



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26th June 2020

CONSIDERATION OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (DETAIL OF THE CABINET REPORTS CONSIDERED ON THE 21ST May & 25TH JUNE 2020)

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise, review and challenge the information contained within the attached Cabinet reports, which were presented to the Cabinet on 21st May and 25th June 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:-

- 2.1 Consider the verbal update from the Chief Executive and respective members of the Senior Leadership Team in relation to the Council's response to COVID-19.
- 2.2 Acknowledge the contents of the Cabinet reports included and determine whether there are any areas in which Members would like to receive further information.
- 2.3 Subject to 2.1 and 2.2 above, request the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to report any relevant and further information to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.4 Agree as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees Work Programme for the Municipal Year to continue to receive regular progress updates on the COVID-19 position in Rhondda Cynon Taf and service delivery response.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Cabinet reports identify the critical actions taken by the Council since the COVID-19 restrictions were imposed by the UK and Welsh Governments and set out the future steps the Council will take in respect of service planning in the next recovery phase.

- 3.2 Within its remit, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may enquire, consider, review and make recommendations to the Cabinet/and or Council as appropriate. **This Committee is therefore presented with details of recent Cabinet considerations, to determine areas of future scrutiny and to provide a general overview of the Council's service response over the last three months.**

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On the 23rd March 2020, and in response to measures implemented by the UK and Welsh Governments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council's committee meetings were temporarily suspended.
- 4.2 Council decisions have continued to be made during this period in accordance with the Council's constitution. However, the Council's Scrutiny Committees have been unable to undertake their role as part of the Council's decision making processes during this time, until the necessary regulations were presented by the Welsh Government.
- 4.3 With the introduction of [the Local Authorities \(Coronavirus\) \(Meetings\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020 in May](#) all local authorities in Wales have been provided with the opportunity to resume their committee processes.

5. SCRUTINISING THE OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 – REPORTS PRESENTED TO CABINET ON THE 21st MAY AND 25th JUNE 2020

- 5.1 The Cabinet has been utilising video conferencing to engage with senior officers around the Council's response to the Coronavirus and the first formal virtual meeting of the Cabinet was held on [Thursday 21st May](#). At that meeting, the attached report was presented by the Chief Executive, outlining the Council's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic to date, and the future intentions to establish the recovery and resumption of services. Reports emanating from the recommendations agreed at this meeting, are to be considered by Cabinet on [Thursday 25th June](#). The Chair of Overview & Scrutiny attended the initial meeting of the Cabinet, along with the Leader of the Opposition.
- 5.2 This Overview and Scrutiny Committee is being held to provide the first opportunity for Scrutiny to consider the decisions taken during this period, and the service response of the Council to date. Importantly it provides the first opportunity for members to receive information in respect of these issues. **Members are asked to consider the reports attached and determine whether there are any issues on which they would like to receive further information or review in greater detail at a future meeting. It is proposed, at this initial meeting, to facilitate detailed discussions around specific areas.**
- 5.3 Given the fast moving nature of these matters, it is important to acknowledge that information may need to be provided to Scrutiny in different formats, with a focus on a smaller range of issues relating predominantly to the Council's activity around COVID-19.
- 5.4 There will be further reports to Cabinet in the coming weeks which will outline how the Council continues to respond and prepare for the future.

- 5.5 **It is important to acknowledge, in the current circumstances, that facilitating the opportunity for Senior Officers to provide up-to-date information directly at the committee meeting provides the most effective way for Scrutiny to be engaged in these matters.** In doing so, the opportunity will continue to be afforded for Scrutiny to be updated with the latest developments as they unfold, providing greater scope to engage in these matters and request information and additional reporting as deemed appropriate by Committee Members.
- 5.6 Scrutiny will receive information and evidence from members of the Senior Leadership Team to aid Member's considerations.
- 5.7 As part of the review of these matters, it is proposed to receive information and evidence from the Cabinet Members where appropriate. The Council Leader, Cllr Andrew Morgan, has indicated his intention, subject to availability, to be in attendance at this meeting to respond to members initial questions.
- 5.8 Information on the detail of Officers and Members attending, will be circulated to members nearer the date of the meeting, to assist member's considerations of questions. To support the smooth conduct of this first virtual scrutiny meeting, members are encouraged to seek clarification on specific matters, particularly of a ward nature, outside of the meeting, if these questions to not relate to recommendations set out for Member's considerations.

6. SUPPORTING PAPERS

- 6.1 To facilitate the scrutiny process the following appendices are attached to this report:-
- **Appendix A** – Cabinet report titled: **“Update on COVID 19 Position in Rhondda Cynon Taf”**
 - **Appendix B** – Cabinet Reports scheduled to be considered on 25th June:
‘Council Infrastructure Projects – Supporting the Local economy during CORONAVIRUS’
‘Safer Places – Social Distancing in town centres and public spaces during Coronavirus’
‘Safer buildings social distancing and other safety measure in Council Offices, schools and other public buildings as lockdown is lifted.’
‘The Financial Implications of COVID-19.’

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 Engagement has been undertaken with the Leader of the Council, as Chair of the Cabinet, to provide the opportunity for Scrutiny to consider the content of reports to be presented to Cabinet on 25th June 2020.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not currently required - the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES.

11.1 This is an information report presenting the Cabinet report which outlines how the Council is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 Whilst it is proposed that Scrutiny is presented with a regular package of information identifying the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (pressure points on Council services relating to COVID-19, along with the business of reinstating some services and the recovery and service planning process), Members are asked to acknowledge the fast-moving nature of this situation, which has necessitated the need to provide up-to-date information as part of the meeting, to effectively allow Scrutiny to consider these matters.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26th JUNE 2020

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &

COMMUNICATION



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21st MAY 2020

UPDATE ON COVID 19 POSITION IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR A MORGAN)

Author: Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update of the action taken by the Council as a result of the COVID 19 national emergency.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the action taken by the Council to date in response to the Covid 19 pandemic;
- 2.2 Request that a report estimating the potential financial impact of the Council's response to the pandemic is presented to the next Cabinet meeting;
- 2.3 Request that further reports that set out how the Council plans to reopen key services and public areas such as town centres and transport hubs are presented to future Cabinet meetings.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide a comprehensive summary for Cabinet of the action taken by the Council since the Covid 19 restrictions were imposed by the UK and Welsh Governments; and set out future steps the Council will take to prepare for the future phased lifting of these restrictions.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In a televised address to the UK on 23rd March, the Prime Minister announced unprecedented lockdown measures to stop the spread of the Covid 19 virus between households, changing the way in which everyone in the UK lives their daily lives. This resulted in an initial three week lockdown of the movement of people, forcing people to remain at home, other than key workers, a significant increase in the UK Government's response from the changes introduced on:
- 16th March, which focused on avoiding all non-essential contact with others;
 - 20th March all bars, pubs, cafes and restaurants were closed, followed by the closure of schools and childcare facilities, except for the children of key workers.
- 4.2 The purpose of the lockdown has been very clear as set out in the four UK governments' messages of Stay at Home; Protect the NHS; Save Lives. The overwhelming focus has been to delay the virus and ensure the demand for NHS services does not exceed the supply, which could result in many hundred thousands of deaths.
- 4.3 There is a requirement in the new lockdown legislation that the respective governments review the position every three weeks and determine whether they increase, decrease or maintain the existing lockdown restraints across the UK. The most recent review of the current lockdown was at the weekend of the Victory In Europe celebrations on 8th May. The First Minister for Wales stated that whilst the virus infection rate had fallen and fewer people were being admitted to hospital, progress had not been sufficient to lift the lockdown restrictions, other than to ask local authorities to consider re-opening libraries and community waste recycling centres. The message from the Welsh Government remains the same – Stay at Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives.

5. HOW HAS THE COUNCIL RESPONDED TO COVID 19?

- 5.1 To respond to the challenges posed by the Covid 19 lockdown, the Council is continuing to operate the majority of its key functions, with reduced staffing levels.
- 5.2 The following bullet points provide more detail for Members on the level of service provided in response to this pandemic based on the Corporate Plan priorities of People, Place and Prosperity:
- **People**
 - Despite the impact of the pandemic across the country, our staff continue to provide social care services to vulnerable people in very difficult circumstances across the County Borough in people's own homes, residential homes, nursing homes, supported living and hostels;

- In order to manage the impact of the pandemic on the wellbeing of our most vulnerable adults and children and ensure safeguarding issues are addressed during this time we have established multi-agency regional and local Command responses to coordinating the critical safeguarding activities of our partner agencies;
- The Environmental Health, Procurement and the Social Care Commissioning teams working together to provide infection control support and guidance along with PPE to the care sector across the County Borough;
- Homelessness services, domestic abuse services and substance misuse services to vulnerable people. Over the past few weeks we have seen further rises in cases across these services;
- Community Meals services to the elderly. We have seen a significant increase in the take up of this service since with 635 people are receiving daily meals in their homes. A further 413 frozen meals are delivered each week to shielded vulnerable individuals who are unable to cook for themselves.
- We are also coordinating the Shielding Scheme and made contact with 6,726 people identified by the NHS as vulnerable to Covid 19 and are providing them with regular deliveries of food and medicines. This is managed and coordinated by staff displaced from services such as the Leisure Service;
- Key step down social care services for people leaving hospital to ensure the hospitals have the capacity to deal with Covid 19 patients
- The new extra care facility in Aberaman opened on 4th May and as at 12th May, 4 people have moved in and a further 5 new residents will be supported to take up occupancy over the next two weeks. The extracare facility will also provide some temporary respite accommodation in the short term to enable step up/down from people's own homes, where appropriate;
- The Community Services teams working with the HR and Prosperity teams have put in place the Shielding Scheme for vulnerable individuals and families, providing a service at a level well beyond that imagined by Welsh Government. The new service is managed and coordinated by staff displaced from a range of services such as the Leisure Service. The team has also made contact with 6,726 people identified by the NHS as vulnerable to Covid 19 and are providing them with regular deliveries of food and medicines;
- The Shielding Scheme is superbly supported by our Resilient Families Service and 361 community volunteers whose contribution has been appreciated by the Council and the local residents they are supporting;
- Our Children's Services, Attendance & Wellbeing Service and our schools are keeping in touch with some of our most vulnerable children and families. In addition, our education psychologists and specialist teachers are providing wellbeing support, advice and guidance to the individuals and families that require it, in these very stressful and uncertain times;

- In terms of back office functions a number of initiatives have been ongoing including the development of a Well-Being Helpline and counselling service that we have made available to all staff (including the independent care sector) who may be feeling worried, anxious and isolated which is available throughout the week;
- Whilst, on average, we have had over 1,600 staff unavailable for work due to sickness, self – isolating; being part of the shielded list; have underlying conditions that places an individual at risk, such as being pregnant; or lives in the same household as someone that needs to be shielded, many staff have offered to undertake different roles. Through an ongoing staff survey, 3,000 employees have already responded to the survey to say they will undertake work in the Care Sector and other essential services. So far 365 employees have been assigned to the Care sector, 200 employees have been assigned to the Community Hubs, 95 employees have been assigned to the telephone service to contact shielded residents and 25 employees have been assigned to the food distribution centre;
- To support the communication of key information to residents, the Council's web-pages have provided key service and public health messages. The Council has developed and promoted its own social media content to communicate the importance of social distancing measures and has proactively targeted these messages during key times, such as bank holidays to compliment the 'Stay at Home' public message . During this period the Council has communicated 2,400 social media messages relating to coronavirus, which have been viewed over 16M times to date; the Council's coronavirus webpages have also received 1.1M visits over this eight week period.
- **Place;**
 - The level of waste and recycling that is being collected is the equivalent of a Christmas period nearly every week, yet the waste collection and disposal services across the County Borough continue to provide the usual high levels of service.
 - Street cleansing, fleet maintenance, parks, and the essential highways maintenance teams are continuing to ensure communities are clean, and essential roads maintenance continues;
 - The highways and land reclamation engineering teams continue to address the flooding issues that caused so many problems for communities a few weeks before the lockdown and are monitoring (weekly in some cases) former colliery tips and addressing water issues to ensure their safety;
 - Our youth services, library services, and adult education services are delivering a wide range of provision on-line and the increased take up of these services has been considerable;
 - Increasing the capacity of our crematoria and burial services to cope with the extra demand and ensure funerals can be held with dignity and within a reasonable timescale;
- **Prosperity;**

- Business grants – we have processed and provided over £38m of business grants to over 3,300 businesses, 2,000 (£23m) of which were processed during the first week of the scheme;
- Business Support – we have been proactively working with small businesses who are finding it difficult to navigate the range of Government support measures available. This includes identifying support they could be eligible for and providing a brokerage service liaising with other Council services and external organisations such as Business Wales. The majority of business owners have expressed their appreciation for the support;
- Free school meals – for the first few weeks we provided 1,600 daily packed lunches to FSM pupils from their local primary school. Nearly 100% of the families of the 9,300 children eligible for free school meals are having payments direct to their parent’s bank accounts. This has been quite an administrative achievement;
- Emergency childcare provision is made in school settings for vulnerable children between the ages of 4-19, including children looked after, on the child protection register, young carers or have additional learning needs. Provision is also made for the children of key workers, as defined by the Welsh Government from 8am-6pm, 7 days a week including holiday periods and bank holidays. Initially, all the schools offered this provision, but for the past six weeks it has been delivered on a hub basis with Headteachers in a cluster coordinating the staffing of this provision, which includes their own attendance at the hub facilities. On average 420 children are attending 13 hubs on a daily basis each week, 130 of whom are vulnerable children. In addition, provision is also made available for over 200 children aged 0-4 years as part of the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme in 42 different settings;
- Digitally Excluded Learners - Welsh Government have pledged to provide an additional £3M across Wales to support continuity of learning arrangements for digitally excluded learners. An audit has been undertaken in partnership with schools to identify 3,048 digitally excluded learners and 1,709 surplus devices will be repurposed for the most disadvantaged. Mobile connectivity devices will also be provided for those who require it. A total of 246 devices have already been made available and a further 1,651 new devices will be disseminated for those with the greatest need.
- We have seen a significant increase in the applications and changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support from individuals and families across the County Borough. To date we have seen over 900 new CTRS entitlements awarded since the lockdown started, more than any other Council in Wales; we have also awarded Free School Meal entitlement to an additional 400 pupils;
- Through home working, many other key administrative services such as Council Tax and Business Rates billing and collection, paying our staff and administering the pension fund with the thousands of pensioners being paid each month, have continued;

- We have worked with contractors to continue to safely deliver major construction projects such as Llys Cadwyn, the new industrial unit at Coed Ely, the new primary school in Hirwaun, completing the projects at Tonyrefail and Treorchy schools and reinstatement works following the flood damage.
- 5.3 The Council's staff across all services have been exceptional in the manner in which they have responded to the challenge of the Covid 19 pandemic and have been willing to come forward and do whatever has been necessary. Particular praise must go to those in frontline roles, particularly colleagues in Social Care, Meals on Wheels, School Hubs, Waste and Streetcare, and the Shielding Scheme & Food Distribution Centre.
- 5.4 It is also recognised that the Council's ICT and Digital Services team within the space of a few days transformed the way in which the Council works, with over 3,000 staff across the Council now working from home enabling them to undertake and support many of the tasks and actions highlighted in the paragraphs above. We all recognise this significant change and it has been welcomed by all staff.
- 5.5 The Senior Leadership Team also appreciates the support from the trade unions for the way in which they have engaged with the Council and provided constructive support and guidance.

