

Agenda



Pwyllgor Craffu ar Berfformiad – Lleoedd a Materion Corfforaethol

Dyddiad: Dydd Llun, 6 Medi 2021

Amser: 4.00 pm

Lleoliad: Virtual Meeting

At: Cynghorwyr: C Evans (Cadeirydd), M Al-Nuaimi, G Berry, C Ferris, I Hayat, M Kellaway, M Linton, J Richards and M Whitcutt

Eitem	Wardiau Dan Sylw
1	<u>Ymddiheuriadau</u>
2	<u>Datgan diddordeb</u>
3	<u>Cofnodion y cyfarfodydd blaenorol a gynhaliwyd ar 7 Mehefin 2021 a 21 Mehefin (Tudalennau 3 - 18)</u>
4	<u>Cymorth i Staff yn ystod Covid-19 (Tudalennau 19 - 32)</u>
5	<u>Casgliad Adroddiadau Pwyllgorau</u> Following the completion of the Committee reports, the Committee will be asked to formalise its conclusions, recommendations and comments on previous items for actioning.
6	<u>Adroddiad Cynghorydd Craffu (Tudalennau 33 - 38)</u> a) Forward Work Programme Update (Appendix 1)
7	<u>Digwyddiad byw</u> To watch the live event click here

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place and Corporate

Date: 7 June 2021

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors G Berry, M Whitcutt, I Hayat, J Richards, M Al-Nuaimi, C Ferris, Councillor R Truman and D Mayer

In Attendance: Councillors R Truman and D Mayer, Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation), Rhys Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change), Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser) and Felicity Collins (Governance Officer)

1 Apologies

Councillors Chris Evans, Malcolm Linton and Martyn Kellaway. Cllr Al-Nuaimi took as Chair for the meeting in Councillor Evans' absence.

2 Declaration of Interest

None.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 March 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2021 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

4 2020/21 Service Plan End of Year Reviews

Law and Regulation

Invitees:

- Gareth Price - Head of Law and Regulation
- Councillor Ray Truman - Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation

The Head of Law and Regulation gave an overview of the report. The Committee were advised how the out term report performance last year was remarkable given the circumstances of the many challenges faced from the pandemic. The Committee was informed that most of the service's attention was diverted into dealing with response to COVID.

It was stipulated that the service area still managed to sustain normal level of service, indicating that most of its performance was still exceedingly good. Head of Law and Regulation commented that this is a testament to the hard work of the staff from the service area and paid tribute to their dedication to keep things going with the addition to the extra tasks that came with the Council's Covid response. It was further stated that the biggest test was setting up the Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) service from scratch – in last May/June they were instructed to set it up with just two weeks' notice.

It was outlined to the committee that by 1 June 2020, the system had 50 council staff from other service areas that were redeployed to work on the temporary IT systems over first few weeks and then in the following 6 months, they built the service up from nothing with a budget of £1.7 million. The explained to the committee that this was only successful due to the organisational support and professionalism from environmental health experts, the managers and support staff. Their dedication over the last 12 months was complimented by the Head of Service. The committee was informed that at one point, the TTP system in Newport had reported 260 cases in a day, this emphasised how busy they were with work and that it is a significant achievement to be able to manage.

It was explained that the second element of the response in containment of the virus, was the Covid Enforcement work undertaken by the Public Protection and Trading Standards teams. They checked licence premises and business premises, many local organisations were given advice on compliance with social distancing and PPE. The team dealt with around 3000 inspections during that period which echoes the point that all of the staff within that section were fully employed with Covid work so it was inevitable that other services within the area would have been forced to be put on the backburner during that period.

It was explained to the committee that due to the work of Covid response being so time consuming and due to the restrictions; food hygiene and housing inspections could not be carried out, mainly also due to infection control and outbreaks in care settings, schools and dealing with the compliance work. However, regulatory work did suffer by comparison, this was also inevitable due to the precedence of Covid work being the priority. It was stressed that there was no underperformance in the targets of the service plan as the committee was advised that for any delayed cases, there is an explanation which is related back to the Covid response being the causal link to the legal staff being diverted from their regular day to day tasks. The staff's response to the pandemic was praised as commendable by how they controlled the workload as staff adapted to new ways of working remotely such as the governance and scrutiny team to help keep the democratic decision making still go ahead.

Members were then advised of the other achievements of the Legal Services team such as Trading Standards officers dealt with a number of premises in the city centre dealing illegal tobacco and that its success was showcased on BBC Wales X-ray. It was informed that many rogue traders were caught out during this period. It was also mentioned that the Newport City Dogs Home won an RSPCA award for efficiently dealing with stray dogs during the pandemic. It was pointed out to the committee that despite the additional work Covid placed upon the teams, they were able to keep up with the challenges that came with it.

The Head of Law and Regulation acknowledged that the Covid legacy will be with the Council for a while due to the backlog of cases such as housing cases, childcare cases being adjourned and food hygiene inspections. It was also indicated that this year will be full of more new challenges despite the impact of the pandemic from the local government act with dealing with governance systems before the elections and waiting on the full Brexit support withdrawal and waiting on the impact on import and exports. The committee were advised that the service area hasn't yet seen an increase in work due to this but it is anticipated that the workload will be just as great this year as last year but the head of service indicated that through last year's performance, Law and Regulation's standard of service will be sustained.

The Cabinet Member concurred with the officer and advised members that the staff went above and beyond what was expected of them during this period. They worked well from inspections with trading standards, setting up the track and trace system, notices being served, working well with Newport businesses as well as carrying out

joint inspections with the police force. It was acknowledged that it came with a cost as many environmental health officers were pulled out of their normal hours and in doing so, dealt with a host of different challenges.

The Cabinet Member proceeded to explain that it is clear why the Environmental Health officers could not do as much as they usually could do work wise due to Covid being prioritised. The Cabinet Member acknowledges the huge backlog but the committee was assured that this will be dealt with as soon as possible but it is clear that Covid is the priority.

The committee was then informed by the Cabinet Member that the Welsh Government confirmed it will be providing additional funding for the Track and Trace system up until end of March 2022, when it was previously agreed to be funded up until September 2021. The Cabinet Member concluded that it has been an extremely busy year and that no one could have foreseen it but the staff in Civic Centre who pulled together with team effort.

The Chair of the Committee agreed with the remarks made by the Head of Service and Cabinet Member that the council staff have worked well during an unprecedented and very difficult situation.

