers and patients.
- Detect and contain outbreaks in long-term care facilities and other closed communities to protect those most at risk of severe disease and poor outcomes.

### 4.2 Our priorities

In our response planning, we have been working towards the following key surveillance priorities:

Priority 1. Monitor intensity and severity of COVID-19 in Gwent in order to inform appropriate mitigation measures

Priority 2. Monitor behaviour of COVID-19 in at-risk groups to better target prevention efforts

Priority 3. Early detection of clusters in the community and in hospital and enclosed settings to prevent spread

Priority 4. Monitor sero-prevalence of COVID-19 antibodies

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<sup>2</sup> CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Updated guidelines for evaluating public health surveillance systems: Recommendations from the guidelines working group. *MMWR Recommendations and Reports*. 2001;50(RR-13):1–35.

<sup>3</sup> European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. *Strategies for the surveillance of COVID-19*. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/strategies-surveillance-covid-19>

With this surveillance information, we should be able to determine as early as possible whether the COVID-19 situation is escalating or not, where there are any particular challenges, and thus adjust our response accordingly.

### 4.3 Surveillance plan

This section summarises the current Gwent surveillance system, but it is recognised that the system will need to adapt with changes in policy and national guidance, and with emergence of different variants.

A multi-agency surveillance and reporting system has developed in response to COVID-19. The system (Figure 6 below) ensures the collation, analysis and dissemination of data from a variety of different sources, enabling a comprehensive overview of the local situation and the sharing of data for decision-making, including informing the scale and pace of the Gwent response. The system allows for: community, hospital, occupational health, mortality, cluster and outbreak surveillance.

COVID-19 reporting is shared with the IMTs in Gwent, Gwent Regional Oversight Group and Gwent Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) which ensures representation from all organisations involved. Access to data and surveillance information by relevant members is in line with Information Governance and confidentiality protocols, as outlined in Appendix D. Central elements to the process in Gwent are outlined below.

Local and regional leadership, including Leaders and Executive Members, will continue to be briefed and engaged in the ongoing situation via strategic leads and Executive Officers.

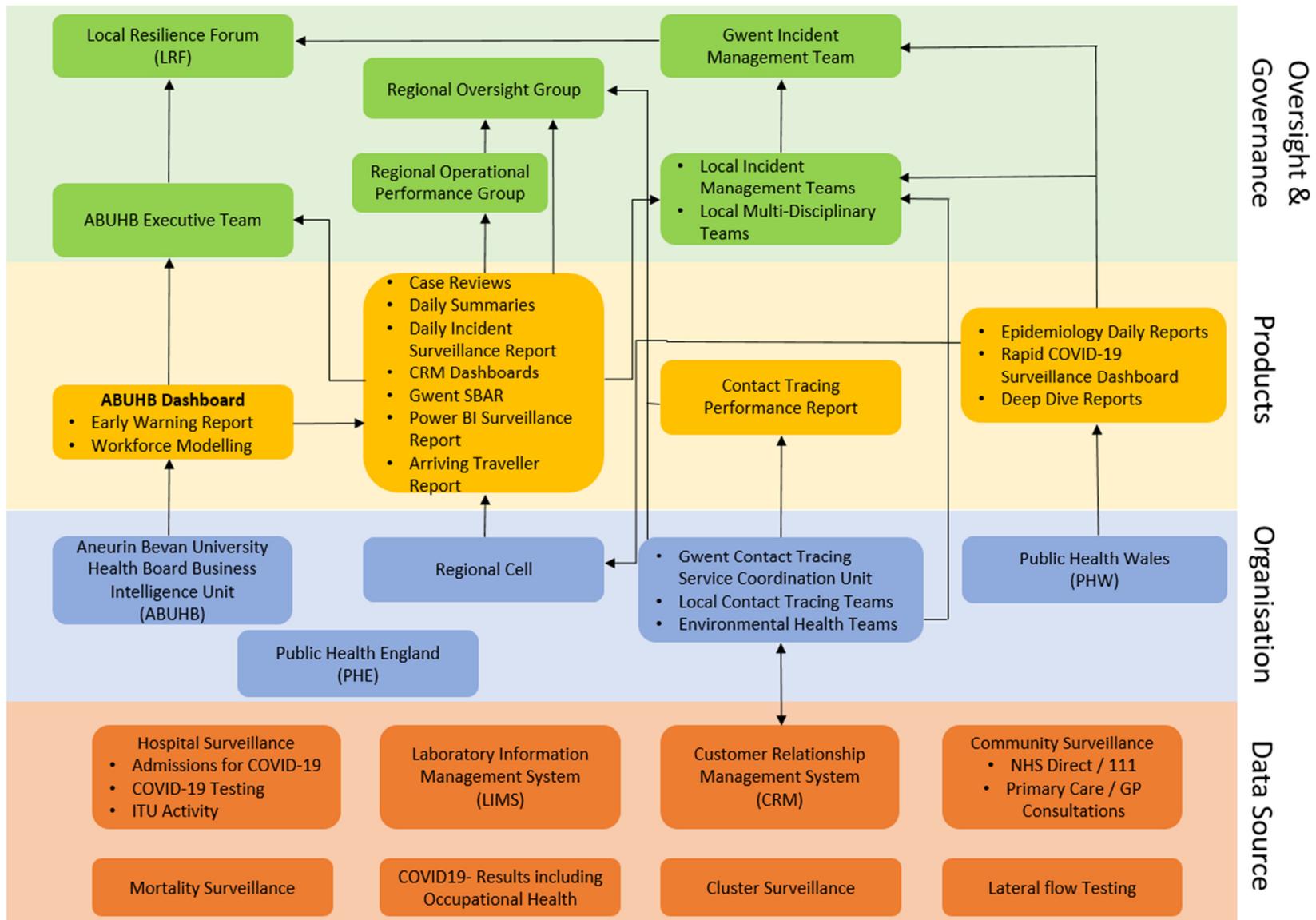


Figure 6: Gwent COVID-19 Surveillance system

#### 4.4 Aneurin Bevan University Health Board reporting system

The Health Board provides a full business intelligence function, which includes generating many automated routine reports and dashboards. A range of data sources are incorporated, including COVID-19 test results updated on an hourly basis, mortality data, and CRM data.

The products generated are used by Health Board senior managers and Executive Team (Strategic and Tactical Groups when activated) to inform Health Board action. They are also used for reporting purposes to Welsh Government, and to report to the Gwent SCG for directing a regional co-ordinated response.

A **hospital surveillance** dashboard collects all COVID-19 results:

- Results are matched to hospital activity data to provide accurate measures of the number of patients who are currently admitted and are being tested for COVID-19.
- When the test result is known this then informs the mandatory reporting to Welsh Government, separating the numbers of patients out into currently positive, suspected and recovering.
- This information is further broken down to include patients who are in the Health Board's ITU areas, indication their ventilation status as applicable. These patient numbers are combined with the Health Board's bed occupancy and availability information to provide an overall status of the current demand of COVID-19 patients on Health Board resources.

The process allows the monitoring of the impact of severe COVID-19 infection on the population and informs an understanding of natural history of disease. It also allows an understanding of the clinical severity of cases and provides data to inform models of transmission to forecast and estimate disease burden and health services utilisation.

The dashboard allows rapid **mortality surveillance** of deaths in hospitalised COVID-19 cases.

**Occupational health surveillance** can also occur as the incidence is recorded of confirmed cases in health care workers, including care home staff, utilising data from electronic test (antigen test) request forms.

Using data from the CRM, the COVID-19 dashboard includes mapping functionality which visibly highlights on a map any geographical areas that may be of concern. The maps are also shared with IMTs as part of **community surveillance**.

#### 4.5 Gwent Regional Cell

The Regional Cell directly supports the IMTs, Regional Oversight Group and Regional Co-ordinating Unit, providing a regional surveillance function through its various functions and teams including:

- The **Regional Data Cell** was established to ensure a systematic response, with the main aims of: undertaking surveillance reporting to inform the response to COVID-19 in Gwent, and supporting the delivery and effectiveness of the Gwent TTP Service.
- The **Enclosed Settings Cell** was established to monitor testing and results in residents and staff in care homes and other enclosed settings. This ensures that

clusters in enclosed settings are identified quickly and appropriate response undertaken. Further details are provided in the Prevention, Mitigation and Control section of this plan.

a) Surveillance reporting

The Data Cell's function includes collating, analysing and interpreting data from various sources, and disseminating the data through an agreed reporting framework, ensuring that information for decision making and action is shared with stakeholders. A key product is the production of a three times a week report for the Regional Oversight Group for **community surveillance**. The Data Cell reporting framework is reviewed and amended as required to monitor the changing COVID-19 situation. Figure 7 provides an example of the reporting content for the Gwent SCG. As well as the ABUHB COVID-19 dashboard, key sources include the Public Health Wales Rapid COVID-19 Surveillance Dashboard<sup>4</sup> and Daily Epidemiology Reports.

Data from Public Health Wales and other sources, such as CRM, are used for **cluster and outbreak surveillance**, providing useful epidemiological intelligence whether in the community or in at-risk groups/settings. This supports the early detection of cases, and identification and management of potential 'hot spots', informing when and where prevention work is required to prevent spread. In addition, local teams have been undertaking detailed case reviews using CRM to gather intelligence for local action, including assessing why and where infections are occurring.

b) Supporting the delivery and effectiveness of the Gwent TTP Service

- TTP performance support
  - Supporting the Regional Co-ordination Unit and local contact tracing teams to ensure the quality (completeness, accuracy and consistency) of data recorded on CRM. Numerous dashboards have been created to enable the identification of any systematic quality issues, and aid the review of performance data, and barriers to timely contact tracing.
  - workforce demand and capacity intelligence.
- Data 'cleansing'
  - Supporting the timeliness of the contact tracing process by checking clinical systems to verify or obtain additional contact details for individuals.
  - Directing cases/contacts appropriately, for example, escalating to clinical leads any individuals who have been admitted to hospital, or who potentially have communication issues.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://public.tableau.com/profile/public.health.wales.health.protection#!/vizhome/RapidCOVID-19virology-Public/Headlinesummary>



## 4.6 Additional elements

### COVID-19 Reproduction Number ( $R_0$ )

The basic reproduction number ( $R_0$ ) is defined as the number of cases that are expected to occur on average in a homogeneous population as a result of infection by a single individual, when the population is susceptible at the start of an epidemic, before widespread immunity starts to develop and before any attempt has been made at immunisation.

If one person develops the infection and passes it on to two others, the  $R_0$  is 2. If the average  $R_0$  in the population is greater than 1, the infection will spread exponentially. If  $R_0$  is less than 1, the infection will spread slowly, and it will eventually die out. The higher the value of  $R_0$  the faster an epidemic will progress.

$R_0$  assumes that everybody in a population is susceptible to infection. It was important to know this in the early stages of the Covid 19 pandemic. The  $R_t$  is calculated over time as Covid-19 cases fluctuate in response to control measures. The  $R_t$  is also influenced by population immunity levels, through natural infection, or vaccination.

$R_t$  is produced for Wales by the Welsh Government and shared directly with the Local Resilience Forum. Other important indicators are COVID-19 cases doubling time and halving time. None of the three indicators is yet available at the Health Board or Local Authority levels.

## 4.7 Assurance

The Gwent TTP Service has developed a Quality Assurance (QA) process, designed to build confidence and insight to enable the service to deliver on its primary objectives. The QA process has five discrete QA gates covering the whole Gwent TTP Service process. These are outlined in Table .1

Table 1: The five QA gates to assist the Gwent TTP Service.

Quality Assurance Gate	Brief description
1: NWIS data review	Pan Wales CRM data check
2: Local Teams QA tracing (effectiveness and efficiency)	Use of key QA Standards focused on Training, Induction, Quality of the tracing call and the information captured within the CRM system
3: Data Validation/ Cleansing	Key steps to quality assure the CRM data; improve the quality of the contact information for cases /contacts; remove cases/contacts that should not be traced; redirect potential issues to clinical leads
4: Data Reporting/ Surveillance	To support surveillance by collating, analysing and interpreting data, and disseminating data through a reporting framework. This includes informing the development of local and national data collection and reporting systems as appropriate. This facilitates early warning of clusters, incidents or outbreaks
5: Review of Issues/ Incidents that have been escalated to Regional Oversight Group	For complex issues /cases /incidents /outbreaks (Regional, Inter-regional and Cross Border) to ensure that lessons are learned and a detailed improvement plan is compiled

## 5 SAMPLING AND TESTING

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Testing for COVID-19 is a vital part of how the NHS and local authorities are working to protect the public by preventing the spread of infection, optimising the outcomes for patients and keep essential services running in Wales. It is a key pillar of the strategy to protect the NHS and save lives. Anyone who needs a test in Gwent now gets one easily and most get their results back in less than 24 hours.

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board's Testing Service provides COVID-19 testing capability throughout communities in Gwent. The service provides:

- Community testing for symptomatic members of our communities;
- Hospital testing to support the delivery of safe and effective healthcare;
- Pre-elective testing;
- Testing in response to outbreaks, clusters and incidents;
- Prioritised testing for local resilience partners' staff;
- Regular testing of Health Board staff;

To do that, it has:

- Two regional testing centres (Rodney Parade and Cwm);
- Central coordination centre with a referral and results cell;
- Six home visit vehicles to test people on their doorstep;
- Seven mobile testing units;
- Fives local testing sites;
- Teams on every hospital site

### 5.1 Roles and Responsibilities

To deliver this plan there are a number of key roles and responsibilities, which align with our Test, Trace, Protect strategy:

- **Individuals** – following public health advice, hand washing, social distancing, reporting symptoms and self-isolating when necessary.
- **Welsh Government** – provide strategic direction, oversight, determine priorities and provide resources to enable testing.
- **Public Health Wales** – national public health body providing specialist advice on public health approaches. Responsible for coordinating contact tracing, advising on sampling and testing, laboratory analysis of tests, health surveillance and providing expert health protection advice and analysis of the spread of the virus in our communities through a range of health surveillance indicators.
- **Aneurin Bevan University Health Board** – providing a strategic overview and delivery for local decisions and sampling capacity. Provide testing facilities to support Test, Trace,

Protect and environmental and public health responses to local outbreaks and clusters or preventative action in areas regarded as high risk. Developing local testing plans with partners to help deliver the Testing Strategy and to actively engage and communicate with local populations.

- **Local Authorities and other partners (Local Resilience Forum)** – to contribute to and support the development and implementation of the COVID-19 Prevention and Response Plan for Gwent.

## 5.2 Incident Management

The Testing Service are available to attend any Incident or Cluster Management Team to advise, support and deliver any testing requirements that the groups determine. The Health Board, Local Authorities and Public Health Wales work as an integrated unit to ensure that the team has all the tools it needs to contain and settle transmission.