6 THE NEXT STEPS?

- 6.1 Over the next few months, the UK and Welsh Governments will seek to phase the release of the lockdown measures, and try to ensure that the infection rate remains at a level at which the NHS can meet the demand for its services. In doing so, the Council has five key tasks:
- Contact Tracing;
 - Recovery and Service Planning;
 - Decision Making & Democratic Engagement;
 - Counting the Cost (now and into the future); and
 - Economic Resilience.
- 6.2 **Contact Tracing** – The Council is playing a key role in leading on Contract Tracing across Cwm Taf Morgannwg in partnership with the local health board, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil Councils and Public Health Wales. The purpose of contact tracing and case management is to interrupt chains of transmission in the community by identifying cases of COVID19 (confirmed and suspected), tracing the people who may have become infected by spending time in close contact with them, and then requiring and supporting those close contacts to self-isolate so that they are less likely to transmit it to others.

- 6.3 The Council's Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services is leading this process in Cwm Taf Morgannwg supported by other members of SLT. This task is quite a challenge as we are seeking to initially establish six teams across the region with over 300 staff from principally from local government before the end of the month. The team will initially focus on high risk settings such as care homes, school hubs, supported living, homeless accommodation etc, before expanding the number of teams to thirteen and providing a response to community clusters and actively testing the wider population.
- 6.4 **Recovery and Service Planning** - The Council's Senior Leadership Team has been preparing recovery plans that consider how the Council can begin to reopen services when the Welsh Government begins to lift the restrictions. In preparing these plans we are taking into account the changes we have been forced to make to our services, the different ways of engaging residents and clients, and the way we work taking into account that social distancing is likely to become the "norm" for quite a while. The UK Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty has said *"This disease is not going to be eradicated, it is not going to disappear... The UK will have to maintain some forms of social distancing until a vaccine or effective treatment for Covid19 are developed, both of which are unlikely this year"*.
- 6.5 In planning for the future:
- The Director of Education & Inclusion Services has begun to test out options with Headteacher groups to understand how social distancing could be managed in schools and what lessons can be learnt from other countries that have begun to re-open schools to specific groups of pupils.
 - The Director of Corporate Estates is reviewing the Council's office accommodation to ascertain the maximum number we could base in each setting, and then work with the respective managers to balance the mix between office, agile and home working. Similar discussions are ongoing with leisure, libraries, theatres, visitor attractions and other services across the Council.
 - The Group Director of Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services is reviewing how social distancing could work in town centres, transport hubs and other locations across the County Borough and put in place, initially temporary measures, to facilitate social distancing.
 - The Group Director of Community & Children's Services is considering how to resume the full range of services the community will require in the coming months and has plans to:
 - Review safeguarding issues when all partners, including schools and communities, have more direct contact with children, families and adults;

- Review the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children, young people, adults and families, as some have found the lockdown period very difficult;
 - Complete Court work that has been started in the period such as care orders, revoking orders such as placements with parents, and adoption orders;
 - Review the Children Looked After placements and where appropriate make changes, as this has been very difficult during the lockdown.
- 6.6 SLT has also challenged services to learn from this experience and ensure we do not routinely return to “normal – as we were” but take the benefits of working from home, delivering services digitally or in a different way. The use of technology such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams has changed the way many managers and staff have engaged with each other over the past few months and the verbal feedback we have received suggests that we are more productive as a result of this technology. Through HR, a further survey is being undertaken with over 3,000 staff to capture their views and experiences of agile/homeworking over the past few weeks.
- 6.7 One of the big lessons we have learnt, is that we can be very decisive and move mountains in a very short time if we all pull together. In a week, we enabled the 3,000+ workers to have the technology to work from home – it would normally have taken us three years to do the same. Yes, it’s not perfect, but we can continue via trial and error to solve any problems we encounter.
- 6.8 We also need to take into account that if we do not have a vaccine or treatment for the virus there are groups of residents that will still have to self isolate for a long period and they will need our continued support. In doing so, we need to consider how we will continue to engage the army of volunteers that have provided a sterling service to support the Council.
- 6.9 Over the next few weeks, as guidance becomes available from the two governments, further reports will be made available to Cabinet on how the Council could begin to reopen key services in a phased approach.
- 6.10 **Decision Making & Democratic Engagement** - Since the lockdown, decision making and governance has continued to operate in compliance with the Council’s Constitution. Key Executive decisions such as closing services have been made by the Leader of the Council and/or the relevant Cabinet member in discussion with the Chief Executive and relevant Senior Leadership Team Director(s). A variety of decisions have been taken either as part of the wider coordinated CV19 emergency response, or as mandated by the laws that have been enacted as part of the response. All of these decisions have been within

the normal delegated powers of Chief Officers, and where possible taken after consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

- 6.11 Due to social distancing, no Committees have met. Weekly briefings of the Cabinet with the Senior Leadership Team have been held weekly via Microsoft Teams and more recently Zoom video conferencing. The Senior Leadership Team has also met daily, with the Leader also in attendance. This has allowed the Senior Leadership Team to make appropriate operational decisions in consultation with the Leader, which has enabled immediate action to occur which has been important. I consider that this method of open discussion and decision making between the Leader and officers has been extremely effective.
- 6.12 However, Covid 19 is likely to be with us for at least a further year along with social distancing requirements, and we need to ensure that the committee processes of local government are reinstated. The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 have changed the pre-existing laws to enable fully remote meetings to take place as long as those participating can hear and be heard. It also provides for the distribution and publication of all associated documents via electronic means only. . As a result, the Council will incrementally resume its committee functions. In consultation with the Chairs of the the Committees, arrangements are being made to hold virtual meetings in the near future, starting with Cabinet and Planning.
- 6.13 Holding large committee meetings via Zoom or Microsoft Teams can be a challenge, and all participants need to understand how to use the technology and the protocols and practices that need to be adopted to ensure the meetings operate effectively and everyone can engage in the meeting. Therefore, it has been proposed, in consultation with the Group Leaders, to adopt a phased approach to the resumption of committee meetings. All members are having the opportunity to have their respective devices updated to include the appropriate virtual conferencing technology and shortly training will be available to all members.
- 6.14 A draft timetable for the roll out of the virtual committee meetings is being considered by the Committee Chairs. This timetable will need to be flexible as members and officers learn and adapt to holding committee meetings in this way, over the coming weeks and months.
- 6.15 **Counting the Cost (now and into the future)** – The additional cost to the Council of responding to the Covid 19 pandemic will be significant particularly with the likely restrictions being in place for the remainder of the calendar year. The Council is losing income it would have generated from a range of services such as leisure, car parking, theatres, visitor attractions, school meals, the sale of recycled waste materials, and other sundry sales. In addition, sickness rates

and the need to shield or self isolate have created additional pressures on staffing resources across key services. Furthermore, the level of demand for a range of community based services has risen, including a doubling of the provision of community meals to the vulnerable, supporting care homes to remain financially viable, providing suitable responses to children who need to be looked after, the increase in waste disposal costs and the need to supplement the supply of PPE available where necessary across services. It is initially estimated that the financial impact on the Council of the pandemic is at least £4.5m per month over and above its existing resources with further modelling being undertaken around for example the cost implications of future service planning and delivery requirements as referenced above.

- 6.16 Furthermore, the Covid 19 costs are in addition to the significant costs the Council has had to incur due to Storm Dennis, which occurred during the February half term holidays. The Council is actively working with the WLGA and Welsh Government to ensure the additional costs incurred as a result of Storm Dennis and the Covid 19 pandemic will be supported in full in due course. The Director of Finance and Digital Services will provide an update on the 2019/20 year end position and the estimated financial impact for 2020/21 financial year at the next Cabinet meeting.
- 6.17 The Council's capital programme is an important contributor to the local economy providing a valuable work programme to local building and highways contractors, which many rely upon as their stable income. As a result, the Leader approved the Education and Highways Supplementary Capital Programmes, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members, encouraging local contractors to come forward and tender for up to £30m of work. Clearly, a requirement of the contracts will be the need to ensure the safety of the contractors and the general public and strict application of the social distancing requirements.
- 6.18 **Economic Resilience** - Our primary focus will always be on our residents wellbeing and protecting lives, we also need to deal with the economic disaster that the virus has created. We can see globally that many countries in the first wave of the virus are struggling to get the right balance between opening up the economy and managing virus infection rates.
- 6.19 Despite, this difficult message, there are opportunities for businesses in the County Borough. The big lesson for us all is not to rely on overseas imports for key supplies and services. As a country we need more resilience in terms of our supply chain, and therefore more manufacturing in the UK. This will require the public sector in Wales to undertake a radical re-evaluation of our supply chains.

- 6.20 We have already made progress on this. We have local companies manufacturing visors, we have two distilleries manufacturing hand sanitiser and a local company manufacturing bottles and filling them with the sanitiser, and a company has ordered machinery to manufacture face masks for local government and the NHS, with the aim of starting production in early summer. This local procurement has already protected and created many jobs, and it is something we need to consider urgently across our supply chain.
- 6.21 Whilst, the UK and Welsh Governments have put in place a range of interventions to support businesses across a wide range of sectors, locally we need to work with Welsh Government and the Cardiff Capital Region to understand the potential impact of social distancing on the financial viability of our town centres. A number of national chains have recently gone into administration, such as Debenhams, Warehouse, Oasis, and Bonmarche and other key national chains such as Peacocks, Next, Primark and the Arcadia Group are reported, in the national press, to be under financial pressure from low sales.
- 6.22 Therefore, it is likely that fewer national stores will be reopened in the future. Over the coming months we will look to work with local businesses to see how we can best support our town centres and develop an offer that attracts residents to shop locally and support local businesses.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equality and Diversity Assessment has not been carried out in connection with the recommendations set out in this report as the contents and actions do not require a policy or service change, resulting in no reasonably foreseeable differential impacts.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 There is no requirement to consult on this report, it is primarily for information.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 The financial implications of the Council responding to the Covid 19 pandemic are considered in paragraphs 6.15-6.17 of this report.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

11 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 11.1 This is an information report on progress in responding to the Covid 19 pandemic. No decisions are being taken in this report.

12 CONCLUSIONS

- 12.1 The past few months have been challenging on an unprecedented scale for the Council, local businesses and residents with the Covid 19 pandemic quickly following Storm Dennis. To date we have all pulled together, communities supporting each other and the vast majority of people complying with the lockdown restrictions. However, life is unlikely to return to normal for many months if not a couple of years, and the Council and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf need to change the way we live and work, where social distancing, personal hygiene and shielding the vulnerable becomes the norm.
- 12.2 To date, the Council has responded to these challenges efficiently and effectively, and the staff have been outstanding in their response, and particular thanks go to the frontline social care staff.
- 12.3 Throughout this pandemic, the Council has put in place the necessary plans to effectively respond to the potential impacts of COVID 19 and it has continued to deliver essential services and protect local communities and our staff. As we look forward into the future, it is impossible to plan for every eventuality, but it is inevitable that we will see further spikes in the virus as the lockdown restrictions are eased. Based on our experience to date the Council has many challenges to overcome but we are confident that we have the capacity and capability to respond to every situation.

APPENDIX B

Cabinet Reports scheduled to be considered on 25th June:-

- **Council Infrastructure Projects – Supporting the Local economy during CORONAVIRUS**
- **Safer Places – Social Distancing in town centres and public spaces during Coronavirus**
- **Safer buildings social distancing and other safety measure in Council Offices, schools and other public buildings as lockdown is lifted.**
- **The Financial Implications of COVID-19.**

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

25TH JUNE 2020

COUNCIL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS - SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY DURING CORONAVIRUS

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR A MORGAN)

Authors: Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive; Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development; David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates; Roger Waters, Service Director of Highways & Transportation.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on the action taken to continue to safely deliver key infrastructure and construction projects during the current COVID 19 pandemic to support businesses and help support the local economy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Consider the information provided and notes the action taken to date to continue the safe delivery of priority £200m infrastructure and regeneration projects, supporting over 200 jobs, over the period of the COVID 19 pandemic;
- 2.2 Requests that a further report is presented to the following Cabinet setting out the actions the Council proposes to take, in partnership with Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital Region and private sector partners, to mitigate the economic impact of COVID 19 on the local and regional economy.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide a summary for Cabinet of the major infrastructure and regeneration work that has continued to be undertaken, safely in accordance with safe distancing and other health & safety guidelines, since the COVID 19 restrictions were imposed by the UK and Welsh Governments.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On 23rd March, the UK government announced unprecedented lockdown measures to stop the spread of the COVID 19 virus between households, changing the way in which everyone in the UK lives their daily lives. This resulted in an initial three week lockdown of the movement of people, forcing people to remain at home, other than key workers.
- 4.2 Clearly these measures have had a significant impact on the local economy. Whilst the UK and Welsh Governments have put in place a range of interventions to support businesses across a wide range of sectors, locally, the Council has continued to safely deliver key strategic projects across a wide range of service areas. The report sets out the comprehensive list of key projects continued to be safely delivered by teams from corporate estates, regeneration, housing, highways, transportation, and flood recovery and prevention that are important elements of the Council's wider infrastructure investment strategy and support our contractors during the current COVID 19 national emergency.
- 4.3 It has been important for the Council to continue with its investment plans in order to financially support our contractors; meet our contractual commitments and obligations to a range of organisations, create an effective working environment for businesses to operate as we recover from the current crisis; and to continue with our statutory maintenance and compliance responsibilities whilst the majority of the Council's built assets, such as schools and offices, are temporarily closed. This work, in turn, will play a vital role in the sustaining the local economy and employment in the area.

5. PROGRESS UPDATE

- 5.1 Services across the Council have continued to focus on the development and delivery of key investment projects, and the management of our existing built assets during the current COVID 19 pandemic.
- 5.2 A key part of this work has involved the Council working proactively with contractors, and Registered Social Landlords to ensure projects continue to deliver on site as far as possible. Compliance with social distancing measures has played a major role in the delivery of projects, where contractors have had to adapt their working methods to ensure compliance with guidelines set by Government and the construction industry.
- 5.3 Examples of a number of these projects are given below and demonstrate that the Council has worked with contractors to ensure the projects have continued to develop and be delivered as far as possible.

A more comprehensive list of projects that have continued through the pandemic are set out in Appendix 1. The value of these projects is worth more than £200m and they have sustained more than 200 jobs in addition to securing hundreds more over the life of the projects and through the supply chain.

- 5.4 In addition to the projects listed below considerable officer time has been invested in planning for new infrastructure projects that are still in the design and planning stages such as the A4119 Dualling at Coed Ely, the Cynon Valley Gateway North Link and the Llanharan By-Pass. Storm Dennis created significant additional work for the Structures Team and work has continued to progress on developing options to replace a number of bridges damaged by the storm.
- 5.5 Work has also continued to stabilise Tylorstown Tip after the well-publicised land slide during Storm Dennis. The tip is currently in a stable condition after the Council's engineers and contractor installed temporary surface water drainage systems to remove flow of water from the tip to dry the materials/mountain side. This work was completed by April 2020. Design and investigations are ongoing, and further reports will be brought forward to Cabinet to provide options to restore the Rhondda Fach River to its original level and course.
- 5.6 Further examples of the progress that has been made by the Council over the period of the Covid pandemic are set out below.