The Committee asked the following:

- The Committee queried that with the cases that were not a priority at the time for the Legal Team, would the service area be able to provide a time scale for when they will be prioritised.

The Head of Law and Regulation stated that the legal team were unable to give a precise timescale as it was explained that they are still dealing with Covid response issues, not in Covid recovery phase as of yet. The Environmental Health team were working just as hard with the restrictions being relaxed and Licensing Officers were also heavily involved with the response phase. The Head of Service then advised that despite this, they hope to be able to deal with the Food Hygiene cases within the next 12 months but will know more closer to the recovery phase.

Members reiterated that they fully appreciate the Environmental Health and Legal team's extremely fundamental work to ensure that the local environment is fit for purpose in order to safeguard the public from the pandemic and stated that it holds many significant achievements against a challenging backdrop.

- The Committee further acknowledged that it is difficult to ask specific questions as the communities are in a crisis situation due to the pandemic and that the staff have worked well. The committee queried how staff would get rewarded for their efforts, the chair queried if this would be through the council pay scheme.

In response, the Head of Law and Regulation advised the Members that the national pay scale is not something that is influenced by scrutiny committees therefore it is not appropriate for the decision to be discussed by scrutiny about pay and reward but such comments have been duly noted.

The Committee reached a consensus that they would like their appreciation for the work of the staff to be recorded in the minutes of said meeting.

The Head of Service proceeded to give an overview of the section and the committee were advised and given updates on why some areas of the Amber and Red

measures were due to the direct and indirect impact of Covid-19. It was outlined that three to four areas are in the red measures to date.

Members were advised that two performance indicators are showing red. The Head of Service noted that one is a Local Land Charge searches and the other is percentages of Regulatory Service complaints being resolved. Head of Law stated that the reason for the underperformance of the latter is obvious due to Regulatory Service officers being diverted into response work for the pandemic with Environmental Health assistance. The Committee were advised that despite this, the performance of the area was still high with reaching 75% whereas the target was 95%.

The Head of Law and Regulation concluded that given inspectors had been redeployed, you can see the result of resources being stripped due to Covid is a clear indication that the prioritisation of other work has had a direct impact on resolutions of complaints. It was further explained with regard to the Land Charges search delays that this is also linked to Covid as it was explained to the Members that when the council process property transactions, they usually are able to review searches within 5 working days. This was put into perspective by pointing out that normally the team would look to process 95% of the searches within five working days so as the committee could see from this indicator, during the last 12 months, that went down to 78%. This drop was explained to have happened due to limited numbers of staff during the Covid lockdown period.

The Committee were advised that the reason for that was due to significantly fewer numbers of staff during the first lockdown period where only key workers could undertake key journeys, therefore there was a limited number of staff to deal with journeys and the property search agents could not come in. It was explained that the Council would use private companies to check council property registers and undertake their own searches so it was described as a double edged sword as searches were piling up as a result of fewer staff both within the council property transaction team and the search providers. Despite this however, the Council's income level was maintained due to the property transactions not going ahead so there was in time a drop in the local charges searches which was a positive as it meant that their income level was sustained due to the pandemic.

The Chair then thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for attending.

People and Business Change

Invitees:

- Rhys Cornwall - Head of People and Business Change
- Councillor David Mayer - Cabinet Member for Communities and Resources

The Head of People and Business Change gave the committee a brief overview of the service plan and explained that for the financial out turn for the year, the area was around £2000 below the budget, the reason was explained to the committee that this was primarily due to the undelivered expenditure on IT provision. It was explained that the focus had been on if they can operate as an organisation due to less infrastructural work due to difficulties with supplies and less people being physically in work.

Members were advised that by in large as a service area, the staff have been remarkable regarding being redeployed into different areas such as social services and civic centre to maintain services. Not only that but the Newport Intelligence Hub and working with NHS Wales around data on shielding individuals and providing appropriate support for health and safety who have been instrumental for conducting robust risk assessments. The Committee were then advised and given updates on

why some areas of the red measures were due to the direct impact of covid-19. It was outlined that four areas were in the red measures to date. Members were advised that half way through the way the lockdown, a strategic decision was made to embed Public Relations team into the service area that they do and was happy to discuss the impact on the services.

From the performance point of view, out of the four red measures in place, three were to do with staff training as it was difficult to implement and undertake training through a pandemic. With the measures in place, the service area are starting a programme for this Summer online.

Members were advised that one of the red measures was to do with Subject Access Requests. The Head of People and Business Change explained that they are personal data requests that organisations hold and given the amount of primary social services, paper records the Council still maintain because they have got a prolonged retention rate, that requires people to come into the building to scan and redact that information as necessary. So the committee was informed that due to this there had been some particular issues in the performance measures on delivering against that. Despite all of that, there has been some really strong performance across the service area as they are driving forward real sort of organisational change. The Head of People and Business Change gave an example of this through partnering with the Shared Resource Services since 2017, the investments for future requirements came into fruition as the service area worked remotely within a very short period of time.

The Head of People and Business Changes highlighted the benefits of getting the Council teams set up from home successfully for working and this goes hand in hand with the work they have been doing with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on a report on the New Normal. This report will try to encapsulate some of the benefits that the Council has achieved over the past year and how to run that forward.

The Head of People and Business Change concluded by stating that despite the pandemic, the service area has achieved many things against the service plan during the course of the past year, the performance measures should be understandable given the circumstances but the delays on some of those such as with civil contingencies, the department plan to undertake during the year 2021 which may roll into the next financial year with activities around HRR but generally an overall very strong performance from the service area as a whole. Discussion ensued and it was agreed amongst the committee that COVID obviously has had a massive impact that cannot be underestimated.

The Cabinet Member agreed and addressed the committee of how the Intelligence Hub has been at the centre of communication for the whole of Wales and that the staff have been wonderful through providing support all the way through the pandemic.

Members asked the following:

- A comment was made in relation to training courses performance measures on page 41 of the agenda. The committee queried why the staff/members who received inequality training and Welsh language course were so low in number.

Members were advised that the training programme for these were primarily face to face courses. It was also highlighted that it had taken the service area some time to identify the provider of an online training provision which is now taking place for all staff. It was noted that the Leader is determined for all

members of staff to undertake it, starting in the summer period, so the numbers will change dramatically.

With regard to the Welsh language course, Members were advised that the service area started a new training programme a month before everyone went into national lockdown in 2020, so this was massively impacted by restrictions.

