



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, 24 July 2020 at 3.00 pm at Virtual Meeting.

**County Borough Councillors - Council Members in attendance:-**

Councillor S Powderhill (Chair)

Councillor M Adams	Councillor R Bevan
Councillor H Boggis	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor S Bradwick	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor G Caple	Councillor A Cox
Councillor A Crimmings	Councillor M Diamond
Councillor J Edwards	Councillor J Elliott
Councillor S Evans	Councillor M Forey
Councillor A Fox	Councillor E George
Councillor D Grehan	Councillor M Griffiths
Councillor L Hooper	Councillor G Hopkins
Councillor G Hughes	Councillor J James
Councillor P Jarman	Councillor L Jones
Councillor W Jones	Councillor R Lewis
Councillor W Lewis	Councillor C Leyshon
Councillor A Morgan	Councillor S Morgans
Councillor M Norris	Councillor D Owen-Jones
Councillor S Pickering	Councillor M Powell
Councillor S Rees	Councillor A Roberts
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor G Thomas
Councillor M Weaver	Councillor M Webber
Councillor E Webster	Councillor D Williams
Councillor J Williams	Councillor T Williams
Councillor R Yeo	

**Officers in attendance**

Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services  
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services  
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services

**Others in attendance**

Professor Marcus Longley – Chair of the Health Board  
Dr Sharon Hopkins - Interim Chief Executive of the Health Board  
Dr Val Wilson, Director of Maternity  
Dr Nick Lyons - Medical Director

## **163 Apology**

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillors S Belzak, A Calvert, A Chapman, J Cullwick, G R Davies, A Davies-Jones, L De Vet, S Evans, M Fidler Jones, H Fychan, E Griffiths, J Harries, G Holmes, P Howe, G Jones, K Jones, K Morgan, W Owen, S Powell, S Rees-Owen, J Rosser, E Stephens, M Tegg, W Treeby, R K Turner, L Walker, G D Williams, C Willis and Mr C Bradshaw (Chief Executive).

## **164 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of Personal Interests were made pertaining to the agenda:-

County Borough Councillor G Caple – “My son is a doctor and works in Bridgend and for Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board”

County Borough Councillor G Caple – “I am a member of the Community Health Council”

County Borough Councillor S Evans – “I work for the NHS”

County Borough Councillor M Forey – “I am a former Elected Member representative on the Health Board”

County Borough Councillor P Jarman – “I am a former member of the Cwm Taf LHB”

County Borough Councillor R Yeo – “My wife works for Cwm Taf UHB in Prince Charles Hospital”

## **165 Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that following the last Council meeting in February 2020, there had been a request to extend an invitation to the Health Board to present, at a special meeting of Council, before the summer recess. The Chair explained that the Health Board had agreed to attend to update members on the recent decision in respect of the A&E at Royal Glamorgan, the ongoing position in respect of Maternity Services and the position in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chair advised that as operating virtually is very different, in terms of how Members interact, when compared to being present in the Council chamber, he had requested that the Head of Democratic Services engage with Group Leaders around taking the lead on behalf of their respective Group members.

The Chair set out the format for the meeting, following the presentation by the Health Board, the Leader of the Council, followed by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Cllr followed by Cllr Powell and Cllr James, would respond and present their comments on behalf of their members. At the end of each Group Leader's contribution, colleagues from the Health Board would be invited to respond. The Chair stressed that the intention of the session was not to conduct a question and answer session but to receive a presentation. Should time allow the Leader of the Council will be asked to close the debate.