The Health Board's Public Health team, Test Trace Protect teams and its Testing Service work in unison to ensure that we make good decisions, we are efficient in our delivery and that each other is supported.

## 5.3 Sampling capacity

Testing capacity in Gwent is achieved through a combination of local and national provision. Testing is provided through:

- **Regional Testing Site at Rodney Parade Newport) and Cwm (Ebbw Vale)** which have the capacity and capability to provide a drive-through testing facility for the general public and key workers, pre-labelled testing kits for sampling asymptomatic care home staff and home testing. Rodney Parade also provides mass testing to assist with incident or outbreak management in enclosed setting such as care homes, schools, nurseries and high risk workplaces.
- **Mobile Testing Units** which can be deployed across the Health Board region to enable a rapid response to an escalation in cases within a particularly community, for specific populations to improve access or in specific settings.
- **Home Testing Kits** which enable members of the public to receive a postal/courier self-swabbing kits if they are symptomatic or for asymptomatic care home staff via a dedicated online portal.
- **Local Testing Sites** will provide a longer term local testing facility than the MTUs in either indoor or outdoor settings for specific population such as geographically isolated communities or Newport city centre for hard to reach populations such as homeless people or asylum seekers and refugees.

- **Testing teams on every Health Board site** who regularly test patients on admission to hospital and regularly during their stay. The teams also respond to patients who become symptomatic whilst they are with us or to support a discharge or transfer.

## 5.4 Laboratories and reliable turnaround times

We understand that our incident management teams need good, reliable testing and sampling capability to help them find and contain clusters in various places throughout Gwent. Having the ability and capacity to test thousands of individuals a day is one essential component to COVID-19 testing, logistics and laboratory analysis are equally as important. Taking a whole system approach to COVID-19 testing, we have built extremely strong relationships with both Public Health Wales and the Health Board. Maximising the performance of the whole system we now routinely expect a large proportion of our COVID-19 tests to be completed in under 12 hours.

Working alongside Public Health Wales colleagues we have adapted our practice to take advantage of numerous marginal efficiency gains within the laboratory. We have utilised electronic requesting more than any other Health Board to try and ensure our samples can be processed as quickly and easily as possible. Alongside an effective and reactive transport service we can ensure samples are processed faster now than at any point during the pandemic.

Table 2: ABUHB COVID-19 Samples processed within PHW laboratories

<b>ABUHB COVID-19 Samples processed within PHW laboratories</b>			
<b>From received to authorised</b>	<b>30/03/2020</b>	<b>30/03/2021</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Tested within 12 hours	16%	57%	+ 41%
Tested within 24 hours	39%	92%	+ 53%
Tested within 48 hours	81%	100%	+ 19%

The Testing Service in Gwent operates on three laboratory networks:

- Public Health Wales (IP5, University Hospital of Wales and more)
- Lighthouse laboratories (IP5, Milton Keynes and more)
- Health Board Microbiology Department (Grange University Hospital and Royal Gwent Hospital)

## 5.5 Care homes, residential and closed settings

People living in care homes and other similar residential settings are amongst the most vulnerable, with many relying on close personal care. Testing supports a reduction in infection rates if coupled with actions to promote infection control more generally. Testing care homes in Gwent involves<sup>5</sup>:

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<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government. (2020d). Testing process in care homes. <https://gov.wales/testing-process-care-homes/testing-process-care-homes-covid-19-html>

## OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

- Testing of all symptomatic residents and staff via a twice-daily line list of referrals.
- Whole home testing of all residents in care homes or other residential setting will be carried out where there is evidence of infection to assist in the management of an incident or outbreak.
- Testing all individuals being discharged from hospital to live in care homes.
- Testing all people who are being transferred between care homes and for new admissions from the community.
- Testing will be offered to asymptomatic staff who have not previously tested positive for COVID-19 within the previous 42 days in line with Welsh Government policy (currently a fortnightly cycle).

We will continue to deploy testing in care homes and other residential settings as part of our approach to protect our care home workers and residents from Covid-19 and to rapidly respond to outbreaks.

### 5.6 Hospital Inpatients and Planned Care

Understanding the COVID-19 status of hospital patients has become essential to delivering services in a safe and effective manner. The Framework for COVID-19 testing for hospital inpatients in Wales outlines the purposes for testing:

- To prevent COVID-19 in elective pathways
- To prevent COVID-19 in elective pathways in those with previous COVID-19 infection
- To identify COVID-19 in emergency care pathways
- To reduce risk to patients at higher risk
- To show non-infectivity prior to discharge of patients with a history of COVID-19

This service has subsequently expanded and as the graph illustrates, we continue to test patients more than ever. We provide support for admission, asymptomatic twice weekly and discharge testing across all LGHs.

### 5.7 Accessibility to Community Testing

There is mounting UK and international evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significantly greater impact on people from socially vulnerable groups. Being socially at risk refers to the inability of individuals and communities to withstand adverse impacts from multiple stressors to which they are exposed, including natural or human-caused disasters or disease outbreaks. Some individuals have faced particular challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic due to their belonging to two or more recognised categories of social risk or vulnerability.

The Health Board has identified the following groups are more likely to be socially vulnerable or at risk in the community:

- People who are homeless
- Asylum seekers
- Refugees

- Migrant workers
- Undocumented migrants including those who are 'over stayers', unlawfully present or illegally present
- People of Roma ethnic origin
- Gypsy travellers
- People from minority ethnic backgrounds with poor English skills
- Street sex workers
- People who misuse drugs and/or alcohol – particular those not engaged with services.

In order to provide the best opportunity for people who are deemed socially at risk to come forward for or undertake testing it is essential to minimise any real or perceived barriers to access. Welsh Government have identified 4 groups of the population where access equity should be considered – people living in socio-economically deprived areas, socially vulnerable groups in the community, geographically isolated and people with protected characteristics.

It is therefore proposed to provide testing in areas close to where people live so that they don't require transport and with open access/drop-in to eliminate the requirement to book online.

The main approach to increasing access will therefore be via open access walk through Mobile Testing Units (MTUs) or Local Testing Sites (LTSs) in key geographical locations within identified infection 'hot-spots' or to improve access for social vulnerable, digitally excluded or geographically isolated groups of the population.

## 5.8 Rapid Community Testing for Variants of Concern

The emergence of new variant strains of COVID-19 remind us that the virus has not gone away. Our region's plan sets out the arrangements for mass community testing in response to a variant of concern in Gwent and is supported by local delivery plans. This plan aims to:

- Support the 'Test to Find' approach set out in Welsh Government's revised Testing Strategy for Wales to identify cases of variants of concern in communities;
- Support a locally-led public health risk-based approach using area intelligence and knowledge to reduce the spread of the virus in response to a confirmed case of a variant of concern;
- Provide additional asymptomatic testing capacity within communities and remove any potential barriers;
- Identify active cases from individuals showing no symptoms and unaware they are potentially infecting others;
- Enhance local surveillance to aid further actions by partners;
- Provide assurances and support for affected communities.

Plans for mass testing in relation to variants of concern will heavily depend on the current circumstances, the size and scale of testing required, its specific objective and the context of the local area. This plan has been drafted to support the operationalisation of mass testing if the scale of need is determined to be over and above the 'business as usual' outbreak testing that already exists.

The following operating principles apply:

- This plan should be the highest rung on the ladder once other options have been exhausted;
- Testing must happen at pace – the decision to mass test should be made in hours and the operation should be stood up in days;
- All testing will take place through the PCR method (which requires a throat and nasal swab) – lateral flow testing must not be used at this stage;
- Sampling should take place at targeted people’s homes wherever possible. Test kits should be delivered to and collected from home addresses to reduce the need for potentially infected people to travel. However, Mobile Testing Units could be considered as a last resort where specific geographies make this a more appropriate approach (such as testing at a workplace);
- Most people should self-swab but help should be made available for those that are unable to swab themselves;
- A call centre should be established that is able to support and help individuals who may feel anxious or nervous about this approach;
- A clear communication and engagement plan should be enacted to that the public and staff are informed and reassured, with a particular focus on those communities who are socially vulnerable (including barriers of language).
- Gwent organisations should work as an integrated unit with clear roles and responsibilities to ensure that the right skills, resource and powers are available to the operation and to ensure that individual organisations do not become overwhelmed.

## 5.9 Lateral Flow Testing

Lateral flow tests (LFTs) are used across schools, care homes, front line services, volunteers, businesses and people who are unable to work from home in line with Welsh Government’s testing strategy. Lateral flow test are used to identify people with COVID-19 who are not showing symptoms. LFTs are easy to use and give results in 30 minutes. If you get a positive lateral flow test you must self-isolate immediately for 10 days and take a PCR test at a test centre within 24 hours.

## 5.10 Antibody Testing

Antibody testing to SARS-CoV-2 antigens can be used to provide surveillance information to determine levels of historical infection. Antibody testing can focus on specific environments or occupational groups with repeat testing undertaken to garner a greater understanding of antibody development with individuals and if they are retained over time. This is specifically valuable with groups of individuals associated with the potential for high contact rates.

Testing could be further extended to wider settings on the direction of Welsh Government to help provide intelligence for the public health response, an evaluation of the vaccine efficacy or in direct care.

## 6 PREVENTION, MITIGATION AND CONTROL



Prevention is an essential part of the Gwent COVID-19 response and includes proactive engagement and communication with the population to promote adherence and compliance with:

- Social distancing measures
- Respiratory and hand hygiene
- Enhanced cleaning regimes
- Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), to combat the spread of COVID-19
- TTP process including self-isolation requirements.

Effective prevention measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 will be communicated to the population of Gwent, with an emphasis on clear and consistent messaging from all partner organisations (and consistent with national guidance), as outlined in the Communications section of this plan.

Building public confidence in the Gwent TTP Service and community engagement in the testing and contact tracing is essential. Information on how to access testing and the importance of complying with self-isolation guidance will be clearly and widely communicated to encourage participation and compliance.

When incidents, clusters or outbreaks occur, processes and protocols are in place to ensure Gwent activates an outbreak response in an appropriate and timely manner. This section has identified high risk settings in which coordinated efforts to prevent, mitigate and control COVID-19 are applied. This has been informed by Wales COVID-19 Risk Assessment undertaken by military liaison colleagues, which identified a number of high-risk settings across Wales, applicable to Gwent, for consideration:

- Educational settings (Wales COVID-19 Risk Assessment)
- Care home and social care settings
- Hospital and Health Care settings
- Food processing factories and Industrial/Factory settings (Wales COVID-19 Risk Assessment) and agricultural processing
- Workplaces and businesses
- Hospitality settings
- Large gathering in organised events
- HM Prisons
- Shipping and sea ports.

### 6.1 Educational and childcare settings

Nurseries and schools play a key infection and prevention control role and the introduction of a number of measures, along with guidance issued by Welsh Government and PHW, contributes to preventing the spread of infection in these settings. Prevention activity includes:

- Social distancing measures, including the use of 'learning bubbles' to minimise the number of contacts each child or staff member has during the school day, classroom layout, Welsh Government policy on school transport.
- Respiratory and hand hygiene, including hand washing facilities

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- Enhanced cleaning regimes, including catering
- Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff
- Implementing Welsh Government policy for staff who are shielding, for staff and learners from BAME community
- Isolation of symptomatic children and their household contacts.

Local authorities have undertaken significant work with educational settings to implement guidance to prevent outbreaks, including risk assessments and operational protocols.

When outbreaks occur, the Regional Response Team work with nurseries, schools, Coleg Gwent and University of South Wales to ensure rapid escalation, formation of a multi-agency IMT (this should involve the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as the enforcing authority for schools and universities), and the implementation of public health actions to bring the outbreak under control. PHW have provided 'Investigation and Management of Clusters and Incidents of COVID-19 in Educational and Childcare Settings' protocol that Gwent will follow to respond to outbreaks in educational settings.

### 6.1.1 Prevention and Response actions

1. Continue to provide proactive advice about prevention of infection, with support for risk assessments to ensure up to date policy and guidance for infection and prevention control is adhered to;
2. Provide educational settings with dedicated contact details for Environmental Health Departments to ensure they are able to access timely advice about infection prevention and control measures, contingency plans to prevent a potential escalation in cases, and reactive advice for on-going incidents and outbreaks;
3. Request that all educational settings maintain accurate and up-to-date records on attendance, reasons for absenteeism, vulnerable staff and learners and UK mobile phone and landline numbers for parents/guardians/contractors to promote prompt mitigation and control measures, particularly for contact tracing, should the need arise;
4. Maintain a coherent line of communication between Environmental Health Officers and Education departments to ensure suspected cases of COVID-19 (both pupils, teachers and non-teaching staff) are promptly notified to Environmental Health to identify any potential cluster of infections early and in advance of contact tracing;
5. Use nursery, school and college networks to reinforce with parents the importance of symptomatic individuals seeking a COVID-19 antigen test, as this underpins the Contact Tracing process;
6. The escalation framework will be followed for individual cases and/or enclosed settings that require further assessment, support or action. This involves promptly convening multi-disciplinary team meetings (involving Regional Cell, Regional Response Teams, partners in the education sector, PHW National Health Protection Team, Environmental Health) in response to new incidents/outbreaks, as identified by surveillance.

[Case Study – Nursery setting](#)

## 6.2 Care homes and social care settings

Covid-19 continues to present an unprecedented challenge for the care homes and the wider social care sector. Since this pandemic began, care home providers have taken significant steps to protect the health and well-being of their residents. A Community Care Sub Group (CCSG) of the Gwent SCG, and an

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ABUHB Closed Settings Group brings together the various agencies and professionals with a common aim of preventing the spread of Covid-19 in residential settings.

The local systems for gathering intelligence in relation to care home settings includes a daily status report, weekly SITREP and information about Covid-19 testing (i.e. positive proportion of PCR and LFD testing episodes and turnaround times). The current escalation framework is being reviewed in light of changes to the PHW SOP and additional capacity for the IPAC team to undertake proactive visits. Local authorities, ABUHB and PHW have worked collaboratively in Gwent to proactively target prevention advice to agency workers which will be on-going as part of the response.

PHW have updated the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for adult and children's home which seeks to clarify the essential public health action in response to cases or clusters of Covid-19 infection in residential care setting in Wales. The objective of the SOP are to:

1. To reduce transmission through the rapid identification testing and isolation of possible or confirmed cases.
2. To provide information for action by gathering and recording robust data on the setting, the control measures in place and providing advice on control measures
3. To ensure proactive support for enclosed settings facing possible crises by identifying any enclosed settings which have high levels of risk or need (e.g. high numbers of symptomatic patients or staff shortages that risk resident safety).

In order to coordinate the multi-agency response, the Enclosed Settings Cell (ESC) has established multi-disciplinary group meetings in each Local Authority. These meetings are used to review care home cases and incidents and to make decisions around risk assessment, sampling and infection prevention and control measures. The ESC also supports the interpretation and implementation of relevant Welsh Government policy changes, particularly in relation to testing and new guidelines for care homes (e.g. visiting). The ESC receives queries relating to incident management and accepts referrals for testing from care home providers for symptomatic residents with rapid requests made to the Rodney Parade MTU for sampling.