- The Committee noted that the number of employers trained were below 200. They therefore queried how would the Council have been able to do that as it is a large number of staff?

Members were advised that those were more of that able to do as services provision as a lot of it happens with schools. It was indicated that schools have been operating through lockdown. The Lead Officer advised that with smaller numbers it has been doable, due to people being available. Members were advised that most of the employees would have been teachers/key workers.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance.

Conclusion of Committee Reports

Law and Regulation and People and Business Change

- The Committee gave their thanks for the detailed report and stressed how proud they are of both service areas and what they have achieved in the past year. Members also wished to comment that they fully appreciate the Council is in a better situation from 12 months ago, and also acknowledge the service area have a lot to catch up due to the impact of the pandemic.
- The Committee wished to state that they had no further comments or recommendations to make on the report. It was stated that it was understandable that some performance measures were red given the position the service area are placed in, during unprecedented times.

5 Draft 2021-22 Annual Forward Work Programme

Invitees;

- Neil Barnett – Scrutiny Adviser

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Draft Annual Forward Work Programme for 2021-22 and outlined the draft topics for the year. It was emphasised that the Committee has ownership of the Work Programme and would continue to have the opportunity at each meeting to adapt, reprioritise, add or replace items on its Work Programme. Members' attention was drawn to the proposed schedule of meetings for the year.

Agreed:

The Committee **approved** the Annual Forward Work Programme, the schedule of meetings for 2021-22 and **agreed** the start time for Committee meetings of 4pm.

The meeting terminated at 4.50 pm

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place and Corporate

Date: 21 June 2021

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors G Berry, M Whitcutt, I Hayat, J Richards, M Al-Nuaimi and M Linton

In Attendance: Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser) and Felicity Collins

1 Apologies

Councillors Chris Evans, Charles Ferris and Martyn Kellaway

2 Declaration of Interest

None.

3 2020/21 Service Plan End of Year Reviews

Regeneration, Investment and Housing

Invitees:

- Tracey Brooks - Acting Head of Regeneration Investment and Housing
- Councillor Jane Mudd - Leader of Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Investment

The committee was presented with a brief overview of the report by the acting Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing to highlight the key challenges and opportunities that the service area faced during the past financial year. The Lead Officer highlighted that the report offered some insight into unprecedented challenges during the period of the pandemic which had a significant impact on the service area, for instance, it meant dealing a lot with vulnerable residents but also delivering services as usual in the wake of the new way of working.

The committee was advised of how the service area stepped up to the challenge by continuing with support for the neighbourhood hubs. It was implied that it was actually a good year for the community hubs as the operating model was only launched just prior to Covid-19. This showed how Community Hub colleagues and partner services were able to deliver front facing and very critical services either through face to face or virtual methods. It was also pointed out that Flying Start areas were able to keep going due to the team's support and food parcels were still delivered to those who had to shield. Baby bundles were also dispatched to many new mothers in need.

The officer stressed to the members that there was a significant impact on the economic development work. But despite this, the committee was assured that it did not stop the team's aspirations to grow Newport as a City and has not stopped to drive refurbishment and regeneration work within the city. For instance, the work still continues for the Central Arcade and also for a new Health and Wellbeing Centre which would unlock a site for Coleg Gwent to have a new campus. The officer explained that this shows how the team worked well

under pressure to react to the pandemic accordingly yet also had to drive the service forward with facilities and further opportunities.

It was made clear to the committee that the service area's most challenging area was the impact on homelessness from the pandemic. The team tried very hard to accommodate people who were struggling in the face of losing 300 plus units, which were usually used to house those people. The committee was advised that there was a significant reduction in rough sleeping over the course of the pandemic but implied that there has been a big demand in temporary accommodation due to many hotels not operating and usually used hotels for the team's accommodation needs. But however despite this, the team stepped up and delivered in the face of significant challenges in the past year.

The Leader of the Council concurred with the Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing.

The chair opened up questioning for the lead officer.

The Committee asked the following:

- The Committee queried whether this would be the appropriate channel for reporting maintenance issues with a neighbourhood hub.

The Lead Officer informed the Committee that this will be arranged with the relevant team to deal with the ongoing issue.

- The Committee asked how the team would manage the issue of potential evictions from the backlog of cases.

In response, the Head of Service explained that each case can only be considered on a case to case basis, and that embargo has been extended until September 2021 now in order to push this back.

The Committee noted this and also referred to the report that the biggest success has been the way the council staff has reacted to the unprecedented situation with professionalism.

They agreed that the crisis could overshadow the good work that the Council has done.

- The Committee further acknowledged that the Council officers have dealt with this situation greatly. The Committee then queried whether the positive and lessons learned from going through the pandemic have been logged on how everyone adapted?

The Leader of the Council reassured the Committee by highlighting that there is a monthly update provided to Cabinet on recovery and not just the Covid response. It showed that everything necessary has been logged throughout the pandemic for review.

The committee gave their thanks for the responses provided and confirmed that they had no recommendations as the general consensus was that they were satisfied with the responses provided.

City Services

Invitees:

- Paul Jones - Head of City Services
- Councillor Roger Jeavons - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for City Services

The Head of City Services gave a brief overview of the report provided and explained that the service area's achievement was keeping the services running smoothly. The ongoing challenges from the second lockdown put a lot of stress on the site supervisors of having to adapt rapidly. Yet despite this, it was argued that the service area kept working effectively throughout, achieved and progressed well on their service plan. For instance, Newport became the second best recycling city in the UK for two consecutive years running and implied that this is something that the Council should be proud of.

The Committee was advised that the area came under budget only due to the Welsh Government support for Local Authorities. Had the Council not being able to reclaim their lost income, City Services would have been £3.5 million over budget. The Head of Service stressed that from the Welsh Government help alone, has been a life line to local authorities, and stipulated that they will have to observe how the services will settle as they usually generate around £1.7 million a year from car parking fees alone. The Head of Service went on to explain that ironically, Covid has helped the service with its performance as it adapted in some ways for instance the Household Waste Recycling Centre would struggle to meet its usual 65% target, but successfully hit 95% this year. The team had to adapt which meant that they filtered people through better through the online booking system and the team was able to separate the materials better than before. There was also a positive impact on the deterioration of high ways also due to the lower number of cars on the road.