Taff Vale/Llys Cadwyn (Contractor: Wilmott Dixon) - Total Project Cost - £38M (Contract sum)

- 5.7 Regular contact has been maintained with the Contractor and with the Tenant of Building A. With the implementation of appropriate site operating procedures to maintain social distancing and minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus, the Contractor has continued to operate with a reduced workforce since the start of the lockdown period. The availability of adequate resources in the form of labour, plant and materials has proved difficult which inevitably has resulted in programme delays. Positively the number of operatives on site returned to full capacity with approximately **85** operatives back on site by mid-May. A revised programme is in place with an anticipated completion date of mid-October.

Llys Cadwyn – Park Bridge (Contractor: Knights Brown) - Total Project Cost - £1.4M (Contract Sum)

- 5.8 Unfortunately the Contractor had no option but to close down the site at the end of March as its supply chain had temporarily shut down

operations. Regular engagement has been maintained with the contractor and the site was remobilised week commencing 11th May with a range of site operating procedures implemented to comply with social distancing requirements and to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus. There are currently **6** operatives on site. Due to the nature of the work this is the maximum number of operatives that can comfortably maintain social distancing whilst still being productive to complete the necessary tasks. Significant progress has subsequently been made on site since mid-May with the final sections of the bridge deck being installed and the final works being just weeks from completion.

Coedely Industrial Estate – New Commercial Unit (Contractor: John Weaver Contractors) - Total Project Cost - £3.9M

- 5.9 John Weaver Contractors have made steady progress since returning to site on 20th April, with new Site Operating Procedures introduced. This has resulted in fewer operatives allowed on site due to social distancing restrictions.
- 5.10 Roof cladding works are completed, with solar PV underway and some external drainage and brick work being undertaken. The Council has worked with the project & site management teams to ensure the site and materials on site, during the suspension of works, were safe and secure. Encouragement and support was given to ensure Government and Construction Industry advice and best practice was followed and full risk assessments carried out, prior to recommencement of works.

**Statutory Compliance in Council buildings (Contractors: Various)
Payments processed for payment - £1.8M (including orders issued to contractors prior to Covid-19 Pandemic)**

- 5.11 During the lockdown period, the majority of Council owned/occupied buildings, including schools, were closed as most staff were advised to work from home. Corporate Maintenance staff worked in conjunction with all Service Groups and local contractors to ensure the buildings maintained compliance in accordance with statutory requirements. During the period, more than 750 orders were issued to local contractors which allowed contractors to continue to operate without having to furlough all their staff.
- 5.12 Essential maintenance continued along with essential inspection and servicing of plant/systems by appointed contractors. Service and inspection programmes were also undertaken to ensure compliance with Legionella and Asbestos legislation.

Pontypridd YMCA (Contractors: Knox & Wells) - Total Project Cost - £4.4M

5.13 Construction started on the YMCA Building in February 2020 and has been primarily focused on demolition works. Despite COVID 19 restrictions, the scheme has made significant progress, with the Contractor adopting working methods to comply with guidelines set by UK Government and the construction industry and in consultation with their CDM advisor. The Council's Highways team has continued to work closely with the YMCA to ensure appropriate traffic management arrangements are in place. During the COVID 19 lockdown period, on average there have been 15 operatives present on site each week, including sub-contractors. Of the supply chain to date, four of the main suppliers have been from within RCT, with local builders merchants and hire companies being utilised on a regular basis.

5.14 In addition to this, Knox & Wells also rent a local empty business premises for site office and welfare facilities. The Council continues to work proactively with the YMCA to monitor and assess the impact of COVID 19 restrictions on the work programme and cost plan.

Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley Link (Contractor Walters / John Sisk joint venture) - Total Project Cost £20m

5.15 The site has continued to work through the pandemic, although social distancing has reduced the number of staff on site and had an impact on the programme. Delivery of precast concrete units and attenuation tanks have been delayed due to subcontractors/manufacturers being closed. As a result, the contractor is now looking to complete the works in September 2020, a delay of 8-12 weeks.

St Albans Bridge Replacement (Contractor Alun Griffiths Contractors Ltd (AGCL)) - Total Project Cost £2.4m

5.16 The construction of the replacement bridge continues on site after an initial 3 week closure at the beginning of the lockdown period. Whilst there has been some issues with suppliers, work has continued with the project scheduled to be completed in late Autumn 2020.

Castle Ifor Bridge Deck Replacement (Contractor AGCL) - Total Project Cost £500k

5.17 The replacement bridge deck works commenced in May 2019 but due to a flash flooding in late August 2019 the works, apart from removing the debris from the river, has been on hold due to constraints from Natural Resources Wales in respect of working in the river during the winter. The works has now recommenced on site in May 2020 and is scheduled for completion in October 2020.

Ferndale Community School – Pool Hall/Changing Room Refurbishment (Contractor: A&N Lewis Ltd) - Project Cost - £1.2M

- 5.18 A further phase of modernisation of the Ferndale Community School has been completed despite the contractor having to close the site due to the lack of its supply chain. The contractor returned to site in early May to complete the works by adopting new site operating procedures.

Sobel Leisure Centre – Changing Room Refurbishment (Contractor: A&N Lewis Ltd) - Project Cost – £278K

- 5.19 The project start was initially delayed but the Council worked with the contractor to agree a new start date to allow them to introduce revised site operating procedures to carry out the works safely. The project will now complete by the end of July.

Highways Investment Programme – Highways

- 5.20 The resurfacing and reconstruction to the carriageways and footpaths has continued during lockdown, although the emphasis has been on undertaking works that are not in built up areas due to the large amount of residents' vehicles being left in the streets and issues with social distancing. However good progress has been made by the Council's contractors and Streetcare team, in undertaking works.

Disabled Facility Grants - £3.7 million budget for 2020/2021

- 5.21 A number of new process and procedures have been implemented to support the delivery of the housing grants programme during the COVID 19 pandemic. An example of this is the Disabled Facilities Grants team:

- 5.22 The service has:

- Implemented an online process to continue to approve DFG's (whilst all staff are working agile), issuing work to framework contractors, in order to aid hospital discharge or to prevent a client from being admitted to hospital.
- Allowed for PPE costs to be included within the cost of works, supporting contractors on the framework to be able to carry out works safely and no financial cost to themselves.
- Deferred quarter 3 rebate costs to financially support the agency framework contractors during lockdown, as a number of these had to furlough their staff.
- Directly supported local contractors, with 42% of contractors on the framework residing in RCT.

- Introduced an online process to agree unforeseen work on live ongoing Grants through the use of photographs and video links, allowing work to proceed.
- Introduced an online process of valuing and agreeing interim payments, up to the value of 90%, on live ongoing Grants through photographs and video links allowing work to continue, financially support contractors.
- Implemented an online payment process ensuring all payments are made without delay for contractors.
- Received 31 new DFG referrals since lockdown, 6 of the referrals were identified as urgent by Occupational Therapists and therefore have been progressed and work completed by contractors.

Tonyrefail Community School (Contractor: Morgan Sindall) - Total Project Cost - £33.6M (Contract Sum)

- 5.23 The contractor was well prepared and responded effectively to the lockdown to mitigate a number of perceived risks in the very early stages of the pandemic. There have been challenges with supply chains however the contractor continued to source materials locally and from established national companies based in the area. Local and South Wales based subcontractors continue to be employed averaging **23** operatives on site with no loss in productivity even with the social distancing rules in place.

Treorchy Comprehensive School (Contractor: Kier Construction) - Total Project Cost - £12.8M (Contract Sum)

- 5.24 The contractor experienced a significant drop in labour supply in the first week of the lockdown. However, a skeleton staff maintained the operation and by week three, with the introduction of new site operating procedures, the labour supply increased to an average of **18** operatives on site. Materials and labour has been sourced locally where possible and progress on the project continued to achieve completion by the beginning of June.

Hirwaun Primary (Contractor: Morgan Sindall - Total Project Cost - £8.8M (Contract Sum)

- 5.25 The contractor was well prepared and responded well to the lockdown to mitigate a number of perceived risks in the very early stages of the pandemic. There have been numerous challenges with supply chains however the contractor continued to source materials locally from established national companies together with assistance from a local builders merchants based in Hirwaun. In the first three weeks of the lockdown, the staff on site averaged between 8 to 10 operatives daily

however this has now significantly increased and in the last few weeks to an average of **26** operatives which is slightly ahead than was anticipated. Although some specialist supplies such as glazing remain challenging the project remains on programme and continues to be closely monitored by the Council.

Garth Olwg Campus (Contractor: Vinci UK Ltd) -Total Project Cost - £4.3M

- 5.26 The main contractor had procured large amounts of material in order to commence major roof works at the site immediately before the lockdown. With the school closing to pupils the project team and the contractor took advantage and mobilised the local supply chain to provide ample labour supply to the site working with new site operating procedures which has resulted in works rapidly advancing ahead of the current programme. The Council has continued regular inspections of the site to allow the contractor to take advantage of the empty buildings currently on Campus.

Maesyfynnon Extra Care Total Project Cost - £9.15 M, Council Contribution £1.4 M

- 5.27 Linc Cymru Housing continued to work on the construction of the Maesyfynnon Extra Care scheme despite the pandemic following Government guidelines for safe working. The 40 bedroom Extra Care Scheme was completed and handed over to the Council for occupation on May 1st 2020. Adult Services is currently nominating tenants to take up apartments and the allocation and moving in process is currently underway.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no equality or diversity implications associated with this report.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 There is no requirement for consultation in respect of this report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This report highlights a number of schemes and grants that are operational across the Council that will play a vital role in supporting the local economy recover from the COVID 19 pandemic. All these schemes and projects are budgeted for.

9. LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

10.1 This is an information report on progress in responding to the COVID 19 pandemic. No decisions are being taken in this report.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 This report has set out the actions taken to develop and sustain delivery of a wide range of key strategic regeneration, and housing investment projects during the current COVID 19 national emergency.

12.2 Good progress has been made to enable a number of schemes across the Council to continue to develop which plays a vital role in supporting the local economy recover from the COVID 19 pandemic.

12.3 The next step in the recovery stage from the pandemic is to work in partnership with Welsh Government, the Cardiff Capital Region and the private sector to develop investment programmes that supports the economy out of the projected severe recession, supporting local businesses and town centres and increases job opportunities, in particular youth employment via apprenticeships. Early indications from the UK and Welsh Governments is their focus will be on investing for the future, in particular tackling climate change, creating the infrastructure and investing in new ways of working and living that will reduce our carbon footprint. This will include an investment in housing, and the potential investment in making all homes more energy efficient and less reliant on carbon fuels.

12.4 As a Council we need to work with our partners in the public and private sector to support the UK and Welsh Governments investment strategies. Over the coming weeks and months, further reports will be presented to Cabinet taking into account future Government plans and how the Council can capitalise on these opportunities in the best interests of the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Appendix 1

Long List of Council Infrastructure/Construction Projects that have Continued During the Coronavirus Emergency

Taff Vale/Llys Cadwyn (Contractor: Wilmott Dixon) - Total Project Cost - £38M (Contract sum)

Regular contact has been maintained with the Contractor and with the Tenant of Building A. With the implementation of appropriate site operating procedures to maintain social distancing and minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus, the Contractor has continued to operate with a reduced workforce since the start of the lockdown period. The availability of adequate resources in the form of labour, plant and materials has proved difficult which inevitably has resulted in programme delays. Positively the number of operatives on site returned to full capacity with approximately **85** operatives back on site by mid-May. A revised programme is in place with an anticipated completion date of mid-October.

Llys Cadwyn – Park Bridge (Contractor: Knights Brown) -Total Project Cost - £1.4M (Contract Sum)

Unfortunately the Contractor had no option but to close down the site at the end of March as its supply chain had temporarily shut down operations. Regular engagement has been maintained with the contractor and the site was remobilised week commencing 11th May with a range of site operating procedures implemented to comply with social distancing requirements and to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus. There are currently **6** operatives on site. Due to the nature of the work this is the maximum number of operatives that can comfortably maintain social distancing whilst still being productive to complete the necessary tasks. Significant progress has subsequently been made on site since mid-May with the final sections of the bridge deck being installed and the final works being just weeks from completion.

Coedely Business Unit (Contractor: John Weaver Contractors) - Total Project Cost - £3.9M

John Weaver Contractors have made steady progress since returning to site on 20th April, with new Site Operating Procedures introduced. This has resulted in fewer operatives allowed on site due to social distancing restrictions.

Roof cladding works are completed, with solar PV underway and some external drainage and brick work being undertaken. The Council have worked with the project & site management teams to ensure the site and materials on site, during the suspension of works, was safe and secure. Encouragement and support was given to ensure Government and Construction Industry advice and best practice was followed and full risk assessments carried out, prior to recommencement of works.

Porth Transport Interchange (Contractor: Bond Demolition) - Welsh Government Local Transport Fund; £820,000 allocation for 2019/20; with the same amount secured from City Deal for 2020/21.

Whilst the demolition of Barclays Bank and the Alec Jones Day Centre has largely been completed; the demolition of Porth Farm Surgery – which was purchased earlier this year as part of the project – has temporarily paused. The UK's COVID-19 outbreak has created difficulties within the construction sector's supply chain prompting delays for the demolition contractor, Bond Demolition. However, with support from the Council and the outdoor nature of the work and small number of operatives required, have allowed the contractor to make continued efforts throughout the COVID-19 lockdown to complete the work.

Valleys Regional Park improvements at Dare Valley Country Park (Contractor: Davies Bros.) - Total Project Cost - £1,677,898

The Council has continued to work with the Contractor throughout the pandemic – regular site visits have been undertaken to inspect works and monitor progress. The contractor is self-contained in terms of public interaction and whilst there has been a decrease in labour on site due to social distancing (Approximately 4-6 employees on site per day) and delays in obtaining materials, work is progressing well and nearing completion.

Pontypridd YMCA (Contractors: Knox & Wells) - Total Project Cost - £4.4M

Construction started on the YMCA Building in February 2020 and has been primarily demolition works. Despite COVID 19 restrictions, the scheme has made significant progress, with the Contractor adopting working methods to comply with guidelines set by UK Government and the construction industry and in consultation with their CDM advisor. Highways have continued to work closely with the YMCA to ensure appropriate traffic management arrangements are in place. During COVID 19, on average there have been 15 operatives present on site each week, including sub-contractors. Of the supply chain to date, 4 of the main suppliers used have been from the RCT region, with local merchants and hire companies being utilised on a regular basis.

In addition to this, Knox & Wells also rent a local empty business premises for site office and welfare facilities. The Council continue to work proactively with the YMCA to monitor and assess the impact of COVID 19 restrictions on the work programme and cost plan, which at this stage is minimal.

Scheme outputs:

- Business Premises created or refurbished (sqm) - 1512
- Number of Jobs accommodated - 75
- Enterprises accommodated - 9
- Gross Jobs Created - 8

Bingo Hall, Pontypridd (Contractor: Various) - Total Project costs: £2.2M (acquisition and demolition only)

The Council purchased Pontypridd Bingo Hall in March 2020. Since then, external consultants have progressed all commissioned survey/feasibility work and RCT Officers have continued to prepare tender documentation throughout the period for its demolition. A Project Board has been established and continues to meet via Teams on a fortnightly basis. The implications of social distancing will need to be captured during the tender processes for the Asbestos removal and Demolition contracts.