Local Authority Environmental Health teams have managed incidents and outbreaks of Covid-19 throughout the pandemic with support from the Enclosed Settings Cell. Going forward and with the advent of the updated SOP (above) Environmental Health departments will take on the role of co-ordinating whole home testing (WHT) with the MTU and the care home provider. The Enclosed Settings Cell will provide Public Health advice and support for more complex cases with specialist advice provided by the PHW National Health Protection Team and/or CCDC.

The Enclosed Settings Cell works with Local Authority Commissioning teams and the Complex Care Division within the Health Board to produce a weekly SITREP with the older adult residential and nursing homes across the region. This highlights the vaccination status of residents and staff, adherence to LFD testing and PCR testing of asymptomatic staff and provision of advice and support from Environmental Health and the Infection Prevention Team. The ESC also produce a daily status report showing previously unaffected care homes with a single asymptomatic case, care homes with a symptomatic staff member or residents and homes with an active incident or outbreak

The MDT approach is also taken to support other enclosed settings (e.g. supported living), domiciliary care and other types of self-contained residential settings for vulnerable adults (e.g. sheltered housing, extra care) where clusters of cases have been identified. Further work is being scoped to provide advice on control measures in day care services. PHW and Welsh Government are developing a framework for outbreak and incident management in independent hospitals which includes additional MDT partners

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including the Health & Safety Executive, Health Inspectorate Wales, NHS Wales Commissioning Collaborative and/or NHS England or CCGs.

Over recent months the social care sector has implemented the Welsh Government policy of twice weekly LFD testing. Welsh Government has also extended weekly PCR testing to asymptomatic staff in selected supported living settings. Furthermore the second round of Covid-19 vaccinations have been offered to staff and residents through the mass vaccination centres and mobile vaccination teams. A fast track system has been set up for new admissions and any staff who have not completed their course of vaccinations.

The Gwent SCG has commissioned a second Reflective Review of the response to date, allowing partners to review their response to the pandemic to inform and shape the recovery phase, as well as prepare for the possibility of future waves. A weekly Provider Forum webinar is held to engage care home providers in preparation for a potential third or fourth wave and a preparedness framework has been agreed covering 4 key areas – vaccination, testing, infection prevention and control and outbreak planning – with the well-being of residents and staff and a wider situation awareness as overarching considerations.

The Community Care Sub Group (Closed Setting Group when standing) and Regional Response Teams will:

- Implement the action plan following the second Health and Social Care Reflective Review on the response to pandemic in care homes and social care settings since May 2020.
- Continue to support the implementation of PCR and LFD testing for asymptomatic care home and social care staff in line with Welsh Government policy.
- Agree the revised escalation framework for care homes with clearly defined roles for the Enclosed Setting Cell, PHW National Health Protection Team, Environmental Health, Complex Care, Local Authority Commissioning Team and the Infection Prevention and Control Team.
- Support the implementation of the Community IPAC Transformation Fund project.
- Review the existing multi-disciplinary team meetings to ensure a sustainable model for coordinating the response to new incidents in line with PHW SOP and guidance on prevention and management of cases, incidents & outbreaks in residential care settings.
- Finalise the end-to-end process for management of clusters in self-contained properties for vulnerable populations (e.g. extra care, sheltered housing).
- Scope the reintroduction of day care services and ensure that appropriate control measures and in place.
- Support implementation of the new Welsh Government framework for case and incident management in independent hospitals and webinars across the region.
- Continue to engage with the Provider Forum to support the implementation of WG policy (e.g. visiting) and the regionally agreed framework in readiness for a potential third or fourth wave.
- Ensure a system is in place which ensures new admissions and staff in care homes are offered COVID-19 vaccines and that care home and domiciliary care staff are encouraged and supported to take up second dose appointments.
- Continue local surveillance in care homes and other social care settings via the daily status report, weekly SITREP, trends in new incidents and LFD and PCR testing episodes.

- Continue to work with Welsh Government and the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC) to assess the impact of COVID-19 vaccinations and testing in care homes

[Case Study – Nursing home](#)

## 6.3 Hospitals and Health Care Settings

In ABUHB, ultimate responsibility for infection prevention and control in NHS settings lies with the Chief Executive, delegated to the Executive Director of Nursing and the Lead Infection Control Specialist (Lead Infection Control Nurse). The delivery of infection control support is through the Infection Prevention and Control Team.

Regular communication to staff is shared across ABUHB and to NHS settings including GP Practices, Dental Practices, Optometry and Patients and visitors are reminded prior to arrival on site and whilst on site of the measures to take to prevent spread of infection. ABUHB has adopted the 'Distance Aware' initiative and formed a Social Distancing task and finish group to monitor activity.

Risk assessments as part of prevention measures are conducted to ensure NHS settings as a whole, and individual services/departments/wards/individuals are complying with latest COVID-19 guidance and primary control measures, namely:

- Social distancing measures (SOP produced by ABUHB<sup>6</sup>)
- Respiratory and hand hygiene
- Enhanced cleaning regimes
- Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Practice at settings such as GP Practice, Dental Practices and Optometry Services is modified to manage the demand for advice and care while maintaining arrangements to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission (in line with national guidance).

The Infection Prevention and Control Team is responsible for investigating incidents and outbreaks, reporting to the executive lead for infection prevention and control and ultimately the Chief Executive, following the ABUHB Hospital Outbreak Plan and aligned to the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales.

### 6.3.1 Healthcare Setting staff

ABUHB is taking a comprehensive approach to preventing the spread of COVID-19 in NHS settings. The Social Distancing task and finish group gathers information and encourage a culture change to re-enforce and adopt social distancing measures across departments. An internal ABUHB Staff COVID-19 Support Team has also been established with the intentions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within ABUHB departments and to ensure that healthcare services are safe and sustainable.

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<sup>6</sup> Aneurin Bevan University Health board. (2020). Standard Operating Procedure – General COVID-19 physical/social distancing guidance. Working safely during Coronavirus (COVID-19) - taking all reasonable measures to maintain physical distancing in the workplace.

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A Standard Operating Protocol is in place for the Staff COVID-19 Support Team to gather information of staff members being tested for COVID-19, enabling a rapid response if there are confirmed positive COVID-19 cases among ABUHB employees. This is a combined response from TTP, Occupational Health and Infection Prevention and Control Teams.

Positive cases of COVID-19 among ABUHB staff members will be contact traced in a timely manner including identification and isolation of work-place related contacts. Infection prevention and control issues will be addressed along with ensuring business continuity planning, aiming to protect the setting from spread of COVID-19.

### 6.3.2 In-patients accessing ABUHB Healthcare settings

The Infection Prevention and Control Team within ABUHB undertake daily surveillance and confirmed COVID-19 cases among patients at ABUHB sites are identified and escalated to the Infection Prevention and Control Team for appropriate measures to be implemented.

Following a patient testing positive for COVID-19 the relevant department and other specialities are contacted by the Infection Prevention and Control Team to ensure that the appropriate measures are being followed, and contact tracing if required, is implemented. In the situation whereby patients test positive for COVID-19 and have recently been admitted to hospital, the existing TTP process is followed, to ensure household and social contacts of confirmed cases are traced and necessary action taken for self-isolation.

In the situation whereby a patient tests positive for COVID-19 and it is deemed healthcare associated, the Infection Prevention and Control Team in collaboration with the multi-disciplinary team will establish any contributing or risk factors, and assess the individual department affected. The aim is to identify the source of infection, action to be taken to address risk of infection including preventative measures mentioned above to reduce on-going transmission and future re-occurrence. Learning is shared accordingly.

### 6.3.3 Prevention and Response actions

ABUHB will continue work with staff and patients to:

1. Provide proactive advice about prevention and latest Welsh Government policies to staff and patients.
2. Provide specific advice to hospital and healthcare settings regarding information on infection prevention and control, and how this may influence their approach to risk assessment/management and service delivery.
3. Provide access to rapid testing for symptomatic testing of staff and patients.
4. Work within the agreed escalation framework for staff and patients in health care settings, with clearly defined roles for the Regional Cell, ABUHB Infection Protection and Control Team, PHW National Health Protection Team. This includes ensuring a single and coherent line of communication within NHS settings.
5. Engage with staff on COVID-19 guidance and provide policy, guidance and news updates through existing, dedicated channels.

## 6.4 Meat and food processing plants

Meat and food processing plants have been identified as settings of high risk of COVID-19 outbreaks due to environmental factors. Prevention action and guidance (such as that issued by the Food

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Standards Agency (FSA) and Welsh Government<sup>7</sup>) will help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely in the food manufacturing sector during the pandemic. Using local and national learning, local authorities will provide proactive advice to businesses on steps to reduce the risk of infection, such as:

- review of HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) procedures
- cleaning and inspection of machinery and equipment
- changes to production lines (for example protective screens, back-to-back working, movement and one-way flows at the site, canteen and rest areas, changing rooms) to adhere to social distancing measures (considering the procedures for good entering and leaving sites particularly in distribution centres and despatch areas)
- staff training, use of PPE
- staggered shift patterns, travel arrangements and car sharing arrangements
- engage with the Factory Managers and HR Departments and provide policy, guidance and news updates through existing communication channels.

The five Gwent Local Authorities have made proactive contact with larger food manufacturers and factories within their respective areas and good dialogue has taken place with relevant contacts to request them to complete and submit risk assessments to the Local Authority with sensible and practical measures to control transmission risks within the workplace. This is based on the advice and guidance provided by the Local Authority and National guidance from Welsh Government, PHW, FSA and Health and Safety Executive (HSE). This contact will be maintained with on-going advice using agreed communication methods.

As part of the risk assessment, Local Authorities have requested that meat and food processing businesses keep up-to-date attendance records (covering all shifts and use of agency staff), and HR records including complete names (with correct spellings and no transposition of first/surnames), date of birth, addresses, preferred language, and UK mobile phone numbers of their workforce. If required, this information will enable rapid mobilisation of the response should an outbreak occur.

Agency workers have been identified as presenting a possible increased risk of transmission in clusters linked to food processing/manufacturing establishments, as described for care home agency staff. A proactive collaborative approach will be taken to target preventative advice, with input from partner organisations and establishing the most appropriate way to communicate key messages to them, their workers and employers engaging their services.

Along with prevention activity, in the form of risk assessments with settings, surveillance of local activity and regular communication with these high-risk settings will ensure any potential incidents, clusters or outbreaks are identified and prompt action taken to address the situation.

The Regional Response Team will convene multi-disciplinary IMT meetings and mobilise mass sampling and testing for employees, if necessary. The response process will comply with the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government. (2020c). *Guidance for meat and food plants on prevention and management of coronavirus (COVID-19)*. <https://gov.wales/guidance-meat-and-food-plants-prevention-and-management-coronavirus-covid-19>

<sup>8</sup> Welsh Government. (2020a). *Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

### 6.4.1 Prevention and Response actions

- Continue to provide proactive advice about prevention of infection, with support for risk assessments to ensure up to date policy and guidance for infection and prevention control is adhered to.
- Provide settings with dedicated contact details for Environmental Health Departments to ensure they are able to access timely advice about infection prevention and control measures, contingency plans to prevent a potential escalation in cases, and reactive advice for on-going incidents and outbreaks.
- Request that settings maintain accurate and up-to-date records are kept on attendance, reasons for absenteeism, vulnerable staff and UK mobile phone and landline numbers for employees to promote prompt mitigation and control measures, particularly for contact tracing, should the need arise
- Maintain a coherent line of communication between Environmental Health Officers and HR Departments to ensure confirmed cases of COVID-19 are promptly notified to Environmental Health to identify any potential cluster of infections early and in advance of contact tracing.
- Develop an escalation framework using lessons learnt from recent experiences along with PHW Action Cards for enclosed settings. This involves promptly convening multi-disciplinary team meetings (involving Regional Cell, Regional Response Teams, HR Department, PHW National Health Protection Team, Environmental Health) in response to new incidents/outbreaks, as identified by surveillance.

[Case Study – Food Factory](#)

## 6.5 Agricultural processing

Farms and associated activity (such as arable crop processing) are the responsibility of the HSE for advice and enforcement. The Gwent area has a large number of farms, agricultural businesses and cattle markets, and it is recognised organisations such as the National Farmers Union and Farmers Association Wales have been very proactive in providing sector specific guidance on advice and preventative control measures.

Whilst no outbreaks have occurred to date on farms in Gwent, if required the outbreak response for meat and food processing plants and factories outlined above will be applied.

## 6.6 Workplace and businesses

The five Gwent Local Authorities work closely with members of the public and businesses to engage and provide consistent advice and guidance on measures to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 in both enclosed settings and communities.

Prevention activity includes ensuring that employers are aware of the 'Keep Wales Safe – At Work' guidance, which aims to help employers, employees and the self-employed to work safely. The 'Distance Aware' campaign has been expanded to promote social distancing in the workplace through the Local Resilience Forum, Care Inspectorate Wales, Older Person's Commissioner and Confederation of British Industry in Wales.

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Welsh Government has issued statutory guidance<sup>9</sup> on taking all reasonable measures to minimise exposure to coronavirus in workplaces and premises open to the public. Large employers are likely to be a greatest risk of a significant COVID-19 outbreak but consideration should also be given to small and mid-size enterprises and those that are self-employed.

Businesses that are permitted to operate, or premises that are allowed to open, must do so safely in a way that complies with the Regulations, in addition to other legal obligations imposed on employers (such as Health and Safety Legislation).

The five Gwent Local Authorities seek compliance of the Welsh Coronavirus Restrictions regulations by advice and persuasion. In the situation whereby businesses fail to heed the advice of Local Authority Officers – and this involves Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards Officers – warning letters and Fixed Penalty Notices and enforcement notices will be issued. This work has and will undoubtedly help prevent person-to-person spread.

Action to be taken by HSE is to provide verbal advice to a business or to write a formal enforcement letter. A local Bevan Commission project ‘Emerging from shielding – an endorsed symbol for distancing’ has explored concerns around de-escalating shielding when lockdown is easing. This has brought into focus the importance of social distancing within the workplace.