However despite this, the Head of Service highlighted that an area that struggled the most was definitely the City Contact Centre with the increase in waiting times. This was not a detriment to the staff as they had taken on a lot more responsibilities such as the Coroner's Court and had to adapt rapidly due to the increase of individuals contacting the council staff through the digital app. It was explained from this increase in communication that the wait time went up. The Committee was assured that the waiting time has been alleviated slightly but the team still monitor the time.

The Cabinet Member for City Services commented to include their sincere thanks to the whole of the City Services staff for keeping the services open and running in a year like no other. The Cabinet Member pointed out the excellent work performed at the WEC and also referred the committee to acknowledge the highways assets and the work that the team have been doing on tackling the airborne disease affects ash trees (Ash Die Back). The Member explained that there has been a lot of expensive and inexpensive work undertaken on this issue, mostly on Caerleon Road.

The Committee wanted to record their sincere thanks to the team of street cleaners, they advised that the community were very much appreciated and also cast their thanks wider to the whole of City Services. They acknowledged that City Services have been at the sharp end in terms of dealing with the pandemic such as highways, recycling and the contact centre. The Committee continued to appreciate that trying to change methods of working must have been a huge challenge such as liaising with emergency services, it was a tremendously difficult job so the committee wanted to convey their congratulations to everyone involved within the service area on their work.

The Cabinet Member welcomed any questions that the Committee may have with regard to what was discussed.

The Committee asked the following:

- The Committee acknowledged how well City Services reacted to reports of issues such as fly tipping and agreed that they deserve the praise. The Committee mentioned one issue was the loss of face to face service in the Information Station. The members expanded on this point and used an example for areas with a lot of resident parking where elderly are used to renewing their permits by going to the Information Station. The committee argued that there had been a few complaints

about the delay in turnaround for the permits which resulted in them being unfairly booked by the parking wardens. Whilst the Committee applauded the success of the team, they agreed that there was a detrimental side to being forced to do customer service roles virtually. Therefore the Members noted that this could be a lesson of this period that many of Newport citizens really appreciate face to face services and may not be comfortable using IT services.

The Head of Service confirmed that like the rest of the Council, they had to adapt their services at short notice. With regard to the Information Station, due to permits having to be manually printed, the Head of Service explained that this caused a few delays but ensured the Committee that they have made the system live via an electronic process for permits now so paper permits might not be used so much anymore. However, it is recognised that some people do prefer the face to face experience as it has been a lot to adjust to and the service area is in the process of finding its feet in the new method of working. The Head of Service acknowledged that life will not be the same as it was before but the team are working to ensure that nobody is left behind through an inclusive service going forward.

- The Committee queried whether the Cemeteries team have considered going down the line of stopping vehicles in and out of the cemeteries during the week, and what notices were being given out to the public through the press to reach elderly residents in particular.

The Head of City Services explained that the reduced vehicle access was actioned in the first lockdown in 2020, with limited communication tools at the time. The team need a safely operating area so allow vehicles on the weekend as usual and special dispensation for those not as mobile if the team do not have machinations on site. There was sadly an increase in the need for work done at the cemeteries during the pandemic for obvious reasons but with mobility issues the team were happy to assist and as usual, citizens are allowed to visit on the weekends.

- The Committee followed up this response by asking how the service area would communicate this to the elderly without social media for being refused to visit the cemeteries in the week. In addition, the Committee added would the team consider putting in shelter for visitors to go to in adverse weather condition and if water taps could be made more localised in certain areas of the cemeteries.

In response, the Head of Service commented that the more localised water tap request has been noted to be mentioned to the team. It was explained that most of the public are aware of the updated opening times as they try not to encourage visits during the week as this is usually when funerals are taking place. Taking this into account, the Head of Service agreed that the City Services team will look into how to successfully decimate the information virtually.

The Cabinet Member mentioned that they had received many compliments on the peace and quiet within the cemetery grounds whilst the visitors said goodbye to loved ones during the funeral as they have not got cars going around or behind them. The Cabinet Member understood the Committee's comments but on the other hand stated that a calm silence is more appropriate for the setting.

Discussion ensued and the committee came to agree and accept the report and mentioned that the Council should publicise to the maximum that the city is likely to retain for the second year running on being the best for recycling as it is an amazing achievement. The Head of Service agreed that there has been some great progress within the Council over the past three years.

Finance

Invitees:

- Meirion Rushworth - Head of Finance
- Mark Howcroft – Assistant Head of Finance
- Emma Johnson - Income Collector Manager
- Richard Leake – Service Manager Procurement & Payments
- Andrew Wathan – Chief Internal Auditor

The Head of Finance indicated that just as every other service area within the Council, a lot of the finance work was able to be worked on from home. Their colleague's attitude was extremely positive as they were able to take their equipment home to ensure they could work the best as they could. It is essential to note how the Council worked hard to make sure that the teams could work effectively from home. The Members were advised that the Finance area tackled major issues with predominantly business support, this was acknowledged as a national issue. A lot of support was administered by the Local Authority by the Revenue team and Business Support team in RH.

The Head of Service provided the Committee with figures, as it was outlined that the council administered £15,000 to businesses on average and £20 million in relief to businesses eligible for the help. It was explained to the committee that the council borrowed money in the middle of March 2020 to ensure that they could pay out to the businesses as fast as they could. Welsh Government informed the Council that in the middle of March they would be putting them into funds in the middle of April so the Council went and borrowed the money themselves so they could get the money out at a quicker rate to help support businesses and it was reimbursed.

The Revenue Team had been administering support grants in the differing four versions until the end of the financial year, this therefore had a big strain on the team. The team noted a reduction in time to deal with tax queries or business queries as they had to prioritise their time to administer these grants correctly. It was stressed that this was a big challenge, but like every other Council in Wales, they achieved what they needed to do to assist businesses. Further, the Head of Finance emphasised that the Accountancy team was instrumental in coordinating the additional costs and found that across the council, they had incurred £18 million worth of covid-19 costs that they had to claim back from the Welsh Government on top of the £5 million of used income that the Council had lost. The members were informed that the council has been supported by the Welsh Government throughout all of this as instrumental help across Wales so the council could respond appropriately and timely; therefore adding a big layer of additional work onto the Accountancy team.