Redevelopment of Guto Square, Mountain Ash (Contractors: Landmark Surveys Wales, Bradley Associates, Lanes for Drains) - Total Project Cost: currently being established

The project has continued and been unaffected by the Coronavirus Pandemic. Designs have been amended further to incorporate the additional area of land created through the planned acquisition of 39 Oxford St and the Workingman's Club Annex. The acquisition of both properties are progressing well and nearing completion. Remedial works to the Workingman's Club are being developed and Ground Investigation works are continuing, to support the overall scheme design. A range of consultants are being used to deliver this work, including Landmark Surveys Wales, Bradleys Associates and Lanes for Drains. A pre-demolition assessment has been requested for both 39 Oxford St and the Workingman's Club Annex, this is being undertaken by Bradleys Associates. A financial cost plan is currently being developed for the scheme. The scheme is scheduled for completion in November 2020.

Pontypridd Property Improvement Programme (WG TRI Programme) - Total Project Cost: - £300K

The Prosperity and Development service leads on the delivery and co-ordination of Welsh Governments Targeted Invest Programme for the ten South East Wales authorities with a total budget of £10M. For RCT,

Three schemes have commenced since the COVID 19 pandemic. The Council has worked proactively with grant applicants to ensure that approvals were put in place to allow projects to start on site as soon as possible. The Council also allowed a degree of flexibility regarding payment arrangements and worked with applicants to resolve COVID 19 related issues e.g. restrictions that affected the ability of contractors to start on site and delays to the supply chain. All three projects are now progressing well and include:

- **9a Gelliwastad Rd – Contractor: Revive Contract Services** are based in Pontypridd. They have 8 employees, of which 4 are employed on this project. There are 4 subcontractors and 5 suppliers, all within a 15 miles radius of Pontypridd.
- **5 – 6 Ceridwen Terrace – Contractor: GKR** are based in Bedwas. They have 93 employees of which 4 – 15 are employed on this project. There are 5 subcontractors and 5 suppliers, all within a 15 miles radius of Pontypridd.
- **Ceridwen Terrace – Contractor: CADWAL** are based in Church Village. They have 6 employees of which 5 are employed on this project. There are 7 subcontractors and 11 suppliers all within a 15 miles radius of Pontypridd.

Housing Grants

In addition to the Housing development programme, the service has implemented a number of new processes and procedures to support the delivery of its grant programme during the COVID 19 pandemic. The below list provides a summary of this work.

Disabled Facility Grants - £4 million budget for 2020/2021

The team has:

- Implemented an online process to continue to approve DFG's (whilst all staff are working agile), issuing work to framework contractors, in order to aid hospital discharge or to prevent a client from being admitted to hospital.
- Allowed for PPE costs to be included within the cost of works, supporting contractors on the framework to be able to carry out works safely and no financial cost to themselves.
- Deferred quarter 3 rebate costs to financially support the agency framework contractors during lockdown, as a number of these had to furlough their staff.
- Introduced an online process to agree unforeseen work on live ongoing Grants through the use of photographs and video links, allowing work to proceed.
- Introduced an online process of valuing and agreeing interim payments, up to the value of 90%, on live ongoing Grants through

photographs and video links allowing work to continue, financially support contractors.

- Implemented an online payment process ensuring all payments are made without delay for contractors.
- Received 31 new DFG referrals since lockdown, 6 of the referrals were identified as urgent by Occupational Therapists and therefore have been progressed and work completed by contractors.

Empty Home Grants - £4.5million budget for 2020/2021

The Prosperity and Development Service leads on the delivery of the Empty Homes grant for the Valley's Taskforce authorities. In 2019/20, the Council was able to claim £3.1M of funding to bring empty homes back into use across the borough. To support the delivery of the scheme and to prepare for the launch of phase 2 in 2020/21 the service has:

- Implemented an online process to continue to approve EHG's (whilst all staff are working agile).
- Introduced an online process to agree unforeseen work on live ongoing Grants through the use of photographs and video links, allowing work to proceed.
- Introduced an online process of valuing and agreeing interim payments, up to the value of 90%, on live ongoing Grants through photographs and video links allowing work to continue, financially support contractors.
- Implemented an online payment process ensuring all payments are made without delay for contractors.
- There are a number of open Empty Homes Grant applications which have been approved and where the client would be offering work to contractors.

Houses into Homes Loan

To support the delivery of the Houses into Homes Loan scheme we have:

- Continued to issue loan application packs to referrals and those who have directly requested them. Since lockdown 27 application packs have been distributed.
- Continued to receive loan applications. Since lockdown 8 applications have been received.
- Introduced remote assessment of loan applications by requesting photos and video footage of properties.
- Continued to approve applications for Houses into Homes loans. Since lockdown 7 loans have been approved.
- Continued to issue payments to applicants in order for them to carry out the works on the property through contractors.

- Introduced a new process for payment of fees to enable fees to be paid online without delay.

Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley Link (Contractor Walters / John Sisk joint venture) - Total Project Cost - £20m

The site has continued to work through the pandemic although by the use of social distancing, etc this has affected outputs and the programme. Delivery of precast concrete units and attenuation tanks has been delayed due to sub contractors / manufacturers being closed which is on the critical path. The contractor is now looking to complete the works in September 2020, a delay of 8-12 weeks.

A4419 Dualling Coed (Hospital to Coed Ely)- Total Project Cost £16m

The project is in design stage with the preliminary design completed and detailed design ongoing. Despite the lockdown, the design has continued including meeting a critical stakeholder on site ie DCWW regarding interface with their plant. Land purchase negotiations are ongoing and preparations are currently underway for the Compulsory Purchase Order. Advance ecological mitigation works and sewer diversion works are planned in 2021 with main construction commencing in Spring 2022.

Cynon Gateway North (Aberdare Bypass Extension) - Total Project Cost £30m

The project is currently in preliminary design stage. Geotechnical site investigations were completed prior to lockdown. Ecological surveys have continued during the lockdown which feeds into the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Design work progresses coupled with Early Contractor Involvement which advises on the buildability, programme and cost of the project. A planning application for the project will be submitted late 2020.

Llanharan Bypass - Total Project Cost £16m

The project is currently in preliminary design stage. Geotechnical investigation was completed during the lockdown and ecological surveys continue which will form part of the EIA. Design work progresses with discussions ongoing with Network Rail regarding constructing a highway bridge over the main Cardiff to Swansea railway line. A planning application for the project will be submitted in late 2020.

Tips

The Highways, Engineering and Strategic Projects services have completed all the necessary inspections of Cat C and D tips and are inspecting the A and B tips. The service areas are working closely with Welsh Government and the Coal Authority over a Welsh strategy for database, monitoring, maintenance, etc.

Tylorstown Tip (Contractor : Walters for phase 1-3) - Total Project Cost £10-15m

Tylorstown Tip suffered a significant landslip as a result of Storm Dennis resulting in 60,000 Tonnes of material travelling down the mountainside and filling the river valley below adjacent to the Rhondda Fach leisure centre. The tip is currently in a stable condition. Phase 1 ie installation of temporary surface water drainage systems to remove flow of water from the tip to dry the materials / mountainside was completed by April 2020. Design and investigations are ongoing, utilising an experienced earthworks contractor for the construction of phase 2 and 3 ie the removal of the material from the river valley and the restoration of the river to its original level and course. Currently it is anticipated that these works will commence late June and be complete by end of October. Phase 4 which is the stabilisation of the upper tip area, is being designed and is anticipated for commence on site during Spring 2021.

Highways Investment Programme - Structures

The Highways Investment Programme has continued during the lockdown period with a number of projects on site, completed and in the design process. A number of these are highlighted below with the other projects included within the Appendix.

St Albans Bridge Replacement (Contractor Alun Griffiths Contractors Ltd (AGCL)) - Total Project Cost - £2.4m

The construction of the replacement bridge continues on site after an initial 3 week closure at the beginning of the lockdown period. Whilst there has been some issues with suppliers work has continued with the project scheduled to be complete on site in late Autumn 2020.

Castle Ifor Bridge Deck Replacement (Contractor AGCL) - Total Project Cost - £500k

The replacement bridge deck works commenced in May 2019 but due to flash flooding in late August 2019 the works, apart from removing the debris from the river, has been on hold due to constraints from Natural Resources Wales in respect of working in the river during the

winter. The works has now recommenced on site in May 2020 and is scheduled for completion in October 2020.

Highways Investment Programme – Highways

The resurfacing and reconstruction to the carriageways and footpaths has continued during lockdown, although the emphasis has been on undertaking works that are not in built up areas due to the large amount of residents' vehicles being left in the streets and issues with social distancing. However good progress has been made by the Council's contractors and Streetcare in undertaking works. A full list of works undertaken to date is provided in the Appendix and has included strategic roundabouts on the highway network as well as Stag Square, Treorchy.

Traffic Management and NRSWA Services

During the lockdown period the various statutory utility companies have been in constant liaison and dialogue about the undertaking of "difficult" repair works to their apparatus on strategic traffic sensitive routes. As a result of the low traffic numbers, the utility companies have been able to work at these various sensitive locations under the guidance and control of the Traffic and NRSWA teams.

The Traffic team has continued to deliver its capital programme of £160k during the lockdown period whilst also undertaking evaluations and costings to be supplied to Welsh Government in under two weeks for a bid of over £2m for highway modifications as a result of Covid19 and different modes of transport.

Storm Dennis – Structures

The Structures team has continued to deliver the following during the lockdown period as a result of Storm Dennis in mid February 2020:

- Scour assessments and surveys
- Bridge and retaining wall inspection and assessments
- Culvert surveys and assessments
- Removal of debris from rivers at bridge locations
- Localised repairs to structures
- Identification of repair works
- Commissioning of consultants for works

Some projects to note are:

- Berw Rd bridge – replacement
- Castle Inn bridge – replacement
- Campbell Terrace – unblocking of main culvert and repairs
- Ynysyngharad Park footbridge – specialist repairs

**Statutory Compliance in buildings (Contractors: Various)
Payments processed for payment - £1.8M (incl orders issued to
contractors prior to Covid-19 Pandemic)**

During the lockdown period, the majority of Council owned/occupied buildings were closed as most staff were advised to work from home. Corporate Maintenance staff worked in conjunction with all Service Groups and local contractors to ensure the buildings maintained compliance in accordance with statutory requirements. During the period, more than 750 orders were issued to local contractors which allowed contractors to continue to operate without having to furlough all their staff.

Essential maintenance continued along with essential inspection and servicing of plant/systems by appointed contractors. Service and inspection programmes were also undertaken to ensure compliance with Legionella and Asbestos legislation.

**Ferndale Community School – Pool Hall/Changing Room
Refurbishment (Contractor: A&N Lewis Ltd) - Project Cost - £1.2M**

A further phase of modernisation of the Ferndale Community School has been completed despite the contractor having to close the site due to the lack of its supply chain. The contractor returned to site in early May to complete the works by adopting new site operating procedures.

**Sobel Leisure Centre – Changing Room Refurbishment
(Contractor: A&N Lewis Ltd) - Project Cost – £278K**

The project start was initially delayed but the Council worked with the contractor to agree a new start date to allow them to introduce revised site operating procedures to carry out the works safely. The project will now complete by the end of July.

**Ynysangharad Memorial Park – Repairs following flood damage
(Contractors: Various) - Project Cost – circa £1M**

Extensive damage to numerous buildings due to the unprecedented flooding as a result of storm Dennis. The Council has continued to work with our insurers and their appointed assessors to maintain progress with repairs/reinstatement.

Tenders were produced and local contractors appointed to carry out priority works to the Rangers Hut, Golf Hut and Public Toilets which should all be complete by end of June in readiness for the summer holidays. Additional tenders have been worked on and local contractors will soon be invited to tender for the works to repair/reinstate the Café, Bowls Pavilion, Lido Buildings and Lido pools.

Ty Glyntaf Depot (Contractor – Brecongate Building Solutions) - Project Cost: £97K

This key site also suffered from extensive flood damage as a result of storm Dennis. Despite there being initial issues with supply of materials, the contractor has continued to work throughout the period whilst maintaining a safe 2M physical distance to allow the site to be reinstated allowing front line services to be delivered across the communities.

Tonyrefail Community School (Contractor: Morgan Sindall) - Total Project Cost - £33.6M (Contract Sum)

The contractor was well prepared and responded well to the lockdown to mitigate a number of perceived risks in the very early stages of the pandemic. There have been challenges with supply chains however the contractor continued to source materials locally and from established national companies based in the area. Local and South Wales based subcontractors continue to be employed averaging **23** operatives on site with no loss in productivity even with the social distancing rules in place.

Treorchy Comprehensive School (Contractor: Kier Construction) - Total Project Cost - £12.8M (Contract Sum)

The contractor experienced a significant drop in labour supply in the first week of the lockdown. However, a skeleton staff maintained the operation and by week three, with the introduction of new site operating procedures, the labour supply increased to an average of **18** operatives on site. Materials and labour has been sourced locally where possible and progress on the project continued to achieve completion by the beginning of June.

Hirwaun Primary (Contractor: Morgan Sindall) - Total Project Cost - £8.8M (Contract Sum)

The contractor was well prepared and responded well to the lockdown to mitigate a number of perceived risks in the very early stages of the pandemic. There have been numerous challenges with supply chains however the contractor continued to source materials locally from established national companies together with assistance from a local builders merchants based in Hirwaun. Labour supplies in the first three weeks of the lockdown averaged between 8 to 10 operatives daily however this has now significantly increased and in the last few weeks to an average of **26** operatives which is slightly ahead than was anticipated. Although some specialist supplies such as glazing remain challenging the project remains on programme and continues to be closely monitored by the Council.

Garth Olwg Campus (Contractor: Vinci UK Ltd) - Total Project Cost - £4.3M

The main contractor had procured large amounts of material in order to commence major roof works at the site immediately before the lockdown. With the school closing to pupils the project team and the contractor took advantage and mobilised the local supply chain to provide ample labour supply to the site working with new site operating procedures which has resulted in works rapidly advancing ahead of the current programme. The Council, has continued regular inspections of the site to allow the contractor to take advantage of the empty buildings currently on Campus.

Strategic Housing and Investment

To support the development of housing investment the Prosperity and Development Service has continued to liaise with RSL partners on new potential schemes, discuss scheme designs with private developers and architects, and support with the delivery of current schemes within the Social Housing Grant programme. The below list provides a summary of some of the **16** scheme that have been supported during the COV19 pandemic. The schemes are to be delivered over the next three years, delivering **191** units in total, with a total investment of **£20M**.

Hafod Housing

Lanelay Road, Talbot Green has experienced some delays, overall delays approximately 6 weeks however the site is now fully operational, with contractors on site and following social distancing guidelines.

Aberdare Girls School – scheme has remained operational throughout the pandemic with the contractors remaining on site, although progress was been hampered by social distancing guidelines and a shortage of some materials. Project was due to be handed over in April 2020, this has now been complete and properties will be let in June 2020.

Trivallis

Appletree Avenue, Dinas – scheme was delayed at the beginning of April but works are due to recommence on the 8th June. This delay was due to a lack of availability of sub-contractors, namely external ground workers required to construct roads and retaining walls.

Forge Lane, Pentre – was delayed as of 26th March but reopened on 4th May, where contractors are back on site following social distancing guidelines.

Black Lion, Aberdare – the scheme was delayed for a week as increased Health and Safety measures were put in place in line with Covid-19 guidelines. Works are continuing, contractors are on site following social distancing guidelines and at present there have not been any reported delays.

Pentre Hotel, Pentre – scheme was due to commence at the end of March but due to Covid-19 the main contractor paused operations. With support from the Council the development is due to recommence 15th June.

Crown Avenue, Ynyswen – works are continuing well and have not been stopped, contractors have remained on site following social distancing guidelines.