The Regional Response Team will work with public sector employers, regulators and the Confederation of British Industry in Wales to:

### 6.6.1 Prevention and Response actions

- Continue to provide proactive advice about prevention of infection, with support for risk assessments to ensure up to date policy and guidance for infection and prevention control is adhered to.
- Provide settings with dedicated contact details for Environmental Health departments to ensure they are able to access timely advice about infection prevention and control measures, contingency plans to prevent a potential escalation in cases, and reactive advice for on-going incidents and outbreaks.
- Request that settings maintain accurate and up to date records are kept on attendance, reasons for absenteeism, vulnerable staff and learners and UK mobile phone and landline numbers for employees to promote prompt mitigation and control measures, particularly for contact tracing, should the need arise.
- Maintain a coherent line of communication between Environmental Health Officers and HR Departments to ensure confirmed cases of COVID-19 are promptly notified to Environmental Health to identify any potential cluster of infections early and in advance of contact tracing.
- Work within the Action Cards for Enclosed Settings (produced by PHW) to respond to outbreaks, with clearly defined roles for the Regional Cell, PHW National Health Protection Team, Environmental Health. This includes multi-disciplinary team meetings to coordinate the response to new incidents and ensure a single and coherent line of communication with settings, as outlined in the Communicable Disease Plan for Wales, 2020 (Welsh Government, 2020a).

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<sup>9</sup> Welsh Government. (2020b). *Taking all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace and premises open to the public.* <https://gov.wales/taking-all-reasonable-measures-minimise-risk-exposure-coronavirus-workplaces-and-premises-open>

## 6.7 Hospitality settings

Hospitality settings such as pubs, restaurants and hotels were closed by the Welsh Business Closure Regulations during periods of 'lockdown' and local authority Public Protection Officers (Environmental Health and Trading Standards) played a key role in ensuring the businesses were closed, as required, by proactively making contact with business operators to check they understood the legislation.

This proactive work was possible because of the established relationship that Officers have with such businesses, as a result of many years of regulatory work and more recently the provision of paid for advice services and Primary Authority Partnerships.

On-going contact with such businesses is essential as the Welsh Government has eased the restrictions to allow trading to resume. To ensure that the guidance has been understood, risk assessments will be undertaken and necessary action implemented. Businesses are contacted both individually and via groups such as 'Pub Watch' and the 'Newport Now Business Improvement District' group and provided with advice or signposted to appropriate advice, such as Welsh Government guidance and guidance provided by the HSE.

### 6.7.1 Prevention and Response actions

The Regional Response Team, in conjunction with the HSE, will:

- Continue to ensure that Welsh Government, HSE and other guidance is understood by the industry and that risk assessments have been undertaken with the necessary action implemented.
- Use established process and procedures to enable members of the public to raise concerns with the local authority about how businesses are being operated.
- Continue to work within the agreed PHW Action Cards, with clearly defined roles for the Regional Cell, PHW National Health Protection Team, Environmental Health. This includes multi-disciplinary team meetings to coordinate the response to new incidents and ensure a single and coherent line of communication with settings.
- Ensure that should any hospitality businesses be associated with a confirmed COVID-19 case, the local knowledge of the local authority Officers and any previous work with the business, will assist Officers to respond appropriately and robustly to prevent onward transmission.

## 6.8 Large gatherings in organised events

The chairs of the Gwent Event Safety Advisory Groups (ESAGs) meet regularly and the five Gwent ESAGs have applied Welsh Government legislation and guidance to ensure consistency across the area, and reduce the risk of person-to-person transmission at various events.

## 6.9 HM Prisons

HM Prisons have received information and the latest guidance relating to preventative measures for COVID-19 to ensure compliance.

HSE is the enforcing authority in custodial settings, whilst PHW is the lead organisation responsible for investigating and managing incidents and outbreaks in this setting. The management and response will follow the detailed contingency plan as presented in the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (Welsh Government, 2020a).

## 6.10 Shipping and Sea Ports

A protocol has been in place in Newport since February 2020 for all vessels (not including “local” vessels such as tugs, dredgers) arriving at the Port of Newport. This includes Newport Docks, Birdport and Liberty Steel.

[Case Study – The role of the port health officer](#)

## 6.11 Effective communication to promote protective behaviours

A proactive population wide communication strategy is required to promote protective behaviours such to social distancing, requests for testing and self-isolation. It is expected that some people will need practical support to comply with the isolation guidance. This will be for a range of reasons including:

- the severity of symptoms
- the financial impact of complying with self-isolation (particularly those on agency, temporary or zero hour contracts)
- concerns over job security
- mistrust in public services
- language and cultural barriers
- literacy
- communal or overcrowded accommodation.

This will be supplemented with targeted work with specific settings. The targeted work will be informed by data and local intelligence to ensure rapid, targeted communications can be deployed where emerging ‘hotspots’ are identified (as identified by on-going surveillance details earlier in this plan). The communications activity will have a focus on ensuring communication barriers can be overcome and the population of Gwent receive messages regarding the appropriate actions they need to take (See Communications section for further details).

WG TAG Group publication on behavioural science - [Technical Advisory Group: using behavioural science to inform policy and practice | GOV.WALES](#)

## 6.12 Mass vaccination for COVID-19 and maximising uptake of the routine influenza vaccination

A Programme Board has been established to provide oversight of the planning and implementation, and a Stakeholder Reference Group to ensure the operational response can be delivered effectively and at scale.

[Covid-19 Vaccine - Aneurin Bevan University Health Board \(nhs.wales\)](https://nhs.uk/wales/covid-19-vaccine)

### 6.12.1 Routine influenza vaccination programme

As in previous years, the Primary and Community Care Division within ABUHB will lead the delivery of the ABUHB Influenza Vaccination Programme through their usual delivery routes for 2 and 3 year olds, people under 65 years old in a clinical risk group and those who are 65 years and over. A survey has been sent to all GP Practices to establish capacity to deliver to specified cohorts whilst observing current COVID-19 infection prevention and control requirements (such as use of PPE, social distancing and area decontamination). Practices will use this information to inform any joint planning for mass vaccination clinics, as required, and the anticipated increase in demand this season, which has already been observed in the Southern Hemisphere.

GP Practices have been asked to prioritise the vaccinations of housebound (through District Nursing Teams) and shielded patients when vaccine is delivered. It is likely that additional cohorts will become eligible for a vaccine this coming flu season but all practices are required to offer vaccinations to those who are usually eligible first, before additional cohorts are invited. This is to ensure that the most vulnerable patients are protected, before influenza starts circulating in the community.

As well as ensuring eligible patient cohort groups are vaccinated, targeted work to ensure maximum uptake of the flu vaccine amongst Frontline Health and Social Care staff is underway. ABUHB Complex Care Team and the Immunisation Co-ordinator are working together to build capacity amongst registered nurses in Nursing Homes to vaccinate residents and staff working within the setting. Work is also underway to agree a clear process for Community Pharmacies to vaccinate staff working in residential homes.

It is recognised that there will be a requirement to move vaccines, as required, between Practices and/or to establish mass vaccination clinics to meet demand. The Health Board will be required to facilitate this in line with MRHA guidance to ensure it is conducted in a safe and appropriate manner and required cold chains are maintained. On-going guidance and support will be given to providers to ensure that venues selected for vaccination clinics meet infection prevention and control requirements (including sufficient PPE, patient flow), to ensure patient and staff safety whilst maximising efficiency and delivery at scale.

The Primary and Community Care Division will work with GP Practices, Community Pharmacies, District Nursing Team and Care Home providers to:

1. Facilitate GP Practices and Community Pharmacies working together through their Neighbourhood Care Networks to agree robust plans to promote and meet the expected demand for the flu vaccine in light of the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Develop and implement an effective Communications plan for successful take up of the flu vaccination among Health and Social Care Workers and eligible cohorts within the general population.

3. Ensure that housebound and shielded patients are recognised as priority groups for vaccination and receive their vaccine early in the flu season.
4. Agree and implement a process to enable registered Nurses working in nursing homes to immunise residents and staff within the setting.
5. Ensure arrangements are in place for Community Pharmacies and District Nurses to immunise in residential homes and access to flu vaccination is readily available for other Social Care staff through local Community Pharmacies.
6. Provide on-going guidance to ensure the safe and efficient movement of vaccine between clinics as set out in the MHRA guidance and ensure appropriate infection prevention and control guidance and support is given to providers in a timely way.

Through their internal structures, WAST will deliver be delivering an Influenza Vaccination Programme to ensure high uptake of vaccine for front line staff.

## 6.13 Enforcement

Local authority Public Protection teams and Gwent Police are promoting compliance through advice and enforcement. The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restriction) (Wales) Regulations, which are subject to ongoing amendments and updates, impose requirements on individuals and workplaces to minimise the risk of coronavirus transmission. These Regulations provide specific provisions for enforcement where non-compliance with the regulations is identified. Local authorities are responsible for exercising enforcement functions relating to workplaces and open premises, whereas the Police are responsible for enforcing requirements that apply to the public.

Local Authorities have prioritised Covid enforcement over other public protection regulatory activity, and have been able to secure some additional enforcement resources funded by the Welsh Government Covid Hardship Fund, but currently only until the end of September 2021. The resource provides the service with additional capacity to undertake interventions proactively and reactively, in response to complaints and intelligence, to assess compliance and take enforcement action where necessary. Local Authorities and the Police are also working collaboratively to deliver targeted advice and enforcement activities jointly.

With the phased lifting of restrictions, officers are delivering targeted, proactive interventions, providing advice and ensuring sufficient risk assessments are in place to facilitate safe reopening. There will be a continued need for increased capacity in Public Protection services to deal with backlogs of regulatory work, which may pose other risks and harms to public health if not addressed. Likewise, the Police are experiencing other “non-Covid” demands on their resources. Partners will continue to work to balance enforcement priorities within available resources.

## 6.14 Arriving travellers

The ABUHB Staff Wellbeing Team in the GTTPS Regional Cell support escalations made by the Arriving Traveller Team for people returning from amber countries. There is a process in place for escalation to Gwent Police, when appropriate, who enforce isolation/quarantine requirements in respect of arriving travellers. We are currently in discussion with Welsh Government regarding possible arrangements for enhanced management of arriving amber travellers.

## 6.15 Populations disproportionately affected by COVID-19

Protecting the most vulnerable in the region who are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 is a priority. The higher vulnerability to COVID-19 death among socio-economically deprived groups means that the Gwent region is an area that is particularly vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic. Multi-generation living presents a risk in relation to COVID-19 due to the vulnerability of the older members of the household. Age is by far the most important individual factor determining risk of COVID-19 death with the majority of deaths to date being in those over 60 years. The response of local people, community organisations and neighbourhood groups has been significant during the first phase of the pandemic, with overwhelming responses of pro-social and civic activity ranging from financial support, shopping and prescription deliveries for the most vulnerable in our communities.

Equity of access to testing is also a key component of the TTP service and our understanding of the epidemiology of the disease. ABUHB has recently completed a project to understand the issues for socially vulnerable groups including socioeconomic circumstances, geographic location and social vulnerability. This has highlighted the barriers some groups of the population have in terms of accessing mainstream communications, language and cultural barriers, digital exclusion, general misconceptions over eligibility testing, stigma associated with communicable diseases and a lack of private transport to access the Drive Through Testing sites. This information is being used to further inform and develop our approach to ensuring the public engage with COVID-19 messaging and a number of delivery methods are considered, such as:

- disseminating printed multi-language communication materials
- promoting the 119 phone number for digitally excluded groups
- a blended approach in terms of mobile testing units, home testing kits and local testing sites to enable and improve access to testing.

A significant amount of work has already been undertaken to identify socially vulnerable groups and ensure their needs can be met in relation to delivery of the Gwent TTP service. A Standard Operating Procedure will be applied for contact tracing socially vulnerable groups, to ensure access to translation services, engagement with key organisations who support these groups and distribution of TTP information to raise awareness of testing and contact tracing arrangements.

The Regional Oversight Group, in conjunction with Gwent IMT and the Gwent Warning and Informing group, will:

- Broaden our approach to Test, Trace, Protect messaging to proactively engage those most vulnerable people in society disproportionately affected by COVID-19 as defined by age, ethnicity and social status.
- Continue to develop the support strategy through the SCG including access to advice, information and financial support for those that are self-isolating.
- Provide on-going guidance, training and printed materials for contact tracing teams about the specific support required for socially vulnerable groups and support for follow up testing should contacts become symptomatic during their isolation period.
- Continue to use our Integrated Well-being Network Team to ensure community groups, third sector organisations and volunteers build on the practical, emotional and psychological support which has enabled people to manage during lockdown.

## 7 RESPONSE—CLUSTERS, INCIDENTS, OUTBREAKS

### 7.1 New cases and clusters



The Test Trace Protect (TTP) teams may identify complex cases or clusters of cases, the response to which is overseen by the Consultant in Communicable Disease Consultant/Consultant in Public Health with the support of local authority Directors of Public Protection and the Health Board Director of Public Health, for the regional teams. Analytical support is provided by Public Health Wales and the Welsh Government's COVID-19 Intelligence Cell. Complex cases and clusters will be reported to the Health Protection Advisory Group and Welsh Ministers, along with the mitigating actions being taken.

This process may identify more complex cases; such as someone in the homeless community, prison population, or with complex medical needs. Clusters might also be identified, with cases from different households but linked to a particular person, location or time period; such as a workplace, event or particular premises.

Complex cases and clusters are referred by TTP from local teams for investigation by appropriate professionals within the regional teams. Regional teams comprise of public health and environmental health professionals from Public Health Wales, local authorities and health boards. Where necessary, an Incident Management Team will be established to investigate and monitor the situation.

If there is concern about clusters in individual premises TTP teams, local Environmental Health Officers and Public Health Wales will support them to take action if someone reports symptoms. Tailored advice is being provided for higher-risk settings, to set out the immediate actions required, and to describe how local and national public health agencies will support them to prevent the spread of the virus. This will help ensure immediate action is taken, before wider community transmission takes place.

### 7.2 Management of clusters and incidents



The primary objective in the management of a cluster, incident and outbreak is to protect public health by identifying the source and/or main determinants and implementing necessary measures to prevent further spread or recurrence of the infection. The primary key to cluster, incident and outbreak management is case finding, in order to undertake effective contact tracing, detect possible linked cases as soon as possible, and to attempt to contain onward transmission. Case finding, enhanced by backward contact identification, in specific instances, will enable the early identification of possible sources, or, clusters of infection.

### 7.3 Identification of clusters and incidents

Surveillance of the contact tracing process enables the identification of a complex case or one involving a high-risk setting and for the Regional Cell to take action.

The Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales, 2020<sup>10</sup> identifies the determination of an outbreak. Traditionally, an outbreak is defined as an observed number of cases greater than that expected for a defined place and time period, or two or more cases with common exposure. However, since that occurs on countless occasions in Wales, the need to activate the Outbreak Plan and convene an Outbreak Control Team (OCT) is made jointly by the three parties (Local Authority, PHW, or Microbiology Services).

As lockdown is being eased, it is expected that there will be more clusters of cases in different settings as people re-start integrating into society, for example in settings such as schools, workplaces, leisure facilities and community. Daily surveillance of data and cases emerging through the Gwent TTP Service enables close monitoring and situational awareness to identify high-risk places, locations, communities which may need additional support to manage/contain the spread of infection.