The Head of Finance went on to praise the Procurement team on their incredible work in working across services for instance, ensuring that key suppliers were supported throughout this period such as bus companies like Newport Bus, Newport Live and Chartwells as it would not have been viable had the Council stopped paying them. The Finance Team acknowledged that such supply chains need to be around and on the other side therefore the officer explained that the council still needed to pay them. In line with national UK guidance adopted by Welsh Government, Councils worked alongside key colleagues and contractors to try help them such as the companies mentioned above. They had to have really detailed issues to ensure that the Council was supporting these organisations as best as they possibly could. From this, the Members were informed of the crucial role of the Auditing Team for continuing to undertake floor checks on business grants as they were stuck until September time. The team were very flexible even with one or two of them working for the test and trace team. The Members acknowledged how grateful the Head of Service was for the staff's flexibility.

The Head of Finance referred to the report in terms of performance and meeting objectives, and informed that report shows that a vast majority of the service area's objectives have been met. This shows that the Finance area were not confined to doing solely Covid

response work, as they were able to keep an eye on key areas as the detail stipulates within the report. Most of the performance measures were green, only a few amber and the Head of Service argued that was quite an achievement given the context.

To conclude, the Head of Finance admitted that they are dealing with the impact of the pandemic and that they have help from the Welsh Government until September 2021. ~~The committee was informed that~~ The Council is still claiming additional costs where they exist at the present time.

The officer explained that although it has slowed down in the revenue team, they now as a result have a lot of catching up in that area. A full normal loaded timetable where they can deliver on that this year on the team's new working arrangements. It was highlighted that is has not been an easy year as the staff have struggled in particular, despite this, it was stressed that the revenue team in particular has been successful and all of the teams' efforts were instrumental in helping the local economy, the officer told the members that it was pleasing to see and hear the good feedback that they did receive in that area.

The Head of Service invited the committee to raise any enquiries that they had with regard to the report.

The Committee asked the following:

- The Committee asked for confirmation on whether the area has seen any difference in council tax collection.

In response, the Head of Finance explained that households were making their own decision about what they could or could not do. For individual decisions, for the council taxes in regulated debts, the Finance Team could not go beyond that unless they have been summoned to court. But given the situation, the courts were not operating as much as they were beforehand. The Head of Finance stated that they had one in session from last year whereas they used to have around four to five over the year. The officer also explained that from this, they have staff working on the support grants.

The Income Collection Manager stated that there was an unprecedented amount of work in terms of council tax payers, for instance many were worried they would not have jobs to return to and furlough was not completely watertight earlier on in lockdown. Unfortunately the finance team observed that not everyone has gone back into employment which therefore impacted on tax collection with Newport being 1% lower than previous years. It was then indicated by the officer to the committee that in actuality, a touch in a million pounds more debt combined with current years' council tax that some households face a lot of catching up to do, financially.

The Income Collection Manager further explained that their team were in the process of trying to put things in place for work coming up. They have had issues with court, such as liability orders. The officer went on to explain that they need an attachment to people's earnings but they cannot without a court order. From this, the team were thwarted as courts have not opened back up yet due to the need for social distancing so the members were advised that the finance team were somewhat dependent on availability of court times. Therefore this proved to the members how council tax collection has been affected.

- The Committee asked with regard to business support, as it has been favourable in its response but also acknowledged some criticism from the public. The Committee referred to the survey that the Head of Finance mentioned and queried what was the local businesses' reaction to the help the Council has provided?

The Income Collection Manager explained that they could only speak for the owners they personally dealt with and believed that most have been very appreciative of the grants on behalf of the Welsh Government. The officer provided figures and stipulated that around 7,500 grants of various amounts were administered within the last year. It was highlighted to the committee that the scheme was not designed to help every single business, only the ones that were forced into closure or ones with restrictions in place such as in leisure and retail. The Income Collection Manager went on to emphasise that this help was well received and most businesses appreciated the speed that they got the money out to them. It was further explained that there were also different business grants, that the Regeneration Team worked with for self-employed, and ones without premises such as mobile hairdressers were helped by a different type of fund, but however this was reported as well received also.

- Following this response, the Committee enquired specifically whether the officer could put a monetary value on the 7,500 grants dispersed.

The Income Collection Manager informed the Members that it was around £47 million over the course of the year, not the Business Support Team but from the team that the officer was working with, right until the end of March. As a follow up, the members then queried if said businesses were local Newport businesses. The officer confirmed that the support was administered to businesses operating in Newport but some were chains and businesses with multiple premises.

- The Committee acknowledged that the responses have generally been positive from businesses. Members queried whether they have evidence trail of this as they argued that it would be beneficial to have a record of the good stories from this.

The Income Collection Manager responded by asserting that their team had received many emails and correspondence from businesses expressing their gratitude to the council for navigating them through the scheme.

- Members appreciated the response and referred to the BID, asking if it has acknowledged what the council has done in assisting them during the pandemic, in writing.

The Head of Finance confirmed that they received a lot of correspondence as the Income Collection Manager would be looking at thousands of emails at any point in time and stressed that it was encouraging to see the staff's efforts being appreciated. The lead officer also denoted that it was important to mention that not everyone who applied was eligible for a grant, so clearly there were a few disappointed individuals but the vast majority of correspondents were grateful. The Committee was advised that over the first month or so of the first scheme, that Newport was ahead of the game under the speed of making payments. It was stressed that the team were putting the funds in to get the cash out to businesses as fast as possible.

- The Committee then enquired with regard to businesses claiming support, which area and organisations were hit the worst?

The Head of Finance used an example, the Finance Team supported Newport Live as one of the handful of organisations that the Council kept in close touch with. It was advised that their income was significantly affected due to lack of leisure facilities being open so the council was able to work with them to work out their net losses. Although they were struggling, they were saving money as well through the furlough scheme and for example there was no need for heating water for the pools.

For the lost income claims, the committee was informed that the Council could pay them a higher subsidy to keep the organisation where they would have been as it was not easy for them. Starting to open up the leisure facilities has not been easy as people are not jumping at the chance into their gyms at the rate that they previously were but the committee was advised that the finance department keep in touch with Steve Ward to keep the support going and intend to do so until September 2021.

The Committee recognised the successes of the finance department and Council as a whole in their Covid work as well as helping keeping businesses afloat. The Head of Finance agreed to pass on the praise to the revenue team as it meant a lot to appreciate their achievements and hard work during a difficult period. The Committee agreed that they were satisfied with the report and responses provided and thanked the officers for their reports, input and the Cabinet Members for their input.