Cynon Taf Housing

Oxford Building, Mountain Ash – Contractor started onsite in May with support and advice from the RSL and Council. Work is progressing well with the scheme due to be completed by May 21.

PROGRESS – Strategic Projects

Strategic Investments and Projects; Project Management and Design Team

The project management team has continued to work on a variety of projects during lockdown. There has been some challenges managing contracts and contractors locking down sites and then re-opening together with supply chain issues. The Team has continued to progress a significant Capital programme both funded from within Strategic Projects and working for other service areas, such as Prosperity and Development. Some of which have been indicated in the foregoing sections. A summary of all the current projects being progressed during lockdown is in Appendix A

Flood Risk Management Team

The Flood Risk Management team has continued to work on both projects and statutory duties. With the added challenge of dealing with the flood risk strategic planning, project development and damage repairs after Storm Dennis. The volume of priority and public correspondence remains high, and particularly difficult to deal with under lockdown conditions. A summary of all the current projects being progressed during lockdown is in Appendix B

The SuDs Approval Body (SAB) has continued to function at full efficiency other than face to face meeting. As a new service it has been set up to be fully digital and this has proved beneficial during lockdown. Site Inspections have only been carried out where absolutely necessary but with developers returning to site demand is growing.

The lead Local Flood Authority Team (LLFA) is liaising with WG and preparing strategic overviews and forward plans for the local Strategy review which after Storm Dennis, will present a timely opportunity. They are also progressing 28nr Flood Investigation Reports into the Storm Dennis Flooding and it is envisaged will be required to write 18 regulatory reports under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 after their completion. This will include main river flooding so are in contact with NRW for their flooding Investigation Reports.

The 2 major projects which were being developed for construction in 2020/21 prior to Storm Dennis have continued to be progressed through Storm Dennis and Lockdown.

Park Lane Flood Alleviation Scheme - Project Value: £500k

The scheme is currently out to tender and will alleviate flooding to both the Park Lane School and properties in the local area.

The project will use sustainable drainage techniques and removal of culverted watercourses to alleviate the risks and reduce the cost of routine inspection and maintenance.

The water will be throttled to create a basin/flood plain therefore reducing the peak flows downstream through Aberdare by as much as 40 – 50%. This water will be used to create a wetland habitat with linkage the Aberdare Park. Envisaged commencement August 2020.

Scheme Outputs:-

- 30 Properties benefiting from increased standard of protection
- Reduced flood risk to Park Lane School.
- Removal of high risk and maintenance culverts.
- Creation of wetland habitat.
- Walking routes/links to Aberdare park.

Cwmbach – phase 2 (Canal Road) Flood Alleviation Scheme - Project Value: £450k

The scheme is currently nearing completion of detailed design and will alleviate flooding to both the commercial premises and properties In the local area.

The project will use sustainable drainage techniques and overland flow routing into an overflow system. Envisaged Commencement September 2020.

Scheme Outputs:-

- 69 Properties benefiting from increased standard of protection
- Creation of overland flow interceptors.
- Overflow pipeline from the overflow interceptors

Maesyfynnon Extra Care Total Project Cost - £9.15 M, Council Contribution £1.4 M

Linc Cymru Housing continued to work on the construction of the Maesyfynnon Extra Care scheme despite the pandemic following Government guidelines for safe working. The 40 bedroom Extra Care Scheme was completed and handed over to the Council for occupation on May 1st 2020. Adult Services is currently nominating tenants to take up apartments and the allocation and moving in process is currently underway.

Pontypridd Extra Care (Former Magistrates Court) – Total Project Cost - £12.73m, Council Contribution £4.143 M

Construction work commenced on the project in July 2019, with the demolition of the former Pontypridd Magistrates Court, with the projected completion in June 2021. The Extra Care facility will offer 60 Beds along with a day care facility for other social care clients. Works have progressed diligently throughout the pandemic and the project is progressing with the concrete section of the substructure frame completed and work progressing on the lightweight steel framework for the above ground floors.

Bryn Pica Eco Park – Estimated Total Project Cost -£12.73m, Council Contribution £4.143 M

Initial clearance and enabling works undergoing and design work progressing through RIBA development stages.

Scheme outputs:

- Development of 4ha of land at Amgen Cymru Site
- Construction of 4 no industrial buildings arranged in 2 number buildings in 2 number pairs with integral office space and welfare.
- Premises created or refurbished- 6,000 square-metres
- Car parking for © 140 vehicles including 14 number EV charging points.
- Internal access roads.
- Biomass heat exchange facility

Design Works have progressed diligently throughout the pandemic and the completion of the RIBA Stage 2 report was presented in May and design progression is continuing with an expected commencement of an earthworks package in November 2020.

Bryn Pica HV Installation – Estimated Total Project Cost -£.35M

Tender package nearing completion.

Scheme outputs:

- Provide High Voltage electrical power and infrastructure to service new MRF facility.
- Containment works for future Eco Park project

Design Works have progressed diligently throughout the pandemic and pre-qualification of tendering contractors compete. Tender package to be issued w/e 12/06/2020 and projected site commencement August 2020 subject to Western Power agreement.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Officer to contact:

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

25 JUNE 2020

**SAFER PLACES – SOCIAL DISTANCING IN TOWN CENTRES AND
PUBLIC PLACES DURING CORONAVIRUS**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR A
MORGAN) & THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENTERPRISE,
DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING (COUNCILLOR R BEVAN)**

Author: Simon Gale

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on the action taken to assist our community to maintain safe social distancing when visiting our town centres and parks during the current COVID 19 pandemic.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Considers the information provided and notes the action taken to date in response to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- 2.2 Request that the Group Director for Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services monitors the situation on a regular basis to ensure our town centres and public spaces are suitably safe, and in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s), introduces additional measures and/or enforces measures where necessary in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide a summary for Cabinet of the action taken since the COVID 19 restrictions were imposed by the UK and Welsh Governments and to prepare for the future re-opening of non-essential supplies and services, in particular within town centres.
- 3.2 To ensure that the Group Director for Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, expeditiously responds to introduce, change and/or enforce measures in town centres and public spaces where necessary in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On 23rd March, the UK government announced unprecedented lockdown measures to stop the spread of the COVID 19 virus between households, changing the way in which everyone in the UK lives their daily lives. This resulted in an initial three week lockdown of the movement of people, forcing people to remain at home, other than key workers. More recently, some of these initial measures have been eased and there is an expectation that further restrictions will be lifted as the response to the pandemic is reviewed by the Welsh Government on a three weekly basis.
- 4.2 At the start of the lockdown there was a significant drop in the number of people visiting our main town centres but over recent weeks there has been a gradual increase.
- 4.3 In discussing the latest review of the lockdown measures, the First Minister has given a clear indication to town centres that they need to be prepared for the re-opening of 'non-essential' shops potentially as early as the next 3 week review, on June 15th.
- 4.4 For Members' information, officers have been supporting town centre business throughout the coronavirus pandemic through the distribution of government grants and through dedicated business support. The services of our 'Stay Well @ Work' team have been made available to the numerous small business to offer support in these difficult times. Dedicated pages have been developed for our website providing a 'toolkit' for shops to support the safe reopening of our town centres.
- 4.5 Our parks have continued to be in use during the lockdown period and have been used by our communities as part of their daily exercise regime. Members will also be aware that Ynysangharad Park reopened to the public on 27 May 2020 following the completion of repair works necessitated by the Storm Dennis floods in February.
- 4.6 This report sets out the measures the Council is introducing in order to enable increased numbers of visitors to return to our towns and parks whilst still maintaining social distancing to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The measures take account of the guidance issued by UK Government - *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Safer Public Places – Urban Centres and Green Spaces* last updated on 13 May 2020.

5. PROGRESS UPDATE

- 5.1 The advice from public health bodies remains that staying 2 metres apart reduces the risk of transmission of Coronavirus. The measures introduced in our town centres and parks enable the public to visit them in a way where social distancing can be maintained. Where the achievement of 2 metre social distancing is simply not possible, the

measures introduced do all that can reasonably be undertaken to reduce the risk.

5.2 The interventions have been planned on the basis of a 'signs and lines' approach and significant physical interventions and the closure of areas have been avoided wherever possible. The measures are designed to enable visitors to town centres and parks to exercise social distancing rather than to force it to happen and the continued cooperation of our communities in exercising social distancing will be critical in the success of the measures proposed.

5.3 The general principles of the 'signs and lines' approach is as follows:

Large banners at the entrance to our main town centres reminding of the need to stay two metres apart and alerting visitors that social distancing measures are in operation in the town (the signs are designed to demonstrate 2m width)



Posters in all available shop windows reinforcing social distancing



Posters stuck to litter bins and bus shelters reinforcing social distancing



Signs applied to the pavement, 2 metres apart, to delineate safe queuing distances where significant queuing is anticipated.



Priority to oncoming pedestrians applied to pinch points in town centres and parks where otherwise social distancing cannot be achieved



Also under consideration:

Where street width allows, lines and arrows applied to the footway setting out one way walking lanes to minimise pedestrians brushing past each other.

Where footway width allows, lines applied to the pavement separating space for the free flow of pedestrians from the space available immediately adjacent to shops to allow for safe queuing

- 5.4 None of our town centres are the same and each presents their own individual issues in terms of observing social distancing due to their size, configuration, role, traffic and parking and levels of footfall. As such not all of the measures set out above have been introduced in all of the main town centres
- 5.5 That said, consistent advice has been deployed across all our main town centres in the form of banners, shop window posters and stickers on street furniture and further examples are shown below:



- 5.6 Benches within town centres have the potential to attract groups of people in conflict with the principles of social distancing. The benches in our centres are not of a uniform design with different styles and sizes depending on the area they are situated. Some are sited on their own, whilst others are in groups or even back to back, each of these configurations presents its own considerations in terms of social distancing conflicts.



- 5.7 There have already been examples where people have been gathering in large numbers on and around groups of benches at the expense of social distancing.



- 5.8 It is recognised that benches present an opportunity for the elderly or less able to have a short rest when they are visiting our town centres. However, at present the overriding need remains the health and safety of the whole community and as a Council we must do what we can to prevent the spread of the virus through enabling and promoting social distancing.
- 5.9 As such, the decision was made to remove some of these benches in order to prevent people gathering in close proximity to each other. However, as can be seen in the example below, to mitigate the effect that this decision will have, we are now leaving some benches open in areas of our Town Centres and are placing a 1 person/seat signs, which will allow residents to use these facilities when required, whilst still maintaining social distancing.



- 5.10 There is continued dialogue between officers and our main town centre contacts such as the BIDs and Chambers of Trade around the measures that have been introduced. Any issues arising and updates have been sent to all businesses in the main town centres. Officers are also engaging with organisations such as RNIB that represent those in our community that are most affected by the removal of benches and the introduction of social distancing measures.
- 5.11 The operation and effectiveness of the measures will be kept under constant review and if and where it is evident that social distancing is not being observed then additional measures will be considered and where necessary deployed. Alternatively, where lockdown restrictions are relaxed in the future and the risk of the spread of the virus can be managed, consideration will be given to the removal of some of the measures and the reinstatement of benches.
- 5.12 In terms of our bus stops and bus stations we have introduced signage and are developing proposals to increase the pedestrian access and waiting areas at Aberdare and Pontypridd bus stations to enable bus users to maintain social distancing whilst waiting, boarding or alighting buses and moving through the bus station area. The public toilets in both these bus stations re-opened on 8 June.
- 5.13 There is a specific issue at the Catherine Street Bus stops in Pontypridd and measures will be implemented over coming Sundays to re-assign road space to widen the footway to allow queuing and through movement of pedestrians to take place. These bus stops will be promoted for journeys out of Pontypridd to reduce pressure on the bus station itself. Consideration is being given to introducing similar measures at Porth.
- 5.14 In terms of our parks, play equipment has been fenced off as a means of restricting the spread of the virus but the remainder of the wider areas of the parks are open. The larger parks such as Ynysangharad and Aberdare which attract greater numbers of visitors have been assessed and predominantly are being managed through the 'signs and lines' approach.

5.15 Social distancing awareness posters are being displayed extensively throughout Ynysangharad Park and also placed in the other large parks such as Aberdare and Dare Valley (see examples below). Social distancing awareness signs are also being displayed at the entrance to all other parks.



5.16 Benches in our parks tend to be in ones and distant from the nearest next bench, and as such, there is little need to remove them to maintain social distancing. However, in Ynysangharad Park; there is potential for gatherings on the numerous benches around the bandstand. The bandstand area is easily cordoned off and it was therefore considered that this is the best way to maintain social distancing. There are a small number of picnic benches in the park and these have been removed to promote social distancing.

5.17 Enforcement Officers from Frontline Services were on hand to monitor the reopening of Ynysangharad Park in case it became the subject of large gatherings but other than a small minority, visitors to the park maintained the principles of social distancing.

5.18 As outlined in 5.2 significant physical interventions and the closure of areas have been avoided wherever possible. However, as visitor numbers to our town centres increase there are some issues and areas that need careful consideration with a view to introducing additional measures where necessary.

5.19 For example, all of our main town centres currently have traffic flows and parking through the main streets which does have the effect of compromising the ability of pedestrians to maintain social distancing. One option is to reallocate some of the vehicle carriageway and/or parking bays to allow for a wider space for pedestrians to move through the towns. Similarly, pedestrian crossings could become areas where pedestrians gather in close proximity as they wait to safely cross the road. It is possible to reprogramme the light sequences to give

pedestrians more priority (and therefore reduce groups queuing) at the expense of creating more queues of vehicle traffic. This will be addressed on a case by case basis.

- 5.20 The current view is that these measures should not be introduced yet but the issues should be closely monitored and then targeted interventions only used where there is a demonstrable need to protect the ability for visitors to our towns to safely socially distance.
- 5.21 One other issue that will need to be assessed when pubs and cafes are allowed to reopen is open air tables and chairs. On the one hand sitting outdoors may be the safest way for customers to use such premises, however tables and chairs in the street have the potential to take away space that would otherwise allow pedestrians to maintain a safe distance.
- 5.22 At this time it is not considered that a blanket policy for all of RCT would be appropriate as street furniture could work in some cases where street width allowed but be wholly inappropriate in others. Members may be aware that a street furniture licencing scheme is in operation in Pontypridd and it is recommended that licences to deploy tables and chairs in the street is suspended for the time being and instead the operators of the premises will be required to demonstrate how they propose to safely reintroduce street furniture before they are allowed to do so. Officers will work with traders in the other main towns to develop a system where street tables and chairs are only introduced where it is safe to do so.
- 5.23 Officers are also exploring opportunities where open space can be dedicated as an area where visitors to towns can consume food and drinks they have ordered from cafes and coffee shops as an alternative to using tables and chairs directly outside the premises.
- 5.24 Welsh Government has invited Expressions of Interest for Emergency Funding to deal with social distancing, particularly around re-assigning road space to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, and other complimentary measures. The Council has submitted a bid for over £2M of funding to introduce a number of potential measures;
- Implementing wide ranging 20mph limits across all town centres to make these areas safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
 - Implementing wide ranging 20mph limits outside up to 20 schools, which will extend into surrounding communities to make these areas safer, and to enable more pupils to walk, cycle or scoot safely to school.
 - Piloting the closing of roads to traffic outside 6 schools in the county borough to reduce congestion at schools, enable social distancing and to limit the attractiveness of the car as an option for school travel.