The Chair welcomed and introduced the Board Members of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board-

- Professor Marcus Longley (Chair),
- Dr Sharon Hopkins (Interim Chief Executive),
- An apology from Greg Dix (Director of Nursing) had been received therefore Val Wilson, Director of Maternity will be in attendance
- Nick Lyons (Medical Director)

**Professor M Longley** thanked the Presiding Officer for the invitation to address Council. He announced that this would be the last meeting of the interim Chief Executive, Sharon Hopkins who would be retiring next month (her successor will commence post on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020). Professor Longley set out the three key issues which have changed since the last meeting in February 2020:-

Coronavirus Pandemic –The Coronavirus pandemic has hit the communities of Cwm Taf Morgannwg harder than many others and is still circulating in the community will be with us for some time to come. It has reeked economic and social pain on our communities. Professor Longley paid tribute to the staff and all key workers from the Health Board and Council for their bravery, courage and flexibility which deserved our recognition and gratitude. He referred to the feeling of solidarity and support which the communities have shown the NHS and its staff and acknowledged the joint working between the Health Board and the Council on all levels which has been exemplary.

Professor Longley advised that no longer is anyone talking about the collapse of the NHS, which is still only operating at around two thirds of its pre pandemic capacity but staff are working hard to resume services as quickly as possible but recognise that this will take some time.

Professor Longley referred to the Health Board's seminal decision to maintain the A&E department at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital. On behalf of the Health Board he thanked all those involved in changing the prospects of the department under the guidance of Dr Nick Lyons and Dr Sharon Hopkins and the thousands of people who have inspired and stimulated these efforts through a series of meetings and passionate discussions.

Members were reminded that the Health Board have addressed Council on a number of occasions to discuss Maternity Services and since February the Independent Oversight Panel has reported again to describe continuing progress which the Director of Nursing will address for the benefit of Members.

**Val Wilson, Director of Nursing** addressed Members regarding the Maternity Services within Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

Despite high levels of Covid-19 related sickness in Prince Charles Hospital (PCH) the service has been maintained albeit having to work in a different guise. The Tirion midwife-led birth centre at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital was initially stood down but the service continued to provide the philosophy of care at PCH and the numbers of midwifery led births was maintained to positive feedback. The Tirion centre will re-open on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020 in the same pre-Covid model.

The Director of Nursing confirmed that a successful South Wales recruitment process has been in place and advised that a number of high calibre candidates have been appointed into the service (PCH site). Long term sickness has been reduced to under 10% for the first time and there is less Covid related sickness present at the moment. Staff are now being redeployed to non-clinical wards.

The Director of Nursing explained that the service has been working innovatively with families during the pandemic, offering anti-natal education classes online and holding meet and greet sessions with staff. There have been a number of improvement works progressing 41 recommendations and at a further meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> August a further 15 recommendations will be presented which is testament to the hard work of all those involved in the service despite Covid-19.

Preliminary feedback has been received from the Maternity Services Oversight Panel (IMSOP) and letters to the affected families are being prepared with packages of care in place as the families start to receive their letters. Much work has already taken place in respect of the review, the Clinical Cabinet is fully integrated with Paediatricians, Midwives and Theatre Staff to make the most of the learning that has derived from the Independent Maternity Services Oversight Panel (IMSOP). Work has also been ongoing to strengthen the integration between neo natal and maternity services through multi-disciplinary team meetings which have produced positive outcomes and learning between the two areas.

**Dr Nick Lyons, Medical Director**, presented an overview of progress regarding the Accident and Emergency Services at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital. He referred to the Council meeting in February 2020 when at the time there was still a lot of work to be done but the onset of the Coronavirus Pandemic contributed to the decision to keep the A&E at the Royal Glamorgan open as it became clear that operating emergency care from two sites was not feasible.

Since the last meeting there has been a successful recruitment process in place which has meant that now there are 4.5 Consultants and 7 middle grade Doctors working in the A&E department at the RGH which is testament to the work of those teams involved in the recruitment process. The Board has made a commitment to a 24/7 Consultant-led service at RGH for the Emergency Department for both Adult and Paediatric Services which will provide a foundation to build up the other clinical services across the Health Board.