Conclusion of Committee Reports:

The Committee noted the performance within Regeneration Investment and Housing, City Services and Finance Service Plan Year-end Reviews and made the following comments to the Cabinet:

Regeneration Investment and Housing

- The Committee firstly wished to thank The Leader for her attendance to the meeting. The Committee were very pleased with the quality of the report, and wanted it to be known that all the officers and staff have every right to be proud of their work and ensuring that the services provided have been of good quality throughout one of the most difficult times in living memory.

City Services

- The Committee again praised the quality of the report and how easy it was to understand. The Committee again wished to thank all the officers and staff for all of their hard throughout the pandemic, and continued high quality of service.
- Members hoped that we are able to clearly pre-warn and advertise through various channels that the Information Station is moving to the Central Library, especially as elderly people are regular users of the services held there and may not be able to access online services to read news updates. Members also wished to express not only how important it is to maintain the face to face process between the Council and residents, but to encourage a smooth transition whenever it takes place.
- The Committee requested if the water taps in cemeteries could be more prominent and localised in certain areas, which would make it easier for visitors of the sites to access these facilities. The Committee also queried if some shelter areas could be installed at points to shelter visitors from the rain.

Finance

- The Committee again wished to express their thanks to all staff and officers for their hard work during the pandemic, and especially how prepared the service area were at the beginning to deal all financial requests from Newport businesses and its residents.
- The Committee praised the positive stories about the Council being able to help numerous businesses over the Covid-19 period, and believe that this is something that the Council should make more known, as a lot of residents might not fully be

aware of the hard work that the service area had undertaken and that £47 million had been dispersed to businesses operating in Newport.

- The Committee queried if the Finance Team could record all highs and lows from working during the pandemic to encourage and to also learn how to become even more efficient in approach, if a similar event was to occur in the future.

4 **Scrutiny Adviser Reports**

Invitees;

- Neil Barnett – Scrutiny Adviser

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Forward Work Programme, and informed the Committee of the topics due to be discussed at the next two committee meetings:

Monday 6th September 2021

- Staff Support
- Economic Growth Strategy and Economic Recovery Plan – Recommendations Monitoring

Monday 1st November 2021

- 2021-22 Service Plan Mid-Year Review for:
 - Law and Regulation
 - People and Business Change

The meeting terminated at 5.20 pm

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn

Scrutiny Report

Performance Scrutiny Committee – Place and Corporate

Part 1

Date: 6th September 2021

Subject **Staff Support during Covid-19**

Author Scrutiny Adviser

The following people have been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Area / Role / Subject
Rhys Cornwall	Head of People and Business Change
Rachael Davies	HR and OD Manager

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

1 Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is asked to

1. Consider the information contained within the report
2. Discuss the ways in which staff wellbeing have been considered by the Council throughout the course of the Covid 19 pandemic and whether any additional measures need to be taken

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 Prior to the emergence of the Covid 19 pandemic in March 2020 the Council had a range of tools by which it could support the wellbeing of the workforce, balanced against the need to have a fully operational staff resource in order to deliver services to residents of the city. These tools included a full doctor-led occupational health service based in the Newport locality, an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which provides in the moment counselling and advice over the telephone on a 24/7, 365 days a year basis, access to the Health and Safety team for stress risk assessments, and a high level of reference to wellbeing issues and subsequent signposting for more help and information in the staff newsletter throughout the year.

3 Actions since March 2020

- 3.1 As a consequence of the first lock-down in March 2020 the Council immediately took steps to consider how best to protect and support the workforce. In line with government guidance all staff who were able to work from home were issued with guidance to do so, whilst those that were unable to work from home but were at higher risk of potential harm due to an underlying health condition, or had a family member who was vulnerable, to remain at home and not attend their workplace. Communication via email, newsletter and manager cascade to teams was sent out on a regular basis offering updates and information on the situation.

The HR/Payroll system was quickly updated to include new categories for managers to record the different reasons for staff being unavailable to work; those who were self-isolating, shielding or who were absent due to contracting Covid. This information was issued daily in order to best understand the impact that the differing absences were having on the operational running of services. It has now reduced to twice weekly as whilst the number of staff absent is significantly reduced, should this situation rapidly change, there is the capability to increase the frequency of reporting if needed.

The Gold command group took a series of decisions around the way in which terms and conditions were applied in order to support the workforce. Overtime rates and the flexi time scheme were reviewed and changes applied to enable operational services to continue and increased flexibility to staff who needed support balancing their work and home lives during the demands of the pandemic.

A key action in the early part of the pandemic was to ensure that staff were working from home in a safe way. The Health and Safety team issued communication to the workforce asking them to complete a piece of e-learning on DSE issues and complete a DSE assessment. This was to enable staff to understand whether they were at any risk of poor posture or inappropriate working conditions and to take action to remedy these risks. A checklist was made available to supplement the DSE assessment which gave staff the opportunity to select which items of equipment they already had at home, perhaps which may have been provided from the office when they vacated, and which items they did not have access to but needed. Those items were then made available for home delivery or collection from the Civic Centre, and ranged from wireless keyboards to desks and chairs. Where it was simply not possible for staff to be safe at home, or where staff had an individual set of circumstances where working from home was not conducive, managers were supportive in making alternative arrangements to attend a Covid secure workplace.

Health and Safety support

- 3.2 The role of the Health and Safety team changed rapidly in March 2020 and, by necessity, a lot of proactive work ceased at that time. The volume of work that the pandemic generated was unprecedented. However, health and safety legislation was not suspended and the complications of managing this, whilst balancing covid risks were significant. Much of the day to day health and safety work or accident reporting and investigation, wellbeing assessments, support for managers and staff, and ensuring that work is carried out safely has of course continued. The role of the H&S Manager continues to be almost totally taken up with covid related issues, with the rest of the team attempting to balance the day to day of reactive health and safety under covid restrictions and with covid controls always at the forefront. We have done our utmost to assist managers in discharging both their health and safety and covid duties and support them to continue to deliver frontline services under incredibly trying circumstances. Some of the activity that has continued to be provided includes;
- Advising and supporting managers in writing and implementing Covid 19 risk assessments and activity risk assessments reflecting Covid 19 controls
 - Ongoing support around school transport operations