Surveillance information is cascaded to the Regional Cell, and the multi-agency Regional Oversight Group to monitor and provide leadership for activating necessary processes including: contact tracing at local level, prevention measures and risk assessments with settings at local level, oversight of the situation across the region, and instigating incident and outbreak responses as required.

### 7.4 Management of clusters and incidents

An agreed approach has been developed, based on prior learning for the management of clusters, incidents and outbreaks in the region and involves multi-agency working at regional and local operational level.

The Local Authority will provide support to the setting (such as care homes, schools, workplaces) and take a lead in communicating to local partners on relevant information to be shared. ABUHB will take a lead to support hospital and other NHS settings, whilst PHW will manage and lead the response in HM Prison settings. The local Contact Tracing teams will provide support and guidance to individuals who need to self-isolate. The setting will also be monitored to ensure compliance with such measures.

On recognition of an incident or cluster, the Local Authority Public Protection Department will initially conduct the risk assessment with the setting, provide infection control advice and request testing as appropriate. SOPs developed and agreed at local/regional level are in place, along with Action Cards (produced by PHW) to support incident/cluster/outbreak management in identified key settings. The SOPs and Action Cards will enable the Regional Cell to respond to a range of incident/cluster/outbreak scenarios taking a timely, appropriate, acceptable and evidence-based approach.

Single cases that cause concern within a setting/community, for example school, care home, homeless, will be referred to the Regional Cell, in particular the Regional Oversight Group, for

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<sup>10</sup> Welsh Government. (2020a). *Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

discussion and advice on the management of the situation, and agreed communications will be disseminated.

Complex incidents, clusters and outbreaks will be discussed in partnership with PHW to ensure a coordinated approach and response.

There are well established processes in place for convening IMTs and mobilising responses to outbreaks, as outlined in the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales<sup>11</sup>. The approach is multi-agency and can be escalated or de-escalated in line with the risk and control measures that are needed.

These processes include the response to variants and mutations of concern (VAMC) / variants under investigate (VUI). Variants and Mutations of Concern (VAMC) - Conceptual Framework and End-to-End Process Manual for TTP Operational Teams in Wales, and VAMC Conceptual Framework Wales - 'Variants and mutations of concern (VAMC): approach to identification and management in Wales' are utilised.

Specific arrangements are in place for identifying VOC and VUIs, which are facilitated through the PHW virology laboratory.

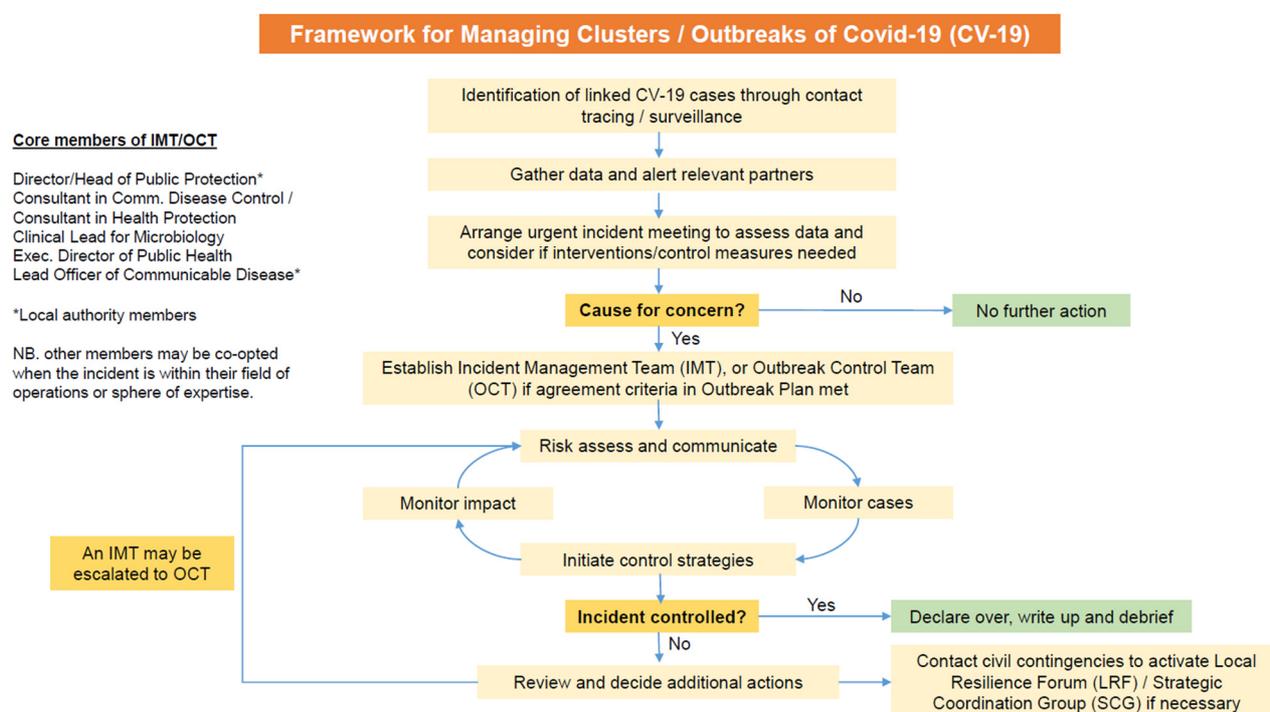


Figure 8 - Framework for managing clusters / incidents of COVID-19

<sup>11</sup> Welsh Government. (2020a). *Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

## 7.5 Decision making and escalation process

Where it appears to any one of the Local Authority, ABUHB, PHW, or Microbiology services that an outbreak may exist, immediate contact will be made with the other parties. The parties will jointly consider the facts available and will determine whether or not an incident needing activation is required. Determining the course of action to be taken will follow the outline in the Wales Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan. From the point at which an outbreak is declared in an incident meeting, the meeting becomes a formal Incident or Cluster meeting and attendees become formal members of an IMT / cluster meeting. Membership of the IMT consists of those partners as directed by the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales.

- Not convening an IMT does not mean that no public health action is required but rather it can be managed as part of local routine processes, for example applying the Action Cards, whilst closely monitoring the situation with on-going surveillance to monitor any progress/changes.
- The decision to declare an outbreak and convene an IMT may be made by one of the above-mentioned parties and core membership includes those listed as part of the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales.
- As part of a local incident response, access to testing is provided at pace when required, including asymptomatic testing around the outbreak where appropriate.
- Communication is key to ensuring all relevant parties are aware of, and have access to timely, accurate information to manage and control clusters, incidents and outbreaks. The approach to public communications is agreed at the first IMT meeting, including the lead organisation responsible for communication and the relevant partners necessary to be involved. The confidentiality of individual cases and businesses will be balanced with proactive communication, when needed, for example, to actively find additional cases or to reassure the public.
- Table 3 outlines the decision making at various levels, below.

Table 3: Summary of the decision making at various activity levels.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Decision making</b>	<b>Co-ordination, advice and engagement</b>	<b>Support and Assurance</b>
Individual settings	Individual managers of the setting	Local Authority Public Protection (Environmental Health)	Gwent TTP Service (local teams) to liaise with all levels as needed
Local	Local Authority Head of Public Protection, ABUHB Director of Public Health and Strategic Partnerships, PHW	Regional Oversight Group, Regional Cell	
Cross boundary (Wales, England)*	PHW, PHE, WG, Regional Cell, Regional Oversight Group	LRF	Neighbouring Local Authorities

Where powers held by the local authority are exceeded, a request for intervention from national government is required.

\*Control measures relating to a setting will be applied by the Local Authority within which it is situated.

The Membership of an IMT can vary depending on the nature of the incident, the setting and the complexity of the environment. There is a core membership for all incidents or outbreaks, additional core members and support staff and co-opted professionals as needed. Named regional leads and named local leads are listed in [Appendix A](#). If the SCG is sitting, the chair of Gwent IMT sits on the SCG and provides the link to SCG structures. If the SCG is not sitting, the strategic leads of each organisation receive the SBAR through internal channels (the SCG chair receives the SBAR directly). Should there be a need to escalate and activate the SCG, the Chair of Gwent IMT / relevant Local Authority / Health Board will have a discussion with the chair of the SCG and activate the SCG as per normal activation protocols.

### 7.5.1 Incident response - IMT

Where there is a public health concern about onward transmission from a cluster or a complex case, an Incident Management Team (IMT) may be established. This brings together public and environmental health experts and other responsible bodies to coordinate the local response and identify whether onward transmission is taking place. Actions will be taken to prevent future transmission, but if there are concerns that containment measures are not wholly effective this will be escalated. It is unlikely that an Outbreak Control Team will be established in line with **The Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales ('The Wales Outbreak Plan')** as the pandemic is seen as the 'outbreak' and the response is managed through the incident management teams.

In the majority of cases an incident or outbreak will be managed and contained at a local level without the need for further escalation and more general measures or restrictions.

### 7.5.2 Roles and responsibilities

Responsibility for managing outbreaks is shared by all the organisations who are members of the Incident Management Team (IMT). Specifically, the responsibility for decisions made by the IMT is collectively owned by all organisations represented on the IMT. Individual organisations are then responsible for carrying out the actions assigned to them as agreed at IMT meetings.

Leadership for incidents and outbreaks sits with the Chair of the relevant Incident Management Teams. This will normally be the Consultant in Communication Disease Control / Consultant in Health Protection within Public Health Wales / the Director of Public Protection within a local authority or the Director of Public Health

### 7.5.3 Relevant powers

In considering the response to incidents and outbreaks, there are already powers for local authorities (specifically those of Environmental Health Officers) and other enforcement agencies to take local action, such as requiring a premises to close or prohibiting individuals from specified actions. These powers exist at the local level under *the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984* and *The Health Protection (Local Authority Powers) (Wales) Regulations 2010*.

To ensure a rapid response we will continue to review and strengthen the powers available to designated public health officers to intervene more quickly to close, restrict entry, or restrict the location of persons in, individual premises.

[The Health Protection \(Coronavirus Restrictions\) \(No. 5\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020 | GOV.WALES](#)

already place restrictions on gatherings and the closure of public land, which allows for enforcement to prevent events from taking place. Should these be relaxed at a national level, we will consider whether local powers are required to prevent specific events or prohibit access to or use of outdoor places.

Welsh Ministers have powers under the **Coronavirus Act 2020** to ensure local actions are proportionate and protect public health. This might include directing the closure of certain premises; such action will be taken on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer for Wales and in consultation with local authorities and the Incident Management Team.

## 7.6 Cross border incidents – Wales / England

For incidents which affect cross border localities within Wales as well as to England, all relevant Local Authorities and Health Boards will fully participate in the process and involve PHW and Public Health England (PHE) as part of the response.

Where the SCG is established, cross-border SCG (Wales) to be considered.

## 7.7 Escalation to the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)

In the event that the prevalence of COVID-19 is increasing in the population and the existing control measures through cluster, incident and outbreak management, along with escalation of community control measures, are not containing the outbreak the issues of concern should be escalated to the SCG.

This may necessitate the implementation of civil restrictions on health protection grounds on a local or regional basis e.g. “Containment”, the requirement for a coordinated strategic response by public authorities or a requirement for mutual aid, including Military Aid to the Civil Authority (MACA).

As agreed by Gwent SCG:

- When an IMT is established, a Local Authority Civil Contingencies representative is to be invited to join the IMT, this includes Gwent IMT.
- The chair of the SCG will receive regular updates from the chair of Gwent IMT.
- Should there be a likelihood of wider consequences or impact as above, and a need for escalation to the SCG, the Chair of the SCG, Chair of the IMT, Director of Public Health and Civil Contingencies rep will discuss the potential for wider consequences and further actions.
- The SCG will be activated if required as per normal SCG activation protocols, and will be established within 2 hours if necessary.
- As in the Wales Communicable Disease Plan, should the SCG be established, the Gwent IMT will become a Tactical Sub group of the SCG.

Strategic Leads of participating organisations are responsible for ensuring that the local and regional leadership, including Leaders and Executive Members, continue to be briefed and engaged in the ongoing situation.

## 8 RESPONSE – LOCAL / REGIONAL /WALES MEASURES

### 8.1 Local / regional restrictions



#### 8.1.1 Criteria for establishing local / regional restrictions

A national approach to restrictions is most likely to be understood and effective. However, should there be clear evidence of a sustained and ongoing variation between parts of Wales, the alert levels approach allows for regional and localised application.

The headline indicators monitored as part of the WG surveillance approach (see [Coronavirus control plan: alert levels in Wales | GOV.WALES](#)) will provide some data on the potential need for response to introduce new local or regional measures:

- Confirmed case rates per 100,000
- Confirmed case rates for over 60's
- Test positivity
- Projection of future case incidence (next 2 weeks)
- Rates of change in the indicators (rapid increase)
- Management of hospital capacity, and expected impact
- IMT concerns and ability to manage local issues, with local action being ineffective

Any decisions will not be made based on these or other indicators alone. There is no mechanistic link between these indicators and the decision to introduce local or regional measures or restrictions. All decisions will be informed by the specific local context and situation on the ground, including advice from local and national health professionals. The HPAG will draw on the full suite of quantitative and qualitative evidence available and synthesised via the COVID-19 Intelligence Cell.

While case incidence and positivity are not the only factors in determining the timing and type of response to combat the spread of the virus, or removal of additional measures, they do however provide a very clear and understandable framework on which to plan ahead and prepare. They serve as prompts for action and 'rules of thumb' to guide, alongside other public health intelligence and appraisals at local level.

Investigation of the drivers of infection may uncover closed settings outbreaks or more widespread community transmission. Different control actions may be needed depending on these drivers and WG would expect Local or Regional Incident Management Teams to identify and consider appropriateness of action.

[Coronavirus control plan: alert levels in Wales | GOV.WALES](#)

### Hyper-local restriction areas

A hyper-local restriction area could be implemented where there is a high incidence of cases and clusters predominantly within distinct areas / wards within a Local Authority. Restrictions would be applied to this area only. Consideration needs to be given to ease of being able to create a distinct area, enforcement and targeted communications. Experience of the local health protection areas in Wales has shown that a micro-targeted approach was not effective over a period of more than a few weeks. This reflects the fact that people travel between small local areas and it is therefore very difficult to contain the spread of coronavirus in those areas where there is very high mobility. CEO of the relevant Local Authority to discuss with WG as necessary.

#### 8.1.2 Decision making process

Leadership for the wider local or regional measures rests with Welsh Ministers, working in concert with local elected Leaders to coordinate local and regional responses.

The decision making process for implementation of local / regional interventions is:

- Gwent IMT make recommendations to COVID-19 intelligence cell through the SBAR (situation, background, assessment, recommendation) reporting. The SBAR is also submitted to SCG for discussion when SCG is active.
- When the SCG is not active, the SBAR is circulated to strategic leads of relevant organisations via internal communication structures.
- Should there be a requirement for increased interventions, or any other criteria be met as 8.1.1, a meeting will be called between Welsh Ministers, Local Authority CEOs and Leaders.
- An urgent SCG should be called to discuss the recommendations via the normal SCG activation protocol.
- Strategic Leads of participating organisations are responsible for ensuring that the local and regional leadership, including Leaders and Executive Members, continue to be briefed and engaged in the ongoing situation.