Dr Lyons advised that this is the start of the work that needs to be undertaken and he paid tribute to the communities and residents who contributed to the many public meetings where discussions and powerful messages had been relayed regarding the future of the A&E Services and he spoke of the incredible value of working with the population. He stressed the importance of working closely with key community representatives going forward and of bringing services closer to home such as the Minor Injuries Units which will relieve the pressure on other A&E Departments. In conclusion, Dr Lyons advised that an update would be provided to a Board meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> July with recommendations as to how to progress.

**Dr Sharon Hopkins, Interim Chief Executive**, reiterated the thanks of the Chair of the Health Board to all the key public sector and Health Board staff for their resilience during the Covid Pandemic. Dr Hopkins acknowledged the collective response of the community to Covid through an effective lockdown,

hand washing and social distancing which will remain important issues going forward.

Dr Hopkins stated that the pandemic had changed the way services were delivered to initially respond to Covid. Many services had to be re set to ensure the most effective way of keeping residents, communities and staff as safe as possible whilst ensuring social distancing and infection prevention. This has meant that different practices such as virtual consultations sessions have hugely increased. All General Practitioners are connected to a system called 'Consult Anywhere' which allows them access to consultant experts whilst conducting consultations.

Dr Hopkins assured Members that Covid-19 and its transmission will continue to be reviewed so that experts can gain an understanding of how the virus behaves, what's safe and not safe to do, how healthcare services are delivered in the future and how protocols will need to continue to change. During Covid referrals decreased by 72% but are gradually increasing and levels are now only 35% down from the same time last year. Outpatient activity initially dropped by 48% but has now increased to 80%. Of all new referrals 30% are operating virtually.

The Health Board is prioritising the care for cancer patients and is working hard to bring services back up to capacity as quickly as is safely possible, concentrating on those with urgent cancer care needs. Operative interventions have been re- introduced which allow more complex cancer surgery on sites in what are termed 'Covid-Light' or 'Green Islands'.

Primary Care – Pharmacies and Dentists are open in line with Welsh Government guidance but are not operating fully as yet.

Mental Health – Working with and supporting mental wellbeing during Covid has been challenging as levels of anxiety and depression have inevitably increased.. The Mental Health Services have been maintained throughout although patients have made different choices about accessing care, face to face sessions and counselling sessions with mental health patients were initially suspended but are now on the increase. A Mental Health Response Group, made up of the 3 partner Local Authorities and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector now reports into the local partnership forum and it is hoped this level of integrated partnership working will continue. Six new mental health practitioners are being recruited into Primary Care, three of which have already been appointed into this increasingly important area.

Looking ahead, Dr Hopkins referred to a number of preventative measures such as the Welsh Government's Test Trace Protect Programme (TTP), across Cwm Taf Morgannwg in partnership with the local health board, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil Councils and Public Health Wales. The programme is being led, in partnership, by the Council's Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services and his team and to date the community response to the calls asking those affected to isolate has been very good. Antibody testing has also commenced, initially, with teachers and other key workers such as care home workers and social care workers. With the likelihood of Covid becoming more prevalent in the winter months with clusters or outbreaks appearing, as much planning and preparation as possible is needed and an enormous effort is being made with regards to the flu vaccination programme. Collectively, the mass vaccination programme will prepare residents as well as possible for the winter months ahead.

In conclusion Dr Hopkins advised that the intention is to keep the field hospital in Bridgend, with a capacity of up to 480 beds, available for vaccination/antibody testing or as an outpatient's area.

**The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andrew Morgan** welcomed the comments regarding the valuable partnership working between Merthyr Council, Bridgend Council and Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board and he extended his thanks to the Board for the close working and effective communication and weekly meetings that have continued throughout the Covid pandemic. The Leader advised that the Test Trace Protect Programme (TTP), across Cwm Taf Morgannwg in partnership with the local health board, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil Councils and Public Health Wales is being led by the Council's Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services. The TTP teams have been very busy as they contact the confirmed cases and their contacts and the process has been well received by members of the public.