- Introducing real-time passenger information at our two busiest bus stations to enable passengers to have more information and assurance regarding their journeys.
- Introducing facilities to enable social distancing at our two busiest bus stations, and at two other busy interchanges, to enable bus users to access public transport safely and minimise car use.
- Introducing enhancements to a range of cycle routes to encourage cycle use.

5.25 Subject to funding being made available, a number of these initiatives could be implemented relatively quickly.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 An EIA was carried out to support the decision to remove town centre benches. The considerations are summarised in 5.6 – 5.9 above. Officers are engaging with relevant access groups to assist in keeping the measures under review so that they remain proportionate to the overriding need to protect the whole community against the spread of coronavirus.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 There has been continued engagement with town centre business groups. Overall feedback has been positive and the groups have welcomed the early engagement from the Council. Where specific issues have been raised this has been used to inform the ongoing deployment of the social distancing measures.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Additional funding has been necessary to develop and introduce the measures. This over and above expenditure will form part of our wider claim to Welsh Government for reimbursement of COVID related costs.

9. LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 The measures have been deployed in consideration of the Coronavirus Legislation and guidance and the relevant highways legislation.

10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

10.1 This is an information report on progress in responding to the COVID 19 pandemic. No decisions are being taken in this report.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 This report has set out the actions taken to develop and deliver of a range measures to enable increased numbers of visitors to our parks



and town centres to remain safe through social distancing whilst we remain in the current COVID 19 national emergency.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee –



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Officer to contact:



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

25TH JUNE 2020

SAFER BUILDINGS – SOCIAL DISTANCING & OTHER SAFETY MEASURES IN COUNCIL OFFICES, SCHOOLS AND OTHER PUBLIC BUILDINGS AS THE LOCKDOWN IS LIFTED

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE ESTATES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES (COUNCILLOR M NORRIS)

Author: David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on the action taken to ensure the Council's buildings, including schools, can be opened safely to Members, staff, pupils and the general public maintaining safe social distancing and other appropriate safety measures during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Considers the information provided and notes the action taken to date in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.2 Request that the Director of Corporate Estates monitors the situation on a regular basis to ensure as schools, services and offices reopen to staff, pupils and the general public, our schools and Council buildings are suitably safe, and in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s), introduces additional measures and/or enforces measures where necessary in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide a summary for Cabinet of the action taken since the COVID-19 restrictions were imposed by the UK and Welsh

Governments and to prepare for the future safe re-opening of Council buildings, and schools.

- 3.2 To ensure that the Director of Corporate Estates, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, expediently responds to introduce, change and/or enforce measures in schools and Council buildings where necessary in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On 23rd March, the UK government announced unprecedented lockdown measures to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus between households, changing the way in which everyone in the UK lives their daily lives. This resulted in an initial three week lockdown of the movement of people, forcing people to remain at home, other than key workers. More recently, some of these initial measures have been eased and there is an expectation that further restrictions will be lifted as the response to the pandemic is reviewed by the Welsh Government on a three weekly basis.
- 4.2 At the start of the lockdown all schools and the vast majority of Council offices were closed, including libraries, theatres, leisure centres, day centres, civic buildings in Clydach Vale, and other key sites where people gathered to work or provide major services. The buildings were closed in a controlled manner to ensure mechanical and electrical services were shut down/adjusted and security systems set to reflect the fact that the buildings would not be occupied. The only operational and administrative buildings that remained open were to continue to support, principally, the day to day social care, homelessness and frontline service provision. Working from home using remote technology has been the default position for the majority of staff.
- 4.3 However, as the lockdown is gradually eased in Wales, council services will need to adapt and consider how they respond to the next phase of the crisis. A number of areas that have not been operating over the course of the crisis will need to 'restart' in an adapted way, such as libraries and schools. Some will not be able to operate over the short to medium term, such as Leisure Services.

5. PROGRESS UPDATE

- 5.1 The Council's approach to date has been to re-start services, such as the Community Recycling Centres, in a way that ensures the safety of staff and citizens, and working at all times working to stop the spread of the virus.

- 5.2 As part of the Council's approach to lowering the rate of transmission, the process of reopening services will be managed in a phased manner as part of a disciplined and coordinated Council wide process. Every service subject to a risk-based assessment, which will be discussed with the Trade Unions, to ensure that they can operate effectively and safely. This will cover all aspects of how services will be delivered in the context of physical distancing and infection control requirements. The Council's Health and Safety methodology will include:
- **Safe Premises** - Each council premises will be subject to an assessment, which identifies the maximum occupancy of the building and considers specific building issues to achieve physical distancing. This includes implementation of safe access/egress, safe use of communal facilities such as welfare provisions, printing, kitchens, meeting rooms and the allocation of safe desk space. The frequency of cleaning of high contact surfaces and provision of hygiene supplies will be included in the assessment.
 - **Safe Services** - Each service area will complete an assessment checklist, which will highlight risks in relation to interaction with the public, colleagues, contractors, as well as use of equipment and travel in work. A risk assessment will be completed for each service area detailing the required controls in place in line with Council policy and national guidelines.
- 5.3 The Chief Executive has written to all staff currently working from home stating that working from home will remain the default position for those council staff who are able to do so until 31 August 2020. The position will be reviewed at that date, but based on the forecast of a second wave of the pandemic in the late autumn, working from home will be common practice for many staff for the foreseeable future. This Council-wide change in working practices will need to be supported by new policies, procedures and management practices. For those services where staff cannot work from home, or where face-to-face contact is necessary, robust physical distancing measures will be put in place as detailed in service area risk assessments.
- 5.4 On 3 June 2020, the Welsh Government Minister for Education announced the next phase for schools in Wales. It is proposed that all schools will reopen on 29 June 2020, with the summer term being extended by one week and ending on 27 July 2020. In the next academic year beginning in September 2020, the intention is to expand the autumn half-term break to two weeks.
- 5.5 All children will have the opportunity to attend school to 'check in, catch up and prepare' for the summer break and the new school year in September 2020. This period of opening will focus on making sure that

pupils, staff and parents are prepared – mentally, emotionally and practically – for a ‘new normal’ in September.

- 5.6 It is likely that each school will adopt a phased approach, with year groups being split into cohorts with staggered starts, lessons and breaks. It is expected that this will mean, at most, a third of pupils being present at any one time, though schools may need time to reach this level of operation. There will be much smaller classes, providing secure dedicated time with teaching staff and classmates.
- 5.7 The physical reopening of schools will involve a similarly rigorous process to that applied to other council services and further guidance is expected shortly from Welsh Government.
- 5.8 To support the opening of schools and public buildings the Corporate Estates Team has prepared comprehensive guidance for headteachers and service managers and sets out Rhondda Cynon Taf’s approach to opening buildings whilst applying consistent measures to protect staff and visitors in accordance with guidance under regulation 7A of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020.
- 5.9 A copy of the guidance is set out in Appendix 1 to this report. To support services, the Corporate Estates team has set maximum occupancy numbers for staff and the public in Council buildings. A similar approach to setting maximum occupancy levels will be adopted with schools, on receipt of the final guidance from Welsh Government.
- 5.10 The guidance provides clear direction to headteachers and service managers, the focus must be to:
 - Take all reasonable measures to **ensure a 2m physical distance** is maintained between all staff, whenever possible;
 - Provide **hand sanitiser/wipes/ handwash arrangements** in appropriate locations;
 - **Not exceed** the max number of staff in the office, kitchen and toilets;
 - Ensure an **enhanced cleaning regime** is introduced for the office and workstations;
 - **Use virtual meetings where practical**, if physical distancing is not possible;
 - Ensure a **clear desk policy** is maintained;
 - Ensure staff **do not cross on stairs** – use one way travel wherever possible;
 - Restrict use of **lifts to 1 person** (and a carer) at a time;
 - Mark out **2m exclusion zones** in appropriate locations;

- Use Kitchens for individual beverages only with **no food preparation**;
 - Consider having **staggered start/finish times** for staff to avoid gatherings in confined spaces;
 - **Communicate effectively with staff** and ensure they also adhere to the regulations and any site specific rules.
- 5.11 Corporate Estates has also prepared and had manufactured a series of signs for all buildings and schools to remind staff and the public using the building of what is expected from them in terms of social distancing, personal hygiene etc. Copies of the signs are set out in the Appendix to this report.
- 5.12 Signage and equipment packs have been rolled out to buildings over the past couple of weeks and measures implemented in accordance with the guidance to ensure buildings are ready to open as soon as an appropriate decision is taken.
- 5.13 The Council is also exploring how best to use temperature checking systems for all users of Council buildings, including schools. Some trial equipment is being tested and if it works successfully, this will also be available in all Council buildings, to help reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 No Equality Impact Assessment is required for this report. Corporate Estates is engaging with the Council's Equality and Diversity team to identifying specific groups of public and staff that will be affected by the changes in the operation of buildings. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as part of the respective re-opening of services, such as Libraries and Schools etc.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 There has been continued engagement with Trade Unions in respect of the guidance set out in the Appendix to this report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Additional funding has been necessary to develop and introduce the measures. This over and above expenditure will form part of our wider claim to Welsh Government for reimbursement of COVID-19 related costs.

9. LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 The measures have been deployed in consideration of the Coronavirus Legislation and guidance and the relevant Health & Safety legislation and guidance.

10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

10.1 This is an information report on progress in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. No decisions are being taken in this report.

11. **CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 This report has set out the actions taken to ensure schools, public buildings and Council offices can be safely opened in the future as the lock down is lifted. Individual schools and services will inevitably have to adapt these guidelines to best meet their particular needs, taking into account the physical layout of the respective building.

Officer Contact: David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates 01443 424144

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee –



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

CORPORATE ESTATES

GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

**RE-OCCUPATION OF BUILDINGS DURING CORONAVIRUS
(COVID-19)**

Taking all reasonable measures to maintain physical distancing in the workplace: Guidance under regulation 7A of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020

This document is available in Welsh or English and other formats are available when requested

Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Checked	Approved
C19.01	May 2020	Hilary Reid	Mike Murphy	David Powell

CONTACT

Hilary Read, Head of Operational Property 01443 281188

hilary.s.reid@rctcbc.gov.uk

RE-OCCUPATION OF BUILDINGS DURING CORONAVIRUS **(COVID-19)**

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 ("Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations") have been amended with effect from 7 April 2020 to introduce general restrictions on places of work, which were not previously covered.

1.2 Certain businesses were closed down and people were told to 'stay at home', protect the NHS and save lives. Employers were required to take every possible step to facilitate their employees working from home, including providing suitable IT and equipment to enable remote working.

1.3 It was recognised that not everyone can work from home and certain jobs require people to travel to their place of work. Everyone attending a place of work must take all reasonable measures to maintain physical distancing in the workplace to comply with guidance under regulation 7A of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020, wherever possible.

1.4 A breach of the above regulation may result in a fine (the amount of which is unlimited) or fixed penalty. This is a change in law in Wales which is in force until 26 September 2020, with ability to extend.

1.5 As the restrictions are eased over the coming weeks/months and businesses re-open, the Council needs to be ready to respond to buildings being opened such as Libraries, Schools, Offices etc whilst still complying with the physical distancing rules until such time as the restrictions are fully lifted and there is no further threat of contracting the virus.

2. PURPOSE

2.1 This guidance document sets out Rhondda Cynon Taf's approach to open buildings whilst applying consistent measures to protect staff and visitors in accordance with guidance under regulation 7A of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

2.2 The guidance is specific for our built assets and does not attempt to deal with open spaces, parks or town centre facilities.

2.3 The guidance sets out practical measures for managers to use in the various workplaces and is intended to be used in conjunction with signage/specialist equipment for each building based upon specific risk assessments/building requirements.

2.4 Each section covers particular 'spaces' within the building and any spaces not included below specific to a building such as a classroom, will need to be

assessed and similar principles applied to ensure compliance with the physical distancing within the workplace.

3. KEY THEMES

3.1 Managers must:

Ensure a suitable risk assessment for Covid-19 in the workplace is undertaken and implement any necessary controls. To ensure the risk is reduced as far as reasonably practicable managers will need to:

- Take reasonable measures to **ensure a 2m physical distance** is maintained between all staff, whenever possible
- Provide **hand sanitiser/wipes/ handwash arrangements** in appropriate locations
- **Not exceed** the max number of staff in the office, kitchen and toilets
- Ensure an **enhanced cleaning regime** is introduced for the office and workstations
- **Use virtual meetings where practical**, if physical distancing is not possible
- Ensure a **clear desk policy** is maintained
- Ensure staff **do not cross on stairs** – use one way travel wherever possible
- Restrict use of **lifts to 1 person** (and a carer) at a time
- Mark out **2m exclusion zones** in appropriate locations
- Use Kitchens for individual beverages only with **no food preparation**
- Consider having **staggered start/finish times** for staff to avoid gatherings in confined spaces
- **Communicate effectively with staff** and ensure they also adhere to the regulations and any site specific rules

3.2 Staff must:

Inform their manager if they (or someone in their household) are in an 'at risk' category, and

- Ensure they are **symptom free** while working from the office
- Maintain a **2m distance** between themselves and colleagues wherever reasonable and practicable to do so

- **Regularly wash hands** with soap for a min. of 20 seconds
- Make use of **hand sanitiser/wipes** as appropriate if hand washing facilities not available
- Adhere to the **max number of staff** in the office, kitchen and toilets
- Adhere to the **clear desk policy** and ensure individual workstations are cleaned/sanitised before re-use
- **Use common sense** when moving around the workplace and be courteous to colleagues when waiting to enter spaces/use equipment

4. RECEPTION

4.1 Objective: to ensure the safety of both visitors and staff

- Where possible, visitors should arrive only by appointment and the organiser should make arrangements with reception staff to achieve the smallest turn around time possible
- Use of temperature sensing equipment may be required
- Clear plastic (or existing glass) protective screens must be used to separate staff and visitors and allow for safe interaction
- Areas must operate on a one in/one out basis and if possible, the use of one way systems
- Where possible a separate waiting area should be provided
- Use of floor and wall signage both internally and externally (see section on signage) will help to remind staff and visitors of distancing requirements
- Doors may be propped open (subject to advice on fire restrictions) to allow for better visibility and reduced contact with door handles
- Sanitiser should be provided at reception counters
- Appropriate exclusion zones marked out
- Encouraging visits via remote connection/working where this is an option.
- Limiting visitor times to a specific time window and restricting access to required visitors only
- Maintaining a record of all visitors

5. DELIVERIES

5.1 Objective: to reduce transmission through contact with objects that come into the workplace and staggering arrival and departure times at work to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace, taking account of the impact on those with protected characteristics.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- Cleaning procedures for goods and merchandise entering the site.
- Cleaning procedures for vehicles.

- Introducing greater handwashing and handwashing facilities for workers handling goods and merchandise and providing hand sanitiser where this is not practical.
- Regular cleaning of vehicles that workers may take home.
- Restricting non-business deliveries, for example, personal deliveries to workers.