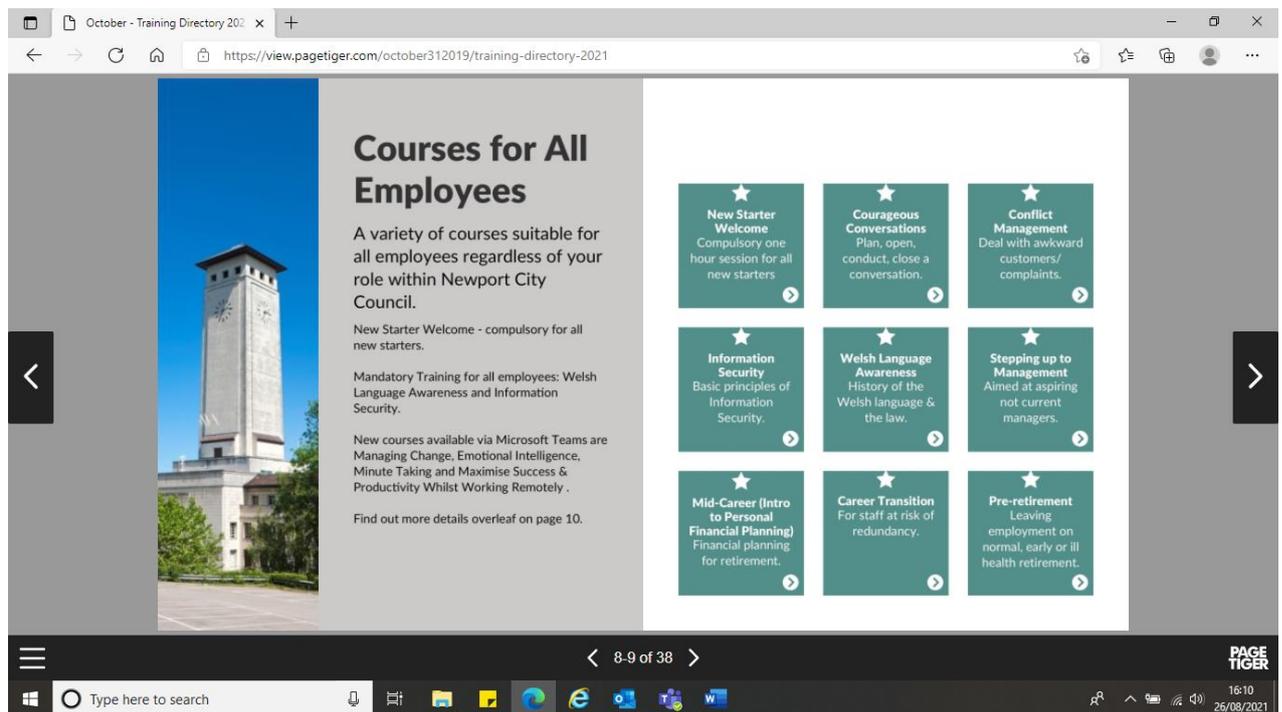
- Continuing to support schools with Covid risk assessment, operational management and case management
- Following up on an increasing number of staff Covid+ cases to establish whether they might be RIDDOR reportable.
- Supporting the Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) process in schools and with confirmed cases in NCC staff – advising on contact isolations and contact group closures, liaising with environmental health, providing extensive advice, support and guidance to schools around isolation and quarantine requirements, as individual results are coming through before they are working their way through the TTP system, so we need to take actions before the TTP process begins.
- Developing and issuing guidance on covid related issues.
- Supporting various departments that are unable to work remotely by carrying out briefing sessions on COVID-19, discussing any concerns that they have and ensuring that they feel safe at work.
- Developing a COVID-19 health and safety compliance audit template, which will enable the health and safety team to identify any areas of concern and to ensure that the necessary advice and support is provided to managers.
- Supporting educational and childcare settings to resume/continue face to face operations whilst introducing lateral flow device testing. This involved the health and safety department working closely with the Environmental Health team to amend and present the COVID-19 presentation from the asset bank to all Head Teachers. We have conducted several drop-in sessions for Head Teachers to ensure that they feel confident in implementing the necessary guidance and have provided overarching risk assessment updates, along with drafting and distributing the necessary protocols for staff.
- Conducting a Covid-19 health and safety compliance audit of the Civic Centre to identify conformances, non-conformances and opportunities for improvement.
- Developing and maintaining a Covid-19 action log to ensure that the necessary requirements are implemented. Completing desktop audits for school settings to ensure that Covid-19 control measures are robust, and that they are operating in a Covid-secure way. This includes reviewing existing 'bubbles', risk assessments and emergency procedures.
- Changing some training programmes to e-learning and training delivery via teams, including replacements for face to face skin surveillance, manual handling training and competency assessments.

We have identified a significant increase in the number of occupational health referrals during this quarter, and of the previous quarter, where clinical support is required for employees suffering from effects of the pandemic – These are either upon themselves directly, or upon their family members, which has impacted upon their physical or mental wellbeing. Where possible, health and safety support continues to be offered during the interim period until an occupational health appointment can take place. However, it is increasingly clear that clinical support is needed for these cases, where there is no work-related link and a medical pathway is required.

Learning and Development

3.3 All in-person courses ceased in March 2020 and after a period of waiting to see whether the pandemic would be short-lived it became clear that the learning and development programme needed to be reinvented in order to continue to provide key training to those in need. Our training providers adapted their courses to be delivered remotely via Teams and were up and running within 6 months. The 2021/22 learning and development programme is entirely provided via Teams (with the exception of first aid and fire training), but as in-person contact increases throughout the remainder of 2021 and into 2022 we will look to repurpose as appropriate.

Whilst the 2020/21 learning and development programme was significantly affected by Covid 19 and most courses were cancelled due to the need to reduce face to face contact, we have ensured that the 2021/22 offer is running at full capacity by moving face to face training to online, remote or e-learning wherever possible.



We therefore expect to offer a full programme of learning and development throughout this year, recognising that the workforce will require access to upskilling opportunities despite the disruption of the pandemic.

As a direct result of feedback received from those working from home, the most popular course in recent months has been a new offer – Maximising Success and Productivity – tackling the challenges of remote working. The aim of this course is to help understand and overcome the challenges of working remotely. It will cover miscommunication; motivating yourself at home; avoiding distractions; prioritising workload; staying connected with colleagues and remote team work – all areas highlighted in our employee surveys that have caused concern since March 2020.