The Leader praised the recent decision taken with regards to the A&E Department in the Royal Glamorgan Hospital particularly the recruitment processes that have been in place to ensure the service will be a sustainable one going forward. The Leader asked the Board to provide an update to Council in respect of the capacity and role of the paediatric provision which had been deferred from last September.

The Leader advised that as a Council, concern was previously raised with regards to the operation of both Ysbyty Cwm Cynon and Ysbyty Cwm Rhondda and how they have the potential to relieve the pressure on A&E Services. The Leader asked for reassurance from the Health Board that the Council would be engaged and consulted on the future of the Minor Injury sites and how they can support residents to access local services.

The Leader extended a formal invitation to the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board to attend a future Council meeting before the end of the Calendar year to provide an update in respect of Covid-19 and the impact of the winter pressures on social care. Despite past criticism of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board by RCT Council the Leader hoped that there would be a renewed confidence in the Health Board. With the new Chief Executive soon in post the Leader of the Council formally thanked Dr Sharon Hopkins in advance of her retirement.

In response to the Leader's comments and to clarify the position, Dr Nick Lyons confirmed the planned move on the 1<sup>st</sup> September of the Paediatric Services will not be taking place. He added that the final model had not yet been defined but the model of care needs to be sustainable and the model will be developed in partnership through the Partnership Panel and is a clear focus for the Health Board with further detail in the paper which will be presented to the subsequent Board meeting.

### **Councillor Jarman**

Councillor Jarman extended her personal thanks and that of the Plaid Cymru Group to all the management and staff at Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board for their dedication and commitment as well as the staff and key workers of the Council.

Councillor Jarman stated that Covid-19 has been an experience none of us want to repeat but with a second spike due in the late autumn/ early winter what would

be done differently second time around now we know more about Covid -19? There are claims that patients were discharged from hospital into the community and into care homes without being tested for Covid-19. What was the situation in Cwm Taf Morgannwg?

Councillor Jarman also asked in the event of a second wave will the resources and capacity normally available be sufficient or are there plans that some field hospital facilities would be kept? (It was acknowledged that the interim Chief Executive of the Cwm Taf UHB had confirmed that that is the intention of the Board that every patient will have an appointment whatever their medical problem).

Councillor Jarman referenced the well-argued evidence brought to the table by the community campaign and the sheer weight of public opinion which could not be ignored on this occasion as it was in 2013 when a similar argument was ignored by the South Wales Programme Partners who rejected the retention of A&E in the RGH in favour of another regional model of provision. The 11<sup>th</sup> hr submission for the retention of 24hr A&E in RGH provision by the then Chair and former now discredited but well rewarded Chief Executive of Cwm Taf. The decision was rejected in favour of the preferred regional arrangement. Not least in my opinion that The then 1<sup>st</sup> Minister was also the Assembly Member for Bridgend. I still have doubts that the commitment given for the retention of a 24/7 A&E provision is long term, driven by medical judgement as opposed to political experience.

Councillor Jarman queried whether the newly appointed Chief Executive of Cwm Taf Morgannwg allegedly also holds several consultant positions with firms who held private health care companies that profit from NHS contracts or is this fake news?

Councillor Jarman also asked for an absolute guarantee that the South Wales Programme partners are fully supportive of Cwm Taf Morgannwg's position regarding A&E and the Chief Executive is totally committed to the principal that the NHS is not for sale? What evaluations have taken place regarding the implementation of the original SW Programme so far and advice re the status of the approved SWP, does it take account of the decision of the reconfiguration of A&E in the region and what is the future of Paediatric provision? Is the South Wales Programme now dead in the water?

Maternity Services – Councillor Jarman acknowledged the improvements to the maternity services in Cwm Taf Morgannwg and congratulated those involved in making the improvements.

Councillor Jarman confirmed that as previously stated, the Plaid Cymru Group supported a call for a police investigation into whether there were any criminal offences relating to the scandal including corporate manslaughter. Professor Longley previously confirmed that discussions with the Police were ongoing. Have those discussions resulted in a formal investigation being launched or ongoing or have they ended?