6. CIRCULATION SPACE

6.1 Objective: to maintain social distancing while using common areas.

- Staff/visitors must not cross on stairs wherever possible – most buildings can accommodate one way travel
- Staff will need to be alert at all times of distancing ability being compromised in these areas
- Good use of signage (see section on signage) will help to remind staff of distancing
- Doors may be propped open (subject to advice on fire restrictions) to allow for better visibility
- Opening windows and doors frequently to encourage ventilation where possible
- Appropriate exclusion zones marked out

7. LIFTS

7.1 Objective: to reduce transmission by allowing for social distancing outside or inside a lift

- To be operated as one in/one out basis (with a carer if required)
- Signage to be clearly visible
- Queuing system to be utilised
- Appropriate exclusion zones marked out

8. FIRE RECORD SIGNING IN/OUT BOOKS

8.1 Objective: to operate the procedure safely whilst still complying with fire safety regulations

- Sanitiser should be provided at the station
- Signage should be easily visible
- Appropriate exclusion zones marked out
- Staff to use personal pen to sign in /out (rather than communal pen)

9. SPACE/DESK UTILISATION

9.1 Objective: to reduce transmission by creating an office space allowing for desk users to achieve relevant distances between them

- The advised maximum number of staff should not be exceeded
- Desk occupation should be allocated to achieve the appropriate space/distance between people this can be done in various ways often depending upon the desk layouts for example: diagonally, straight line, alternating etc
- If desk need to be used by more than one person then the clear desk guide will be explicit in this and user must clean desk after use
- Staff rotas may be needed in order to achieve safe distancing
- Moving desks apart may be possible to assist
- Use of screens between people/desks could assist
- Increase number of air changes/hr in rooms by adjusting ventilation and/or opening windows

10. CLEAR DESK POLICY

10.1 Objective: to reduce transmission between desk users and allow for cleaning of desks to be achieved easily and consistently

- No personal items/paperwork etc are to be kept on desks at any time
- Pedestals must be locked or secured with tape and no items put back and forth onto/from the desk
- Desks, keyboards and telephones must be wiped clean before and after use
- Staff must not share desk phones and shall try at all times to use mobile phones

11. SHARED EQUIPMENT

11.1 Objective: to reduce transmission by managing the use of these

- MFD's and similar equipment such as plotters should be operated on the basis of one user at a time
- Space for queuing should be identified
- Sanitiser should be made available
- Appropriate exclusion zones marked out
- Wipes to be provided for cleaning after each use

12. MEETINGS

12.1 Objective: To reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain social distancing in meetings.

- Using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings, wherever possible
- Only absolutely necessary participants should attend meetings and should maintain 2m separation throughout.
- Avoiding transmission during meetings, for example avoiding sharing pens and other objects.
- Providing hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.
- Holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.
- For areas where regular meetings take place, using floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.
- Limiting or restricting use of high-touch items and equipment, for example, printers or whiteboards

13. KITCHEN USE

13.1 Objective: to reduce transmission and maintain social distancing while allowing staff to use the facilities

- The advised maximum number of staff should not be exceeded
- Only hot drinks to be made or cold drinking water from the dispenser
- Drinks must only be made for the individual needing/wanting one
- No food preparation is to be carried out in the space
- Food and drink which needs refrigeration can be placed in the refrigerators but must be placed in and removed swiftly and removed from the kitchen area for consumption
- Space for queuing should be identified
- Regular checks on the supply of sanitiser/soap should be undertaken
- Cupboards will be sealed so that no items can be held in the kitchen
- The advised maximum number of staff should not be exceeded
- Appropriate exclusion zones marked out

14. TOILETS

14.1 Objective: to allow safe use of facilities while reducing transmission and maintaining social distancing

Toilets must be operated on a safe space distancing basis

- The advised maximum number of staff should not be exceeded
- Distance between hand basins and door cubicles must be able to accommodate staff passing whilst maintaining appropriate distancing
- A one staff in/one staff out policy may need to be implemented
- Where possible visibility of persons in the ancillary toilet area should be achieved
- Space for queuing should be identified
- Suitable hand wash facilities at the sink
- Regular checks on the supply of sanitiser/soap should be undertaken
- The advised maximum number of staff should not be exceeded
- Appropriate exclusion zones marked out

15. SHOWERS

15.1 Objective: to reduce transmission and maintain social distancing while allowing staff to use the facilities

Where possible, showers must not be used unless they are required because of the work activity so in the event that they are needed;

- Users will need to provide their own soap etc...
- Nothing to be left in the space after use
- Ensure lockers and changing rooms are kept clean and clear of personal items
- Appropriate exclusion zones marked out
- Wipes to be provided for cleaning surfaces after each use

16. STATUTORY MAINTENANCE COMPLIANCE

167.1 Objective: to ensure buildings that have been closed are maintained appropriately prior to staff returning

Prior to opening buildings, building managers should;

- Undertake a full building inspection for any obvious health and safety issues noting any degradation of the site including access and egress routes and car parking areas
- Liaise with Corporate Maintenance regarding all corporate statutory inspections and testing compliance undertaken during the building closure
- Ensure all routine Legionella flushing and/or testing has been completed
- Ensure all routine fire alarm testing has been completed
- Whilst testing of fire alarms and systems must be maintained, it is recommended fire drills be suspended until further notice. Managers will need to periodically remind staff of the procedures to ensure they are fully familiar with arrangements
- Inspection of the fire escape routes to ensure that they remain adequate and clear of any obstructions
- Physical check of all Internal & External fire doors to ensure that they open and close as intended
- Recommission any specialist plant/equipment in accordance with manufacturers recommendations

17. ACCIDENTS, SECURITY AND OTHER INCIDENTS

17.1 Objective: to prioritise safety during incidents.

- In an emergency, for example, an accident or fire, people do not have to stay 2m apart if it would be unsafe.
- People involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards including washing hands.

18. SIGNAGE/EQUIPMENT

18.1 Objective: to reduce transmission by means of the provision of multiple targeted message signs and the erection of physical barriers.

- Signage to be displayed in the following locations using signage as listed in Appendix A

Locations	Sign Type
Reception/waiting areas –signs	A,B,C,D, F,H,I,J,K
Kitchens	A,B,C,E,J, M
Toilets	A,B,C,E,J
Lifts	D,J
Staff notice boards and prominent locations on walls	A,E,K
Hand sanitiser stations	F,J
Hand washing locations	E,
Floor distance/direction markers	J
Doors to identify direction of travel	B,G,H,I,J
Hazard Marker tape to be used in front of lift doors to indicate distance spacing and in Entrance Foyers/Receptions to keep back/queuing	L

- Specific equipment will also be provided as listed in Appendix A
 - Additional bins for disposal of wipes
 - Additional temporary clear plastic screens for reception counters
 - Suitable quantities of sanitiser/wipes

19. FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

<https://gov.wales/taking-all-reasonable-measures-maintain-physical-distancing-workplace>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-guidance-launched-to-help-get-brits-safely-back-to-work>

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-social-distancing-guidance>

CONTACTS

Hilary Reid, Head of Operational Property 01443 281188

hilary.s.reid@rctcbc.gov.uk

Phil Bond, Head of Corporate Maintenance 01443 281151

philip.c.bond@rctcbc.gov.uk

Mike Murphy, Health and Safety Advisor 01443 425536

mike.murphy@rctcbc.gov.uk

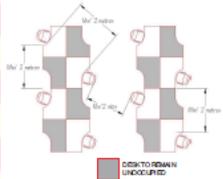
APPENDIX 1 – RCT APPROVED SIGNAGE/EQUIPMENT

Type A - Covid posters to be erected in prominent locations around the building including office notice boards, kitchens, toilets and communal areas;

(COVID -19) - Coronavirus

Physical Distancing in the workplace Office Accommodation Standards A guide for managers/staff

Everyone attending a place of work **MUST** take all reasonable measures to maintain physical distancing in the workplace to comply with guidance under regulation 7A of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020.



Should you have any queries please contact:
Head of Operational Property:
01443 281188
Corporate Estate will provide the maximum number of occupants.
Health and Safety Advisor:
01443 425536
Corporate Health and Safety will be able to discuss concerns.

Managers must:

- Take reasonable measures to ensure a 2m physical distance is maintained between all staff
- Provide hand sanitizer/wipes in appropriate locations (i.e. entry/exit points, signing in, MFD's, shared ICT kit)
- **Not exceed** the max number of staff in the office, kitchen and toilets
- Ensure an **enhanced cleaning regime** is introduced for the office and workstations
- **Use virtual meetings** if physical distancing is not possible
- Ensure a **clear desk policy** is maintained
- Ensure staff **do not cross on stairs** – use one way travel whenever possible
- Restrict use of lifts to 1 person (and a carry) at a time
- Mark out 2m exclusion zones at lift doors, entrance to toilets, fire signing in book, etc
- Use kitchens for individual beverages only **NO food preparation**
- Consider having **staggered start/finish times** for staff to avoid gatherings in confined spaces

Staff must:

- Ensure they are **symptom free** while working from the office
- Maintain a **2m distance** between themselves and colleagues whenever reasonable and practicable to do so
- **Regularly wash hands** with soap for a minimum of 20 seconds
- Make use of **hand sanitiser/wipes** as appropriate
- Adhere to the **max number of staff** in the office, kitchen and toilets
- Adhere to the **clear desk policy** and ensure individual workstations are **cleaned/sanitised** before re-use
- **Use common sense** when moving around the workplace and be courteous to colleagues when waiting to enter appropriate equipment



(COVID-19) - Y Coronafeirws

Cadw pellter corfforol yn y gweithle Safonau ar gyfer swyddfeydd Canllaw i reolwyr/staff

RHAID i bawb sy'n bresennol mewn gweithle gymryd mesurau rheoli rhesymol i gadw pellter corfforol yn y gweithle er mwyn cydymffurfio â chanllawiau o dan reoliad 7A o Reoliadau Diogelu Iechyd (Cyfyngiadau Coronafeirws) (Cymru) 2020

OSGWIRDDI W'WAG

Os oes gyda chi ymholiadau:
Pennaeth Eiddo Gweithredol:
01443 281188
 Bydd modd i'r gartref Eiddo Corfforaethol nodi'r uchelwmi o bobl mewn lleoliad.
Cyngorydd Iechyd a Diogelwch:
01443 425536
 Bydd modd i chi dafod prydorion a'r gartref hedryd a Dargalech Corfforaethol.

Rhaid i reolwyr:

- Cyrraedd mesurau rheoli rhesymol i sicrhau bod pellter o 2 fetr yn cael ei gynnal rhwng pob ailod o staff
- Darparu glanwedd /welps dweilo mewn lleoliadau paratod, i.e. wedi ffractioffurfio, wedi'i ddiroddi i mewn, dylai hysbysu am ymddydd, offeryn TOC yn cael ei osod
- Sicrhau bod nifer y staff yn y swyddfa, y gegin a'r toiledau ddim yn fwy na'r uchelwmi
- Sicrhau bod system lantiau hefyd yn cael ei chyflwyno ar gyfer y swyddfa a'r mathau gwaith
- Cyrraedd cyfarfodydd ar-lein os doeddim modd cadw pellter corfforol
- Sicrhau bod pellter desglauglin yn cael ei gynnal
- Sicrhau bod staff ddim yn croesi ar y grisiau - ddefnyddwch system unfordd i le bo hynny'n bosibl
- Sicrhau bod dim mwy na 1 person (a chynnalwyr) mewn lift ar unrhyw bwyllt
- Nodi ar y llaw i'r mathau rheoli cadw pellter o 2 fetr wrth ymyl dylau liftiau, mynedfeydd i gyfnewtfa, llyfr ffrindod i mewn, ac ati.
- Sicrhau bod beird DDM yn cael ei bensioli gan unigolion yn y gegin - dim ond ddiodydd iddyn nhw eu hunain
- Tafod bod staff yn doderau gorfennu ar weithdai amseroedd 15 eu bod nhw ddim yn ymgwsgo mewn llysoedd cyffwrdd

Rhaid i staff:

- Sicrhau bod dim synwrtomau gyda nhw pan mewn rhwng gweithio yn y swyddfa
- Cadw pellter o 2 fetr rhwngdyn nhw a'u cydwelwyr lle bo hynny'n rhesymol ac yn ymddorffwrdd
- Dalio hysbysu dweilo a sebon yn rheolaidd am o leiaf 20 eiliad
- Ddefnyddio glanwedd /welps dweilo'n brodd
- Paido i mynd dros uchelwmi nifer y staff yn y swyddfa, y gegin a'r toiledau
- Glynu wrth y pellter desglauglin a sicrhau bod manau gweithio unigol yn cael eu glanhau ddiheblu cyn eu ddefnyddio
- Ddefnyddio apweinyr cyffwrdd wrth aymud dweilo gweithio a dangos cwtweli i gydwelwyr wrth aros i'w ddiroddi mewn i llysoedd dweilo ddiroddi

Type B - Sign to be erected outside of kitchens, toilets and all/any small areas or rooms and reception areas



Type C - Sign to be erected in prominent locations around the building including office notice boards, kitchens, toilets, reception and communal areas



Type D - Sign to be erected outside of the lift and at appropriate entry/exit locations



Type E - Sign to be erected in prominent locations around the building including office notice boards, kitchens, toilets, reception and communal areas



Type F - Sign to be erected at all sanitiser locations

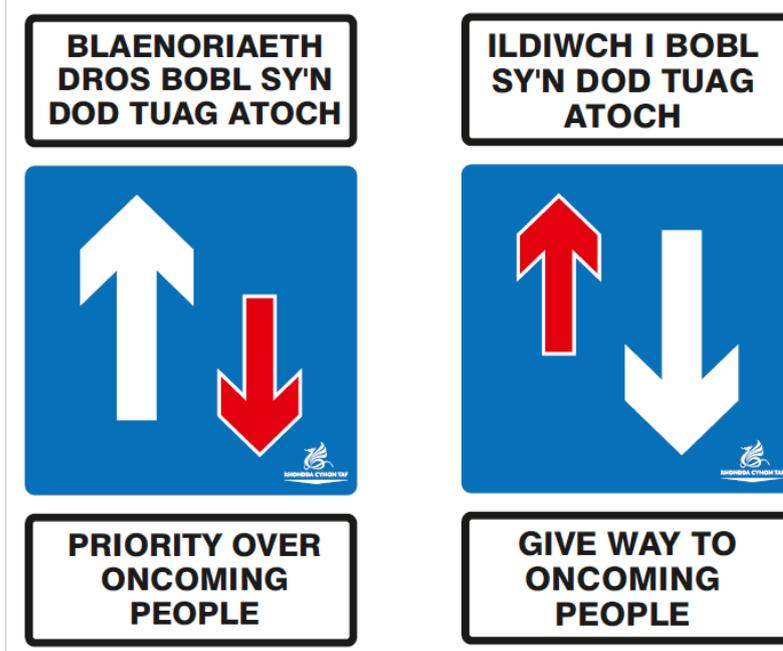


Type G - Signs to clearly indicate one way systems around office areas including stairwells and on doors into rooms where one way in and one way out can be achieved





Type H - Signs to be erected at appropriate locations around the building to clearly indicate travel systems around office areas on doors and on walls in stairwells



Type I – Floor sign to be placed at appropriate locations around the building to clearly indicate travel systems around office areas



Type J – Floor signs to be placed at appropriate locations around the building to clearly indicate where safe distance queueing can take place around office areas to access kitchens, WCs, printers ,lifts, filing rooms and outside reception areas



Type K – Sign to be placed at locations where wipes can be disposed of in appropriate bins



Type L – Hazard tape to be used at appropriate locations around the building to clearly indicate travel systems around office areas, no-go zones such as clear areas outside lifts and to separate travel directions in corridors and stairwells.