#### 8.1.3 Options for intervention ahead of restrictions

Interventions could include a mix of public health advice, regulations, increased testing, or any other measures. Examples of interventions are:

- Continued reinforcement of existing messages – i.e. social distancing, follow the guidelines
- Enhanced contact tracing to identify source of infection and understand epidemiology
- Proactive work with businesses/premises to ensure compliance with social distancing
- Implemented a large communications campaign around behaviours and the need to follow guidelines
- Identified link workers to target getting specific groups to come forward for testing
- Messaging specifically to schools and children
- Introduction of mobile testing units
- Closing / restricting visiting in care homes
- Employers encouraging staff to work from home, where possible
- Additional checks on returning travellers
- Alerts to primary care and hospitals of rising numbers and to actively test – case finding
- Accelerate provision of 1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> dose vaccine (as applicable) to those at risk
- Local Authorities have the following powers: [Powers to impose restrictions \(COVID-19\): guidance for local authorities | GOV.WALES](#)

## 8.2 All Wales measures or restrictions



The [Coronavirus control plan: alert levels in Wales | GOV.WALES](#) sets out in detail how national measures could be introduced if necessary, and also how they will be de-escalated.

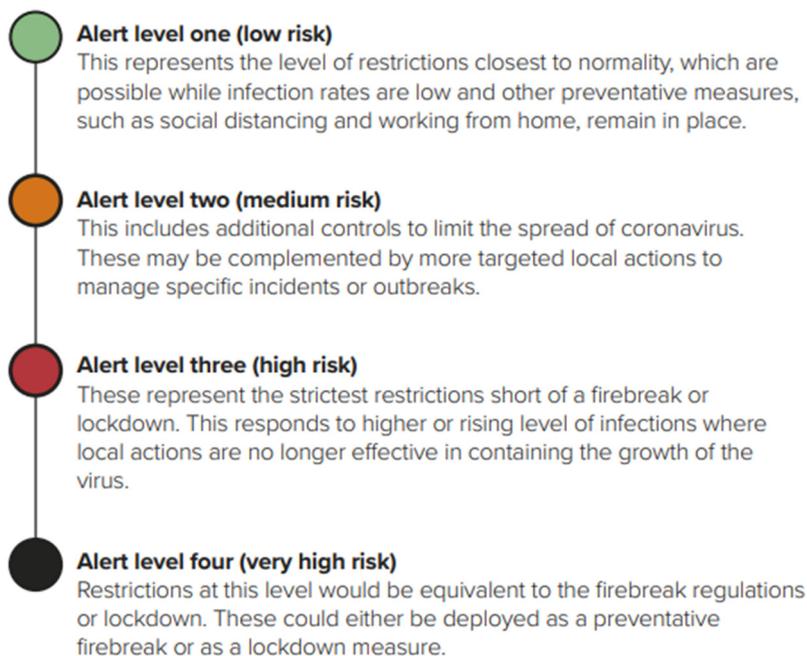


Figure 9 - extract from [Coronavirus control plan: alert levels in Wales | GOV.WALES](#), January 2021

Leadership for the implementation of national measures rests with Welsh Ministers.

The existing regulations have been made by the Welsh Ministers under ***The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984***. Amendments to [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus Restrictions\) \(No. 5\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020 | GOV.WALES](#) could therefore re-impose restrictions that have been lifted, or add new regulations to respond to new evidence or changing circumstances

## 8.3 Wider consequences and considerations

Considerations for SCG / subgroups and other wider consequences:

- Mutual aid requirements
- Movement of key workers with travel restrictions
- PPE supplies
- Business continuity – critical public services
- Public disorder issues – on announcement and throughout
- Protection of care home residents, capacity issues
- Schools and other Educational establishments
- Protection of and support for extremely vulnerable (shielded) residents

- Accommodation for key workers
- Child care for key workers
- Homelessness / rough sleepers
- Death management
- Communication
- Critical supplies and suppliers (including food, fuel, medications)
- Concurrent incidents
- Wider harm (mental health impacts, delays to provision of public services)
- Economic impact considerations
- Military aid
- Widespread community testing

## 8.4 Relevant powers

The Welsh Ministers have a wide range of powers that provide for a broad menu of options for interventions that can be used both for preventative and direct intervention purposes.

The Welsh Ministers have powers under the **Coronavirus Act 2020** to:

- Close education institutions or childcare providers (one or more named institutions, all institutions in Wales or any part of Wales)
- Prohibit, or impose restrictions in relation to, the holding of events or gatherings
- Impose prohibitions, requirements or restrictions in relation to the entry into, departure from, or location of persons in premises in Wales

The Welsh Ministers also have broad powers to make regulations under the **Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984**. Regulations can be made to put in place local or regional measures or restrictions and prevent wider community transmission. These restrictions will be tailored to the specific area and the relative rates of transmission and related risk to public health, but might include any of the areas set out above under the section on interventions.

Table 4: Local decision making powers

Local decision making:	
Closing businesses and venues within the area (such as towns or counties). This might include pubs and restaurants, community centres, places of worship, education settings, or any other place where transmission is occurring	Premises where transmission is occurring – PHW / LA Blanket closure – Welsh Ministers

## 8.5 De-escalating alert levels

WG will ensure that any regulations introduced at a local, regional or national level to impose restrictions are only in place for as long as they are necessary and are proportionate.

Escalation, however, may happen quickly and may involve moving up more than one alert level at a time to prevent the rapid spread of coronavirus. Following escalation up a level(s) any subsequent de-escalation would be unlikely for a number of weeks, as it takes around two weeks to see an effect and further time to establish whether that change has been sustained.

The indicators set out in the Coronavirus Control Plan set out the indicators which will be monitored to determine which alert level applies. These are not mechanical thresholds – they are broad

principles, which will be used to inform balanced judgments. These indicators will be kept under review and revised when necessary, for example to take account of increased mass testing and the availability of vaccination. WG make the decisions on escalation or de-escalation between alert levels based on advice, guidance and the information available. The de-escalation between levels may be a gradual process.

Spread of virus and health outcomes	Alert level one (Low risk) 	Alert level two (Medium risk) 	Alert level three (High risk) 	Alert level four (Very high risk) 
Deteriorating	Alert Level two/three (escalate)	Alert level three (escalate)	Alert level four (escalate)	Alert level four (maintain)
Stable	Alert level one (maintain)	Alert level two (maintain)	Alert level three (maintain)	Alert level four (maintain)
Improving (recent)	Alert level one (maintain)	Alert level two (maintain)	Alert level three (maintain)	Alert level four (maintain)
Improvement (established)	Alert level one (maintain)	Alert level one (de-escalate)	Alert level two (de-escalate)	Alert level three (de-escalate)

Figure 10 - extract from [Coronavirus control plan: alert levels in Wales | GOV.WALES](https://www.gov.wales/coronavirus-control-plan/alert-levels-in-wales), January 2021

## 9. LOCAL DEATH MANAGEMENT

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To meet the Gwent LRF strategic aim of *'prepare and plan for an unprecedented increase in deaths across the Gwent area'*, a Tactical Sub Group has been established to consider the planning and management of the local death management process.

### 9.1 Objectives

The objectives of the group are to:

- Set out the scale of the challenges arising from the projected increase in the death rate.
- Assess the capability of the current arrangements to respond.
- Ensure that where appropriate additional measures are established to enhance current capabilities.
- Ensure that an appropriate structure is established to inform and advise the SCG on the management of deaths.
- Consider any urgent issues for immediate action.
- Consider and agree establishing appropriate sub groups where required such as Certification and Bereavement Process.
- Report to the SCG on progress and put forward recommendations that may require strategic sign off.

### 9.2 Areas of responsibility

The Group's areas of responsibility are:

- Body Process Following Death
  - a. Review Welsh Government Guidance
  - b. Establish an understanding of processes following a death to identify any pinch points:
    - Certification of death
    - Coroner process
    - Funeral Director process
    - ABUHB process
    - Local Authority (Registrar) process
    - Crematoria and burial processes and certification
  - c. Identify and establish new methods of working.
- Body Storage
  - a. Review and establish appropriate body storage in line with projected reasonable worst-case scenarios. Identifying the following:
    - Mortuary capacity
    - Funeral director storage capacity
    - Any additional supplier capabilities
    - Temporary storage options
    - Assistance available from Welsh Government
- Funerals
  - a. Review Welsh Government Guidance
  - b. Review capacity for Crematoria and Burials
  - c. Confirm approach for mourners at Crematoria and Burials
  - d. Public messaging – including messages to faith communities

## OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

The group is able to convene to respond to any emerging local death management issues. Work has commenced on undertaking a substantial review of the LRF Local Death Management arrangements, identification of triggers for standing up of the planning and response, including the restoration of the temporary body storage facilities which were commissioned and established through early intervention by ABUHB, to provide sufficient additional body storage capability.

The identification of appropriate triggers is dependent on the provision of accurate Reasonable Worst Case Scenarios of projected mortality rates and the delivery of timely 'real' data and outcomes resulting from early warning surveillance.

The group will provide weekly death data in line with modelling data to Gwent IMT.

## 10. COMMUNICATION

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There is a need for on-going, clear and effective communication, coordinated between all sectors and with national activity focusing on:

- Surveillance
- Management of Clusters, Incidents and Outbreaks
- Sampling and Testing
- Prevention
- Mitigation and Control.

The following section outlines how ABUHB and the Gwent LRF will achieve consistency of messages across multiple incidents/outbreaks within the region, consistency across regional borders and with national messaging, including alignment to 'Keep Wales Safe' and 'Testing' messages and to avoid creating new campaigns where national frameworks exist, including 'Keep Wales Safe' 'Test, Trace, Protect' and vaccination.

### 10.1 Warning and Informing group

The Gwent LRF Warning and Informing Group is responsible for aligning communications and communicating key information to the residents of Gwent during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring a consistent approach between local partners, PHW and Welsh Government. The Chair of the Warning and Informing Group provides the link to the Gwent SCG LRF Group (when active) and as per plan has allocated Communications Leads to tactical groups. The Chair is part of the Wales Warning and Informing group meetings and disseminates all appropriate updates.

The **aims** of this communication plan are:

- To provide strategic direction for organisations involved in communicating a major incident or a situation where a multi-agency response is required.
- To ensure that the Gwent public, stakeholders, the media are informed in a timely manner about an outbreak and what they need to do to reduce transmission and to keep Wales safe.
- To ensure consistent use of terminology.
- To ensure that there is clear leadership and coordination of all communications activities, and that all communications activities are aligned with and supportive of each other – in line with the Gwent Warning and Informing plan and the All Wales Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (Welsh Government, 2020a).
- To ensure that communications activity and messaging around an outbreak in Wales is carried out in line with the overall Welsh approach to dealing with the pandemic.
- To effectively communicate and share information with the communities and individuals directly affected to maintain confidence and compliance with guidance / expectations.
- To align with existing Keep Wales Safe and TTP Communications campaigns.

Lead Responders ensure the following **objectives** feature prominently in the Prevention and Response Communication Plan:

- Reassurance
- Raising awareness of any risks
- Provide proactive information on how to protect family and loved ones
- Advise on steps being taken to handle the situation
- Explain steps that will be taken to return to normality.

The Gwent Communications strategy will include a number of elements that will enable focussed and targeted communications and consideration of language and cultural barriers using all available multi-agency and external channels:

Communicating with those identified as vulnerable or disproportionately affected by COVID-19, who need a targeted approach to ensure they have the information and support needed to take the required action (see Prevention section). There will be a particular focus on overcoming language and literacy barriers, and increasing confidence in coming forward for testing or participating fully in contact tracing by ensuring the right support is available.

Obtaining real time local intelligence on areas where 'hotspots' in cases are developing to allow for agile targeting of communications and mapping of clusters of cases and contacts.

Through existing programmes (such as Integrated Well-being Networks, key stakeholders and hyper-local communications channels have been identified in each locality and provide ways of communicating as well as obtaining local intelligence on what people are saying / thinking about TTP.

Regional Communications activity will be evaluated by monitoring levels of behaviour change/calls to action, stakeholder engagement, stakeholder and community feedback and monitoring impact on overall cases and outbreak areas.

In line with the Warning and Informing plan, all partners will:

- Provide information for the Multi-Agency Communications Group, if required.
- Use and promote the preferred incident hashtag as a source of reliable and accurate information.
- Link, re-tweet and point to the channels of other responders / agencies involved and regularly indicate who the Lead Responder is.
- Manage public expectations of their sites - If they are not 24-7 include a message giving their times of operation.
- Monitor their own sites and inform the Lead Responder and partners of any misinformation and developing trends.
- Offer mutual aid to the incident Communications Lead if requested and able to do so.

The following internal and external audiences are considered as part of the communications plan:

- General public across Gwent
- 'Hard to reach' groups – BAME, G&T
- Shielding group and wider at risk groups
- Care sector staff/commissioned services
- All multi-agency employees (critical workers)
- Key Officers Environmental Health Officers/Community Cohesion Officers
- Councillors/Elected Representatives/Police Authority Members
- Key community representatives /community councils/opinion formers
- Media
- Businesses/Business Groups/Forums
- Schools
- Childcare settings
- FE/HE
- Relevant partner agencies
- High risk settings (food production settings)
- Public transport users
- Hospitality sector
- Tourism operators and holiday makers

## 10.2 Roles and responsibilities

The communication flow is outlined in Figure 11.

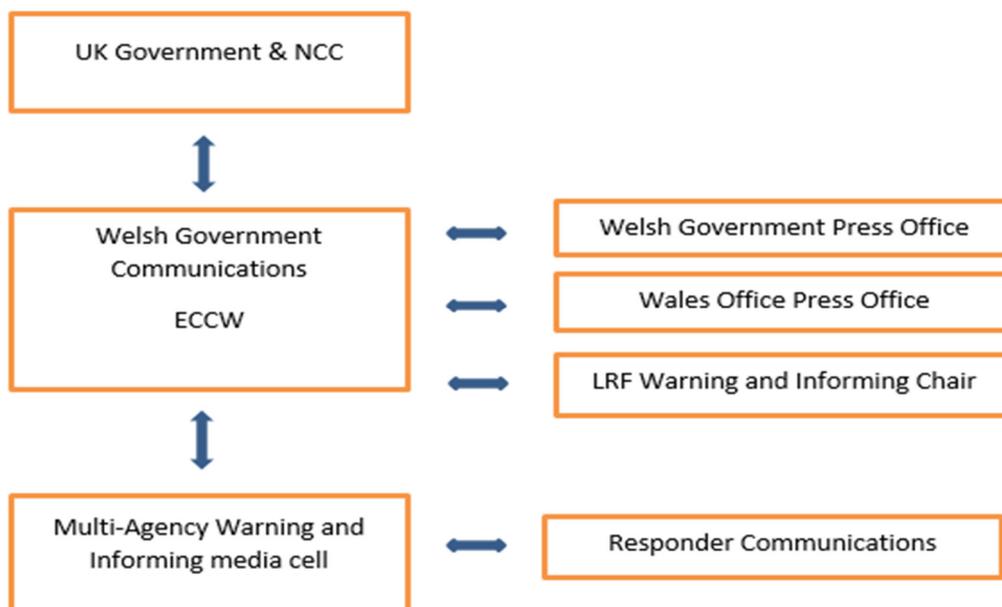


Figure 11 - Communications Flowchart.