This Council has previously paid tribute to the families involved for their bravery for speaking out about the maternity scandal, those same families need to know whether further action will be taken, they need justice. Will disciplinary action be taken but that it has been set aside until any criminal proceedings are concluded?

## **Councillor Powell**

Councillor Powell extended his thanks to the Cwm Taf University Health Board members for attending the meeting and to the trying times they must have experienced before and during Covid-19.

In advance of posing his questions to the Board he asked that written responses also be provided.

Councillor Powell referenced a report that was presented to a Health Board meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 which states that there is a risk of a return to a pre covid-19 patterns of attendance in the RGH respiratory department which could compromise the sustainability of the department. He added that in the Rhondda and Cynon valleys there are 2 Minor Injuries Units (MIU), the Royal Glamorgan Hospital is the MIU for the Taff Ely area and beyond. In comparison there are a larger number of residents in Taff Ely and beyond who are currently attending the A&E Royal Glamorgan Hospital as their minor injuries unit, are there any plans to have a minor injuries department closer to the Pontypridd side of the borough?

Councillor Powell asked that if recently retired EMI Consultants have been recruited to work in the MIU, how long are they likely to carry on working and if only for 2 days a week, what happens to the other 5 days?

As staffing levels still remain below the levels they should be and with contingency plans which could include temporary overnight closures to ambulance admissions, how do we know that A&E is not just a back door way of arriving at a part time A&E arrangement in the Royal Glamorgan Hospital which is what the original proposal suggested?

Are there any plans for the RGH to become a Centre of Excellence for the Elderly Mentally Infirm? Have these plans been put on hold or dismissed?

Track Trace Protect (TTP) – How do we know where the hotspots are within the borough? I have been told we are not gathering that information. I have responses from the Health Board that state that many patients were taken from hospitals into care homes. 309 individual were identified as medically fit to move into care homes between 1<sup>st</sup> March and the 20<sup>th</sup> May.

How many were new admissions? Unknown

How many were tested for Covid-19? 104 were tested (which means that 205 weren't tested in line with Public Health Wales guidance) Of the 104 tested, 19 tests were processed and 24 tested positive but there is no record of how many had died of Coronavirus. Why was the TTP process not undertaken from the start to reduce the number of deaths across Cwm Taf to ensure RCT was not number one on the league for Coronavirus outbreaks in the UK?

## **Councillor J James**

Councillor James paid tribute to the NHS staff for their commitment and concern regarding the levels of stress many staff have experienced during this time. He stressed the importance of mental health & wellbeing resilience is a matter for consideration going forward.



Councillor James referenced the reason for closing the A&E department was due to difficulties with staff recruitment - What is the longevity of the decision, considering that Welsh Government is looking at bookings for A&E appointments, does this make the case stronger for not having a 24 hour A&E if residents are diverted elsewhere?

With some residents having referrals/operations or cancer treatments cancelled or postponed during lockdown, what steps will the Health Board be taking to address the potential long term impact on those patients?

What are the long term effects on those patients who have tested positive for covid-19 such as respiratory or mental health issues?

In response to one point made, the Chair of the Cwm Taf UHB was able to confirm that in respect of the future sustainability of the emergency department of the Royal Glamorgan Hospital, everything would be done to secure its future. It was agreed that written responses would be provided for all other questions following the meeting.

The Leader of the Council praised the local close-working relationship of the Health Board, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector agencies, Community volunteers, local authority and Public Health Wales which meant that the worst case scenarios regarding Coronavirus never came to fruition. The national lockdown had an impact but the efforts made locally made a significant difference to the residents of Cwm Taf. The Leader stated that he would welcome the Health Board's presence at a future meeting of the Council.

**This meeting closed at 4.20 pm**

**Cllr S Powderhill  
Chairman.**