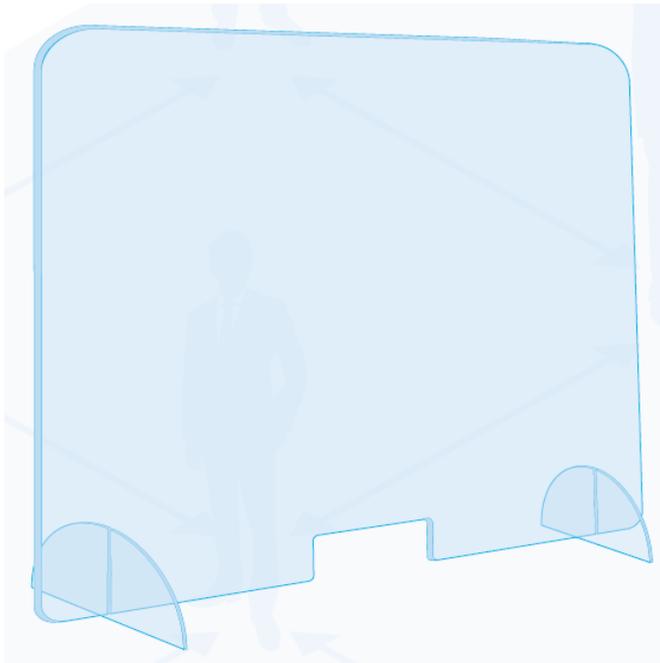
Type M – Sign to be erected in kitchens/tea making facilities.



Equipment
5L Sanitiser



Clear plastic screens for reception counters, manufactured to site specific measurements



APPENDIX B – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)

Q1 Who is guidance aimed at? Building Managers or all Managers?

A1 The guidance is aimed at managers but managers with responsibility for buildings also have an over-arching responsibility. Staff will also need to read/understand the guidance to ensure compliance while attending the workplace.

Q2 How is the guide going to be distributed to staff regarding their responsibilities?

A2 It is anticipated that an e-version of the COVID poster will be issued to staff via one of the regular staff updates together with a link to a document on 'Source' for managers/staff to access and acknowledge they have read/understood it.

Q3 Is there specific guidance for spaces such as lounges in Care Homes and classrooms in schools?

A3 This guidance does not cover all eventualities and/or spaces, it is designed to provide guidance for the 'workplace'. It will be for Service Groups address specific spaces in their unique settings by adopting the principles set out in the guidance for the workplace. Corporate Estates and Health and Safety officers will be happy to assist as and when requested.

Q4 How will I get to know what new site procedures are in place?

A4 Managers are responsible for undertaking specific risk assessments before staff return to their workplace and a mini induction process will be adopted by Service Groups to ensure that all site/building/behaviour related changes are communicated to all staff.

Q5 Are staff being subjected to unnecessary risk by being asked to attend work/the office?

A5 No, as occupation of offices and work places will have been subject to a risk assessment where mitigation processes have been identified and incorporated into the return to work procedure, i.e. distancing at desk locations, sanitising, controlled movement to ensure distancing.

Q6 Are we only testing visitor temperatures to buildings - why not all staff?

A6 Staff should only attend the workplace if they are not displaying symptoms. It is possible to check everyone but this would be time consuming and will take up dedicated resources.

Q7 What will happens if I develop Covid-19 symptoms while at work?

A7 You will be asked to leave immediately and obtain a test/self isolate as appropriate. Your immediate working area will need to be thoroughly cleaned before anyone else is permitted to use it.

Q8 Managers are responsible for ensuring enhanced cleaning regimes are adopted - what are they? A8 Corporate Estates have liaised with Cleaning Services and enhanced cleaning regimes have been agreed, managers need to check they are content with the regimes and request additional measures if required.

Q9 What are the cleaning procedures for deliveries to site?

A9 This depends upon specific site circumstances and the type of deliveries. Where possible, pre-determined knowledge of impending delivery which will assist in this process. Protective gloves and wipes may be used by recipients.

Q10 Who will inform Service Groups how many staff would be in a building/room/kitchen and toilet? A10 Corporate Estates will identify the maximum numbers in readiness for re-occupation.

Q11 Who will supply the new signage and equipment needed to re-occupy buildings?

A11 Corporate Estates have worked closely with Procurement colleagues and will be providing a pack of signs/equipment to Building Managers. Any additional signs required in the future can be obtained by contacting the Head of Operational Property.

Q12 Who is going to install the signage/equipment?

A12 Managers will be responsible for their 'spaces' and building managers will also have an over-arching responsibility. Corporate Estates staff will be available to assist wherever requested.

Q13 Will staff have to bring their own sanitiser/wipes to work?

A13 Sanitiser/wipes will be provided at relevant locations for example; receptions, entry/exit points, kitchens, printers, etc. All sanitiser wipes to be disposed of in clearly marked specific bins.

Q14 What if more than one person uses the same desk/workstation?

A14 Workstations/desks should be cleaned by the member of staff using it prior to commencing any work, and at the end of the working day. Cleaning materials will be provided in each office.

Where desks are shared, the most straightforward way of managing this would be to assign one workstation/desk to no more than two people, and label both the workstation/desk and chair with the name of the two allocated individuals. In this situation, the attendance of the two individuals who share a workstation/desk will need to be managed so that they do not attend the workplace at the same time. For such shared workstations/desks, the requirement for members of staff occupying the desk to clean at the outset and end of the working day should be very strictly adhered to.

Q15 How will I achieve and maintain the clear desk policy requirement?

A15 Upon request from a manager, appropriate numbers of recycling and confidential waste bags will be provided. Items left on desks at the end of the day should be cleared into bins for removal.

Q16 Have the buildings been suitably maintained during the period of closure?

A16 Routine statutory maintenance/testing and weekly checks have been undertaken to ensure compliance. Building managers must liaise with the Head of Corporate Maintenance prior to re-opening a building/site.

Q17 Will the ventilation system increase the risk of passing Covid-19?

A17 No, ventilation systems will be set to 'by-pass' which will ensure air is not re-circulated. Increasing the number of air changes in offices by opening windows will also reduce risks.

Q18 Will vending machines be in use?

A18 No

Q19 How will building opening and closing arrangements work with staggered staff arrival/departure time?

A19 Building opening and closing times will be amended if necessary by dialogue between building managers and the Head of Operational Property.

Q20 Will there be new first aid kits?

A20 First aid kits will be replaced at each location.

Q21 Will the hot desk sites still operate?

A21 All dedicated hot-desking areas will remain closed and not available for agile working.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Officer to contact:



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

25TH JUNE 2020

COVID 19 – FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Author: Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services - 01443 424026

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report provides Members with an initial assessment of the financial implications for the Council arising from COVID 19.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the financial implications arising from COVID 19 on the Council;
- 2.2 To agree to receive a Mid-Year Budget Review in September alongside an updated and interim Medium Term Financial Plan; and
- 2.3 To note the arrangements for the preparation and audit of the Statement of Accounts for 2019/20.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The ongoing response to COVID 19 continues with significant disruption across Council Services with many repurposed, reduced or suspended fully. Whilst the assessment of the financial implications is ongoing this report sets out the initial view of the impact upon the Council.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council's Revenue Budget Strategy for 2020/21 and the Capital Programme for 2020/21 to 2022/23 were agreed by Council on the 4th March 2020.
- 4.2 Within a very short space of time the COVID 19 crisis escalated with the subsequent lockdown announced and effective from the 23rd March 2020.

- 4.3 On the 18th March, an urgent decision of the Leader of the Council was made which set out the current emergency planning arrangements for COVID 19 at UK, Wales and locality levels and set out the potential implications for Council services when the outbreak escalated and the action the Council would take.
- 4.4 Since this time, there has been significant disruption across Council Services with many repurposed, reduced or suspended fully. At the time of writing, the restrictions in Wales are beginning to be relaxed, albeit cautiously.

5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Significant work continues to be undertaken on the assessment of the financial implications across all Council services.
- 5.2 The WLGA have coordinated a survey across the 22 councils in Wales to identify early and initial estimates of the financial implications for the 3 months of April to June 2020. For this Council, the estimated impact for the 3 month period is shown below.

		£M
Expenditure	Net of cost savings	£6.4
Income	Net of cost savings	£7.2
	TOTAL 3 MONTH COST	£13.6
	AVERAGE MONTHLY COST	£4.5

- 5.3 Put into context the all Wales 3 month initial estimated cost is £185M.
- 5.4 The above initial estimate was at a point in time and there are a number of emerging cost pressures which are continuing to arise :
- Supporting the sustainability of the social care sector;
 - Council Tax Collection;
 - Ongoing increases in Council Tax Reduction Scheme claimants;
 - Contractual extension of time claims (capital);
 - Waste Management costs as a consequence of increased volume and changing composition of kerbside waste;
 - Increasing numbers of Children Looked After;
 - Ongoing and longer term PPE requirements;
 - Provision of support (eg food parcels) to the vulnerable;
 - Ongoing cost of cover where staff are “shielding” or have caring responsibilities;
 - Enabling and supporting different ways of working, including ICT costs associated with homeworking;
 - External / Grant Funding risks.

- 5.5 Neither does it begin to factor in the ongoing cost implications arising from

reconfiguring services to adhere to ongoing social distancing requirements (eg Home to School Transport) and ongoing and potentially longer term income reductions across services which cannot be envisaged as returning to “normal” for some considerable time (eg Leisure).

- 5.6 Forecasting the financial implications beyond the short term is clearly dependent upon numerous assumptions which are subject to change on a regular basis as Welsh Government continue to review the restrictions and arrangements within Wales. It is important that we continuously refresh our modelling alongside working with WG to find funding solutions for Wales.
- 5.7 It is also important that we continue to do all that we can locally to mitigate the financial implications and recognise that where services have been and continue to operate at reduced levels that the associated savings are set aside to offset our cost pressures.
- 5.8 In this regard and in line with legal advice, we have taken advantage of the Governments Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and have registered over 670 staff against this scheme with effect from the dates which they have been stood down from duties. Staff registered have been identified in line with legal advice and are in roles funded in the main from income from fees and charges for services, in particular Leisure and Catering. The value of our claims (March, April and May) amounts to £0.855M, which will partly offset our loss of income in respective services. Importantly, all staff continue to receive full pay and continuity of employment throughout this process.
- 5.9 Equally we are already planning and starting to deliver the recovery phase, as we begin to plan and re-open for example our schools and libraries alongside our already successfully re-opened Community Recycling Centres. All Council services are now preparing Service Recovery Plans, seeking to ensure we take advantage of the position in which we find ourselves.
- 5.10 Local Government is also playing a lead delivery role in the contact tracing process, which has commenced fully with effect from 1st June. Whilst caseload levels can only be estimated at this stage, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) region has put in place a scalable model which can be flexed to meet demand over time. Initially resourced from existing resources, as our services are reintroduced there will be a need for staff to return to substantive roles and replaced with new recruits. The cost implication of the Test, Trace, Protect strategy across Wales have been estimated at around £100M, and locally (CTM) approximately £15M subject to requirements of scale. The funding solution for this work remains to be clarified.
- 5.11 The variability of the financial implications on the Council can be clearly seen by the number of variables which are all moving at pace. However, at this juncture, the Council is well placed insofar as we are continuing to mitigate our increased cost base wherever we can and discussions with WG in relation to funding continue to be positive.
- 5.12 Our increased costs incurred to date are being claimed back through the funding already made available and with regard to income loss funding has been identified

and the process for claiming this is currently under consideration.

- 5.13 WG are now reviewing the increased cost of the national Council Tax Reduction Scheme, where we have already seen an increased caseload across Wales of over 9,500. Also under review is the impact of lower Council Tax collection rates already being seen over the initial 2 months of the financial year.

6. WELSH GOVERNMENT FUNDING

- 6.1 Positive discussions continue with Welsh Government on funding in respect of the unprecedented financial pressures which all councils in Wales are facing. To date a £188.5M Hardship Fund has been agreed at an all Wales level, as set out in the WG Supplementary Budget (27th May 2020), which includes :

Support for Homelessness	£10M
Funding for Adult Social Care	£40M
Free School Meal Funding	£40M
Loss of Income	£78M
Support to create temporary facilities to handle the increased number of deaths during the pandemic	£7M

- 6.2 The agreed process for accessing funding is through a monthly claims process, aimed at ensuring that the funding gets to where it is needed. This has been in preference to an allocation basis across councils.
- 6.3 The claims are based on cash paid out during each calendar month and so there is an inherent timing delay between services being delivered and cost being incurred and reimbursed.
- 6.4 The all Wales claims for March and April amounted to £2.4M and £18.8M respectively. This Council's claims have amounted to £0.8M and £1.6M respectively and more recently £4.2M for May.
- 6.5 Discussions regarding the funding arrangements for the period beyond the end of June are ongoing.

7. BUDGET STRATEGY FOR 2020/21 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

- 7.1 We will continue to model and monitor the projected out-turn position alongside confirmed funding sources as and when we have confirmation. Clearly there are many variables and uncertainties at present.
- 7.2 It is clear that the budget as set in March 2020 will not be an appropriate basis against which to deliver our services for the remainder of the financial year and over the next couple of months we would hope to have greater clarity over what the recovery phase and service delivery requirement will be beyond the immediate

term.

- 7.3 Finance officers will work with services across the Council over this period to put in place a revised budget for 2020/21 alongside their Service Recovery Plans and it is proposed that this **Mid-Year Budget Review** be reported to Cabinet and Council in September. This will be alongside and informed by our Quarter 1 Performance Report.
- 7.4 It is further proposed that an updated interim Medium Term Financial Plan is presented alongside this Mid-Year Budget Review in order to begin to inform our budget strategy deliberations for the financial year 2021/22.

8. YEAR END 2019/20

- 8.1 The quarter 3 out-turn position was reported to Cabinet in March 2020, and represented a projected overspend position of £0.539M for the year.
- 8.2 The Councils General Fund Balances at 31st March 2019 amounted to £10.498M. After the £1.5M allocation for Storm Dennis, the remaining balance is £8.998M.
- 8.3 Finance teams are currently working effectively (from home) and compiling the year end position. Whilst we were initially targeting the 31st May to prepare a draft Statement of Accounts (to be audited by July) this target date has been re-set to balance and enable focus and priority to be afforded to assessing the ongoing financial implications on the council as set out above.
- 8.4 In England the Statutory Date for the production of accounts has been relaxed, from the 15th June to the 31st August, to be audited by the 30th November 2020. In Wales there is already provision in the regulations to delay production of accounts and to disclose a reason for doing so on council websites. WG do further recommend Welsh authorities adopt a timetable for the 2019-20 accounts in line with the revised English requirements.
- 8.5 We are currently targeting early July to certify our draft accounts and are working closely with Audit Wales to integrate the audit process as efficiently as possible. The important role of Audit Committee through this process is also being considered, along with the practicalities of making our accounts publicly available for inspection.
- 8.6 A statement has been placed on the Council's website clarifying the above in line with WG and Audit Wales advice.
- 8.7 The Councils year end position will be set out in the quarter 4 performance report which will be reported to the July Cabinet, in line with the normal quarterly reporting timelines.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no Equality and Diversity Implications.

10. CONSULTATION

10.1 There are no consultation requirements arising from this report.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The financial implications are set out in this report.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

12.1 The Council has a legal duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set a balanced budget.

13 LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

13.1 The 2020/21 Revenue Budget Strategy was formulated to support the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities, as set out within the Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020, and the new Corporate Plan "Making a Difference" 2020 – 2024. These documents are aligned to the goals and principles included within the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

14 CONCLUSION

14.1 This report sets out the financial issues and implications on the Council arising from COVID 19. There are clearly a large number of variables, including funding sources, which are being monitored on an ongoing basis.