### 10.2.1 Public Health Wales communications

PHW is the lead agency for communications relating to outbreak. This means that PHW Communications Lead will provide strategic communications advice to the OCT.

- Work rapidly to develop and sign off appropriate messages in conjunction with the Public Health Consultant Lead and other members of the OCT, recognising the importance of professional communications advice in clear public messaging strategy.
- Lead the media response, both proactive and reactive where appropriate.
- Monitor local and media discussion and reporting and lead on rebuttal of misinformation, including acting quickly to correct misreporting.
- Maintain a coordinated plan of activity reflecting activity led by partner communications teams.
- Provide timely summaries (daily where needed) of activity and issues to partner organisations.

Broadly speaking, PHW is the lead agency for communications activity relating to **public health guidance** and **clinical activity** relating to COVID-19 in Wales.

In the context of an outbreak, PHW is the statutory lead for all communications and is responsible for the dissemination of public and stakeholder messaging for key partners, including the Local Authority communications team and the Warning and Informing Cell.

PHW will brief the All-Wales Media Cell (ECCW) and Welsh Government.

PHW will ensure that stakeholders, including Members of the Senedd and Members of Parliament will receive media statements in advance of issuing. PHW will confirm how the Local Authority wishes to disseminate statements and updates to their Elected Representatives.

Care will be taken to ensure appropriate engagement with communications teams should an employer be involved in the outbreak.

A regular battle rhythm of communications meetings will be aligned to SCG Meetings and shared with communications teams, to help align planned communications.

PHW will develop shareable messaging/assets for use by partners to include accessible and language specific assets for communities, employers and employees where English or Welsh is not the first language for.

PHW will lead on formulating public health messages, and will work with the multi-agency partners to disseminate through a range of channels.

### 10.2.2 Welsh Government

Welsh Government is leading on communications relating to **policy** and **official guidance** relating to COVID-19 in Wales.

Welsh Government Communications will brief officials as needed and ensure timely, accurate and consistent lines are provided to Welsh Government spokespeople.

Welsh Government will support communications to the media and public via its established channels, including regional media engagement.

Welsh Government will integrate into the existing outbreak communications structure in the event of an outbreak not being controlled, and local lockdown or local control measures need to be introduced (as per Local Lockdown communications plan).

Welsh Government Communications will ensure that the Health Minister and First Minister are sighted as necessary.

### 10.2.3 Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

The Aneurin Bevan Gwent Public Health Team, as part of ABUHB, have been represented on the Warning and Informing Group and provide the communications link with the Gwent TTP service, and key communications messages based on Welsh Government assets.

The Gwent TTP Service Programme Management Office will include a Communications function to provide co-ordination across the region on behalf of the Health Board, Local Authorities and partners. This will include:

- Developing a Gwent multi-agency TTP communications and engagement strategy and coordinate action between agencies via the Warning and Informing Group to ensure a consistent approach to communicating standard messages.
- Liaising with the Regional Cell to obtain real-time local intelligence and agree targeted communications where there is evidence of a rise in cases, as part of community preventative measures.
- Developing locally tailored communications in alignment with the TTP and Keep Wales Safe messages, and based on local intelligence.
- Regularly briefing key stakeholders across Gwent (e.g. MPs, MSs, Local Councillors, Community Councils, Leaders of community groups and clubs, third sector organisations, Registered Social landlords, primary care teams) and highlighting actions they can take to support effective communication on TTP.

## OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

- Coordinate communications in relation to incidents and outbreaks within Gwent, liaising with PHW.
- Liaison with communications leads in neighbouring regions to ensure consistency of messaging where incidents / outbreaks span boundaries.
- Use partners to exploit a range of local, regional channels to deliver focussed messaging to areas of greatest risk.
- Use partners to exploit a range a local, regional channels to deliver targeted communication in the event of incidents.
- Evaluate how communications increased knowledge, confidence and compliance in local communities.

### 10.2.4 Local Authority

Local Authorities will play a specific role in communicating and engaging with local communities through its existing channels, and through local leaders. Local Authorities will activate its public engagement networks and community cohesion groups.

The Local Authority Communications Leads will ensure PHW Communications Lead is sighted to any media enquiries so that together, we can provide coordinated planning and support to these.

Local Authority Communications Leads will provide advice and support to Local Authority spokespeople, ensure lines are timely, accurate and consistent.

Local Authorities will be responsible for advising on the best way to engage with key elected representatives.

Local Authorities will provide local intelligence gained through social listening and media monitoring which may require attention.

### 10.2.5 Multi-sector partners

All of the multi-sector partners have a role to play in helping to disseminate clear, accurate, timely and consistent messages which will have been signed off by the OCT.

Non-devolved organisations, including the FSA and the HSE will be consulted and involved via their communications team, as well as through their involvement with the OCT as appropriate.

### 10.2.6 Employers

Employer communications leads will work with PHW and Local Authorities to ensure that consistent messages are issued at all times.

# 11 IMPLEMENTATION, REVIEW AND LEARNING

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## 11.1 Implementation

All decisions to employ additional control measures and restrictions to respond to emerging situations will be based on the principles outlined in the national control plan. Escalation is detailed under sections 7, 8 and 12.

## 11.2 Review and learning

There will be a monthly review of the Gwent Prevention and Response plan through the Tactical planning group to assess effectiveness of implementation or the need for change. This will incorporate any changes to requirements in response to emerging regional issues where there is potential impact on case numbers, and changes to policy.

The review of arrangements within the plan will also incorporate learning and lessons identified through exercises, national groups, and learning from other parts of the UK.

## 12 REMOBILISATION / ESCALATION OF RESPONSE

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### 12.1 Notification and activation

In the event that the prevalence of COVID-19 is increasing in the population and the existing control measures through cluster, incident and outbreak management, along with escalation of community control measures, are not containing the outbreak the issues of concern should be escalated to the SCG.

Monitoring data, local intelligence and modelling insights will be used to track the current rates of transmission and incidence. If the following triggers are met escalation to a Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) should be considered:

- Recommendations from the Gwent SBAR;
  - Recommendation from a local or Gwent IMT;
  - An increase in transmission, incidence and prevalence of the virus;
  - Any response that requires mutual aid;
  - Any response that requires increased public restrictions above those that can be implemented by IMTs;
- NHS Capacity**
- Covid confirmed hospital occupancy increasing;
  - Covid confirmed critical care bed occupancy increasing;
  - Covid confirmed mortality rates increasing;
  - Emergence of Variants of Concern (VOC) affecting transmission rates;
  - Concerns around vaccination rates and data on the efficacy and effectiveness of the vaccines.

The SCG can be reconvened by any partner agency based on the triggers listed above, in line with the Wales Outbreak Control Plan and/or via the existing Partnership Groups (previously TCG's).

Should there be a likelihood of wider consequences or impact as above, and a need for escalation to the SCG, the Chair of the SCG, Chair of the IMT, Director of Public Health and Civil Contingencies rep will discuss the potential for wider consequences and further actions.

The SCG can be activated as per normal SCG activation protocols, and will be established within 2 hours if necessary (see 3.3 for SCG role)

Strategic Leads of participating organisations are responsible for ensuring that the local and regional leadership, including Leaders and Executive Members, continue to be briefed and engaged in the ongoing situation.

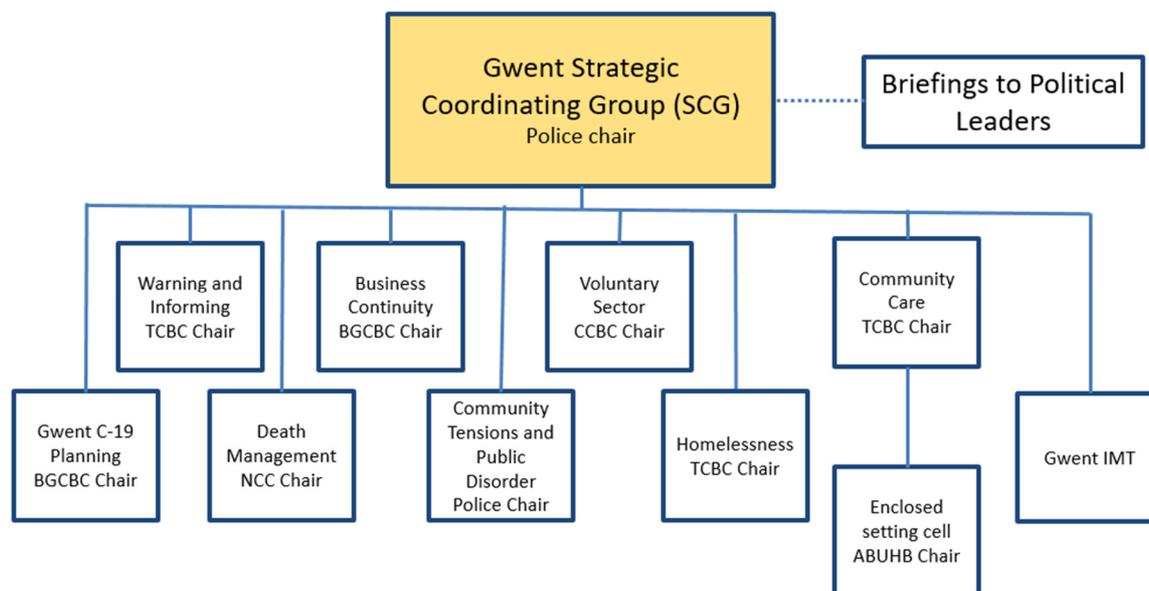


Figure 4 – SCG Response Structure (tactical groups activated as necessary)

## 12.2 Surge arrangements and capacity

### 12.2.1 Testing capabilities

#### Surge testing

Arrangements are in place for surge testing as required. The Testing Service are available to attend any Incident or Cluster Management Team to advise, support and deliver any testing requirements that the groups determine. The Health Board, Local Authorities and Public Health Wales work as an integrated unit to ensure that the team has all the tools it needs to contain and settle transmission.

#### Rapid Community Testing for Variants of Concern

Our region's mass community testing plan sets out the arrangements in response to a variant of concern in Gwent and is supported by local delivery plans. This plan aims to:

- Support the 'Test to Find' approach set out in Welsh Government's revised Testing Strategy for Wales to identify cases of variants of concern in communities;
- Support a locally-led public health risk-based approach using area intelligence and knowledge to reduce the spread of the virus in response to a confirmed case of a variant of concern;
- Provide additional asymptomatic testing capacity within communities and remove any potential barriers;
- Identify active cases from individuals showing no symptoms and unaware they are potentially infecting others;
- Enhance local surveillance to aid further actions by partners;
- Provide assurances and support for affected communities.

Plans for mass testing in relation to variants of concern will heavily depend on the current circumstances, the size and scale of testing required, its specific objective and the context of the local area. This plan has been drafted to support the operationalisation of mass testing if the scale of

need is determined to over and above the 'business as usual' outbreak testing that already exists, and has been tested through a table top exercise.

See [5 SAMPLING AND TESTING](#).

### 12.2.2 Staff and facilities (including mutual aid)

There is agreement in Gwent that mutual aid will be provided where possible to support the response to COVID-19, and this would be approved through the SCG on request from the IMT. Specific arrangements are in place for mutual aid relating to mass community testing, and are detailed in that plan.

### 12.2.3 TTP

Arrangements are in place through the Regional Oversight Group to provide a strategic overview in the identification of mutual support where significant multiple issues arise in one or more LA areas. Surge arrangements are in place locally to manage increased cases. Data and ICT support is in place to support this.

See [STRUCTURES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES](#)

## 12.3 Enforcement

Local Authorities have been able to secure some additional enforcement resources funded by the Welsh Government Covid Hardship Fund. The resource provides the service with additional capacity to undertake interventions proactively and reactively, in response to complaints and intelligence, to assess compliance and take enforcement action where necessary. Local Authorities and the Police work collaboratively to deliver targeted advice and enforcement activities.

## 12.4 Decision making process for implementation of local / regional restrictions

Leadership for the wider local or regional measures rests with Welsh Ministers, working in concert with local elected Leaders to coordinate local and regional responses.

The decision making process for implementation of local / regional interventions is:

- Gwent IMT make recommendations to COVID-19 intelligence cell (and through the intelligence cell to the Health Protection Advisory Group) through the SBAR (situation, background, assessment, recommendation) reporting. The SBAR is also submitted to SCG for discussion when SCG is active.
- When the SCG is not active, the SBAR is circulated to strategic leads of relevant organisations via internal communication structures.
- Should there be a requirement for increased interventions, or any other criteria be met as 8.1.1, a meeting will be called between Welsh Ministers, Local Authority CEOs and Leaders.
- An urgent SCG should be called to discuss the recommendations via the normal SCG activation protocol.
- Strategic Leads of participating organisations are responsible for ensuring that the local and regional leadership, including Leaders and Executive Members, continue to be briefed and engaged in the ongoing situation.

See [8 RESPONSE – LOCAL / REGIONAL / WALES MEASURES](#)

## APPENDICES

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- a. Named Local and Regional Leads – Outbreak Control
- b. Extract: Roles of Local Authorities, Health Boards, Public Health Wales and Other Agencies, as identified in the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales, 2020 (Welsh Government, 2020a)
- c. Case Studies
- d. Data Security and Information Governance
- e. References
- f. Relevant Contact Information

**Appendix A: Named local and regional leads – Outbreak Control**

<b>Membership</b>	<b>Named lead (Role, Organisation)</b>
<i>Core membership</i>	
Director of Public Protection (or their nominated officer of sufficient seniority)	David Thompson (Blaenau Gwent) Ceri Edwards (Caerphilly) David Jones (Monmouthshire) Jonathan Keen (Newport) Daniel Morelli (Torfaen)
Consultant in Communicable Disease Control or Consultant in Health Protection	Rhianwen Stiff (Public Health Wales)
Director Microbiology Laboratory/Consultant Microbiologist	Dr. Silva
Lead Officer for Communicable Disease of the Local Authority	Rhydian West (Blaenau Gwent) Michele Wheden (Caerphilly) Gillian Dicken (Monmouthshire) Kelly Lee (Newport) John Clements (Torfaen)
Executive Director of Public Health of the Health Board	Mererid Bowley (ABUHB)
Additional Core Members:	
LA Secretariat	
Resource Team provided by Local Authority	
Public Health Wales Microbiology Laboratory	
Health Board: Regional Epidemiologist/CDSC Public Relations Officer	
<i>Co-opted Members as necessary:</i> Occupational Physician Hospital Pharmacy Representation Food Examiner/Public Analyst Water Company Natural Resources Wales Health and Safety Executive Representatives from other Outbreak Control Teams/LAs Food Standards Agency Wales Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) Port Health Infection Control Team Immunisation Co-ordinator Drinking Water Inspectorate Healthcare Inspectorate Wales Veterinary Laboratory Agency	

## **Appendix B: Extract: Roles of Local Authorities, Health Boards, Public Health Wales and Other Agencies, as identified in the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales, 2020 (Welsh Government, 2020a).**

### Local Authorities

2.2.1 LAs have statutory responsibility for notifiable infectious disease in their locality (which includes the control of food poisoning) under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2008, and the Health Protection (Notification) (Wales) Regulations 2010.

2.2.2 LAs have duties as an enforcing authority under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. They also have an important role in the control of some zoonoses as the licensing authority for animal establishments. LAs also have duties under the Water Industry Act 1991, sections 77-79, relating to the wholesomeness of public water supplies. They also have responsibility for private water supplies under the Private Water Supplies (Wales) Regulations 2010.

2.2.3 The Local Government Act 1972 enables the LA to appoint individuals as Proper Officer's (PO) to carry out certain functions of the LA. It also enables the LA to delegate powers to individual officers in order to ensure the effective and efficient operation of its functions.

2.2.4 The LA normally appoints the DPP as a PO with delegated authority to sign notices, issue licences and to lay information and make complaints to the Justices for the prosecution of offenders without reference to the LA, in respect of relevant environmental health legislation.

2.2.5 The LA normally appoints and authorises the Public Health Wales' CCDC as PO under the terms of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984. LAs may appoint a sufficient number of Alternate POs who will act in the absence of the PO. All PO appointments will be made in writing and confirm specifically the enactments in which they will act.

2.2.6 The PO normally reports to the LA through the DPP.

2.2.7 The CCDC when acting as PO does so as an officer of the LA.

2.2.8 Other suitably qualified public health professionals in Public Health Wales may be appointed and authorised as alternates to act in the absence of the PO.

### Health Boards

2.2.9 The HB has a number of responsibilities in relation to the public health function, and has overall responsibility for the health of the population within its geographical boundaries. These responsibilities include: the direct provision of healthcare through hospitals and community services; the commissioning of other services relating to health including disease prevention; involvement in promoting health and a role in relation to primary care provision.

2.2.10 The HB has the services of an appropriately qualified CCDC with executive responsibility for the surveillance, prevention and control of communicable disease within the HB's boundary. CCDCs are appointed as PO of the LAs within the HB area for communicable disease control purposes. Alternate PO CCDCs are available if the CCDC who normally covers the relevant HB is unavailable. (Note: 'Control' includes surveillance and prevention as well as control).

2.2.11 The HB will collaborate with all relevant agencies (including LAs, Public Health Wales and others) to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the prevention, surveillance and

control of communicable disease for their population and ensure that the responsibilities for these are clearly defined.

2.2.12 In the event of an outbreak, the HB will provide all necessary support to the OCT. This includes ensuring that the CCDC has access to patients suffering from infection and to advice from clinical colleagues as required.

2.2.13 The HB may commission health care services through formal contracts with other health care providers. Contracts should ensure that satisfactory infection control arrangements are in place, including a requirement that the CCDC be informed of any notifiable disease, or infection problems, with implications for the public health.

2.2.14 Outbreaks may occur in hospitals managed by the HB. Most hospital outbreaks have minimal or no wider public health implications and will be dealt with using that hospital's own internal outbreak plan. However, if an infectious disease outbreak within a hospital has any potentially serious public health implications, responsibility for outbreak control passes to an OCT convened in accordance with this plan (as specified in Part 6 :Hospital Outbreaks with Potential Public Health Implications).

## Public Health Wales

2.2.15 The following elements within the Health Protection Division of Public Health Wales currently have a role in the prevention, surveillance and control of communicable disease:

- a) the CCDC and health protection team;
- b) the Microbiology Laboratories;
- c) the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre,
- d) The CCDC and the health protection team

2.2.16 This group supports the HB in the discharge of its duties. It is one of the initial points of contact for any possible outbreak, conducts the initial investigation as appropriate and participates in the OCT. It will liaise and communicate with the HB, WG and others where appropriate.

## The Microbiology Laboratories

2.2.17 Public Health Wales Microbiology Laboratories are responsible for maintaining a national capability for the detection, diagnosis, treatment, prevention and control of infections and communicable disease.

2.2.18 The Public Health Wales network of laboratories provides comprehensive laboratory facilities for the identification of infection and infectious agents in humans and the environment.

## The Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (Wales)

2.2.19 CDSC provides epidemiological expertise for population surveillance, investigation of outbreaks and development of strategies for prevention and control. It also offers training for public health doctors and Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) in outbreak management.

2.2.20 CDSC (Wales) conducts surveillance in Wales, and provides expert epidemiological advice and assistance in the control of outbreaks upon request.

2.2.21 CDSC should be involved in the following types of incident:

- a) outbreaks of unknown cause involving severe morbidity or mortality;

- b) outbreaks due to relatively rare pathogens;
- c) outbreaks suspected to involve other districts or be the herald of a large scale incident;
- d) outbreaks which are attracting public or national media concern;
- e) outbreaks of particular interest to national surveillance.

2.2.22 CDSC may also ask to assist with incidents that provide opportunities for training or advancing public health knowledge.

2.2.23 In national or international outbreaks, CDSC may be best placed to coordinate the outbreak investigation with the co-operation of CCDC and DPP.

### Food Standards Agency

2.2.24 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is an independent Government department set up by an Act of Parliament in 2000 to protect the public's health and consumer interests in relation to food. The FSA in conjunction with local authorities has developed a Framework Agreement on LA Food Law Enforcement. The Framework Agreement requires local authorities to set up, maintain and implement a documented procedure which has been developed in association with all relevant organisations in relation to the control of outbreaks of food related infectious disease in accordance with relevant central guidance.

2.2.25 The FSA will, when notified by a LA of an outbreak of food related infectious disease which has wider implications, offer support to LAs during their investigations. The response of the Agency will be dependent upon the particular circumstances and may include provision of scientific advice and communication links with local authorities in other parts of the United Kingdom. The Agency will, where necessary, facilitate the issue of a food alert or a RASFF (Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed).

2.2.26 The FSA has responsibility for enforcing hygiene legislation in some meat plants (including slaughterhouses and cutting plants) and will, where such premises are implicated in an outbreak, arrange prompt inspection of premises and offer full co-operation with the investigation.

### Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

2.2.27 CIW has responsibility for registering and inspecting nursing and residential care homes under the Registered Homes Act 1984 and regulations made there under. The inspection teams of CIW ensure that standards of care as laid down in regulations are in place in each premises. CIW will also ensure that adequate infection control arrangements are in place.

### Public Health England (PHE)

2.2.28 PHE is made up of a number of regional and local centres. These are supported by PHE specialist microbiology services which provide laboratory analysis facilities, field epidemiology teams and knowledge and intelligence teams who provide specialist surveillance and intelligence for localities. PHE also contains the Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards, and Emergency Preparedness and Response. However, the remit of the PHE in Wales is limited to those services which are not provided by Public Health Wales.

2.2.29 With regard to the management of communicable disease outbreaks, this includes specialist and reference microbiology tests and services provided in PHE laboratories, and expert advice. Access to PHE and its services for these functions is usually made through Public Health Wales Microbiology Laboratories.

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

2.2.30 In addition, PHE provides expert advisory services to Wales for chemical and radiological issues via the Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards, which is made up of a number of specialist centres. Services provided include expert advice on human health effects from chemicals in water, soil, air and waste as well as information and support to the NHS and health professionals on toxicology. There is a specialist centre for Chemical Hazards and Poisons in Cardiff.

## Appendix C: Case Studies

### Case Study: Nursery setting

Two individuals associated with a private children's nursery tested positive for COVID-19. Contacts of the cases were told that they needed to self-isolate, the nursery readily agreed to temporarily close.

An Incident Management Team (IMT) was formed. It was not possible to rule out transmission within the nursery setting, therefore a decision was taken by the IMT to undertake mass testing of all individuals that attend the nursery.

The mass testing was undertaken within 24 hours of the cases being dealt with as an Incident. All test results were negative.

The notification of results was carefully handled to ensure that cases and identified contacts continued their self-isolation period despite receiving a negative result. Similar, the staff and parents/guardians of children not identified as contacts were advised that a negative test result does not necessarily rule out COVID-19 infection. They were informed that, should they subsequently become symptomatic during their isolation period, they must self-isolate, request a test and notify the nursery owner.

Following the identification and isolation of contacts, the nursery was able to re-open after a deep clean of the premises.

### Case Study: Nursing home outbreak

In late May 2020, the mass testing of asymptomatic staff across 47 nursing homes and 54 residential homes identified a number members of staff in a large care home who were COVID-19 positive. Further weekly sampling of asymptomatic staff identified further positive cases in staff and also residents. A multi-agency meeting was arranged with the care home provider to coordinate the response and resolve a number of issues as they arose. These meetings were also used to address issues identified through contact tracing.

A weekly cycle of whole home testing was arranged for residents over a 3-week period to identify transmission within the resident population. Arrangements were made with the Consultant Virologist at the University Hospital for Wales, Cardiff (UHW) to obtain nasal samples for patients with dementia that were unable to be sampled with a dry throat swab.

A site visit was arranged by the Health Board's Infection Prevention and Control Nurse in conjunction with the Governance Nurse from Complex Care. A number of infection prevention and control recommendations were made including cleaning regimes, avoiding car sharing, cohorting staff working in the same unit and use of staff rest areas.

A professional cleaning company was brought in to carry out a deep clean and an Infection Prevention Society Care Home audit tool was provided.

Special arrangements were made to offer agency staff testing before shift through the Rodney Parade drive through testing centre. Fast-track testing was also arranged for newly symptomatic residents.

The multi-agency meetings with the care home provider led to them introducing a COVID-19 infection prevention and control management action plan covering a range of areas including social distancing, cleaning schedules/regimes, PPE and testing of staff. No further confirmed cases have been identified in the care home since the end of June 2020.

## Case Study: Food Factory Cluster

A Factory Manager proactively contacted the Environmental Health Department about a member of staff that had tested positive for COVID-19 following the onset of symptoms.

Contact tracing was completed to establish the workplace and household contacts of the case. A review of the infection control measures in place within the business at the time of the report was also undertaken and further infection control advice was provided in respect of any identified control gaps.

A number of work related proximity contacts were identified and with assistance from the company these were immediately excluded from work and required to self-isolate.

A multi-agency incident management team meeting took place the following day. The incident was managed in accordance with the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales 2020.

A sampling team was mobilised by the Regional Cell and contacts were sampled either at their home or requested to present to a Testing Centre. Subsequently, on-site mass sampling was swiftly arranged for the workforce. Translators were used to remove language barriers as a significant proportion of the workforce do not have English as their first language.

The company favourably modified its sick pay policy to support workers who were required to self-isolate. This support was extended to agency workers whom had been required to self-isolate as a result of being identified as a contact.

PHW led on the media communications, with releases agreed by all parties. SCG, Welsh Government Ministers, Officials and locally elected representatives were kept informed.

The Health and Safety Executive, as the enforcing authority for health and safety at work at this factory, undertook an inspection of the premises and support to ensure infection prevention and control measures were in place, including: cleaning regime, improvements to shift pattern changes to adhere with social distancing, hand washing, appropriate use of PPE, car sharing among staff.

## Case Study: The role of Port Health Officer in preventing the introduction of COVID-19 infection in Newport

Agent for vessel due to berth in Newport submits Maritime Declaration of Health (MDoH) and copies to the Harbourmaster. The MDoH includes details of Ship Sanitation Certificate, List of Recent Ports Visited and any ill persons on board the vessel.

Port Health Officer reviews the MDoH and if no concerns then “free pratique” is granted for the vessel to berth in Newport. The Harbourmaster is copied into this response, with the understanding that vessels will not be permitted to enter the Port without this. Officers monitor, review and log all vessel movements in and out of the Port. By doing this (which has occurred once to date), Officers identify a vessel that has entered without submitting a MDoH. Reminders on protocols were sent to all necessary personnel to ensure compliance.

If a MDoH indicated issues (for example, ill persons on board), Port Health would contact the on-call Consultant in Communicable Disease Control at PHW for further advice. To date, this has been required for one suspected COVID-19 case, however, based on further detailed symptoms received, no further action was required.

Public Protection Officers are working seven days per week to ensure that vessels arriving in Port are not delayed due to the short notice that MDoHs can be submitted.

Since the end of February 2020, Public Protection Officers in Newport have reviewed documentation for just over 200 vessels that have arrived in Newport

## Appendix D: Data Security and Information Governance

Within Wales the concerns relating to the safe and legal management of an organisations data are overseen by each separate organisation. For the purposes of the Gwent Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) Service there has been a Welsh Government, Health and Local Authority coordinated response.

The conditions for the processing of the citizens data for the purposes of TTP Services have been agreed and comply with the Data Protection legal requirements. These conditions will remain the same in the event of a national or localised outbreak.

Secure mechanisms are in place to collect, store and use this information for the purposes it was intended.

Consent is **not** required for the processing of this information at any stage of the TTP response.

The test results for each citizen are stored in the secure NHS Wales systems as would be the case for any health based test requirements. This will not change in the event of a national or localised outbreak.

The tracing results for each citizen are stored in a secure Wales-wide database and access is restricted to the staff of the local Contact Tracing teams allocated to the geographical region of the citizen's address.

Privacy Notices that inform people about the way in which their information is collected, used and stored are available for people to view on Welsh Government website and within each participating organisation. A paper version is provided where people attend for testing. These are likely to remain the same in the event of an outbreak – although these may change to accommodate any amendments to purpose or proposed methods of collection.

The personal data collected as part of TTP Service provision is likely to be retained for the life of the citizen as the outcomes and long-term effects of COVID-19 are currently unknown and will need to be monitored for many years. This will not change in the event of a national or localised outbreak.

In essence, the Information Governance aspects of managing COVID-19 will remain the same as the purpose for processing is the same regardless of the time, geographical area or population type affected. The Information Governance activated at the onset of the COVID-19 response is appropriate for the management of the programme through the various stage.

## Appendix E: References

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## **Appendix F: Relevant Contact Information**

A full list of organisations, name, role, contact details and out of hours arrangements are available upon request.

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