Our commitment to equalities means that whilst we have continued to offer Autism Awareness, Deaf Awareness (introduction to Sign Language), Dementia Friends Awareness, Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking, Preventing Violent Extremism and Violence against women and domestic abuse awareness training throughout the pandemic, we have also recently started a Council wide rollout of equality and diversity training, with managers and senior leaders being enrolled onto an Inclusive Leadership course to improve personal knowledge, leadership skills and most importantly, create a positive working environment for all of our staff.

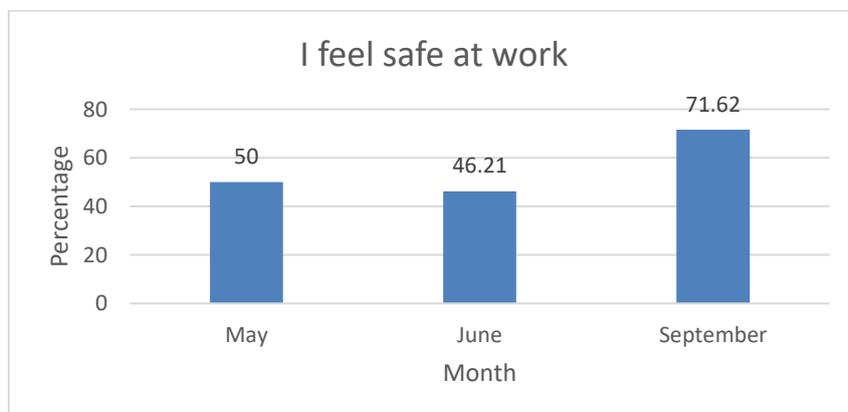
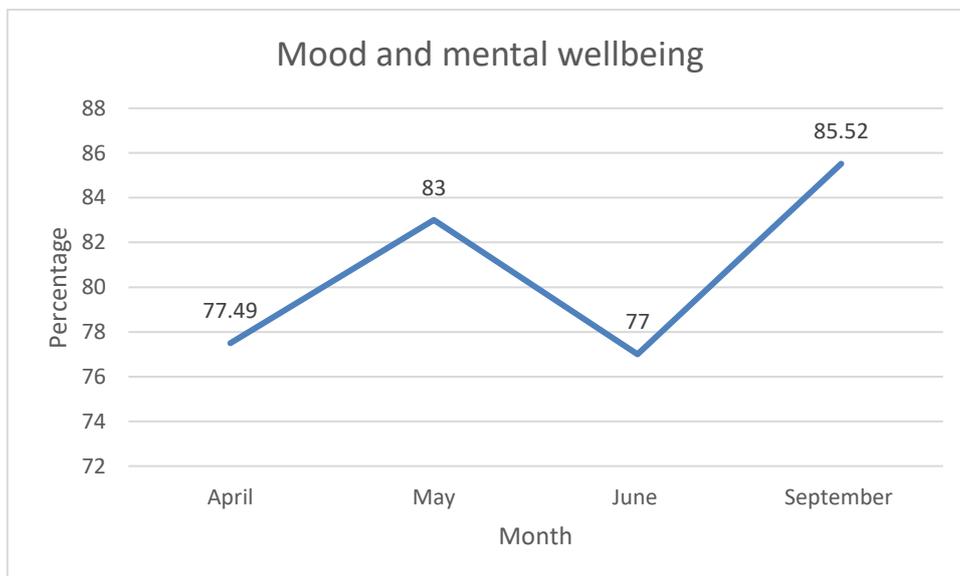
As a consequence of the Covid 19 pandemic the Corporate Management Team have identified a group learning opportunity in health and safety and to support their request for upskilling, will be receiving formal IOSH health and safety training on leadership responsibilities towards assets and resources, including the workforce, so that wellbeing is regarded as high priority by all of our senior leaders.

We expect additional learning and development need to be identified as we emerge from the demands of the pandemic that will enable the workforce to feel supported and valued, whilst enabling service areas to make improvements in the services their teams deliver to residents.

Employee Communications

3.4 Throughout the course of the pandemic surveys have been issued to the workforce to understand the impact of Covid 19 on both work and home life in order to assist with decision making on what support to put in place.

Wellbeing surveys were issued in April, May, June, September and November 2020 to see the trend in responses, as shown in the results below.



A separate survey was issued to managers to ascertain the impact of working through the pandemic on their levels of wellbeing, and feedback included a range of different responses to the challenges being faced by managers and their teams:

“My workload during the pandemic has grown every week, as well as having family commitments, homeschooling and looking after young children. Although my manager says the right things the work is still there to be done and so I end up having to work ridiculous hours and still don't feel that I am able to do everything.”

“My manager is great the support I receive is very good from her, I am able to phone after work and discuss any concerns I may have. My Manager was very supportive, I am a diabetic and she ensured I completed the covid risk assessment and put in place a system where I could still do my job but from home.”

“I feel there are tools in place from the organisation such as iTrent check ins, how to record sickness etc. However, some basic tips on best ways to keep in touch with a team, monitoring productivity and motivating a team virtually would be beneficial.”

Receiving and listening to this feedback has enabled the Council to direct resources to the most appropriate areas, whether that be providing messages to reassure staff with home-schooling demands that they were supported to balance their work and home lives, or identifying new learning and development opportunities to address the new way of working remotely and how to stay motivated.

The frequency of surveying has reduced to quarterly due to feedback that the same questions were being asked of the workforce too often. The latest survey was issued in August 2021 and a further one will be issued in the Autumn.

In addition to regular touch points with the workforce the Council's intranet page has a dedicated Covid-19 messages page where all of the communication from March 2020 can be found, including previous versions of the staff newsletter.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a SharePoint intranet page. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <https://intranet.corporate.newport/sites/live/my-employment/staff-conference>. The SharePoint navigation bar includes 'SharePoint', 'Newsfeed', 'OneDrive', and 'Sites'. The user is identified as 'Davies, Rachael (HR & OD Manager)'. The main content area has a green header with navigation links: 'COUNCIL', 'MY DEVELOPMENT', 'MY EMPLOYMENT', 'MY FINANCE', 'MY INFORMATION', 'MY WELLBEING', and 'MY WORKSPACE'. The page title is 'COVID19 Messages & Important Information'. The main content is on a yellow background and includes the following text:

Keeping up to date on the latest coronavirus (Covid 19) pandemic advice we appreciate can be difficult. In light of this we have provided information on a regular basis via staff news. Information will continue to be circulated by staff news, and published to this page.

Latest Updates:

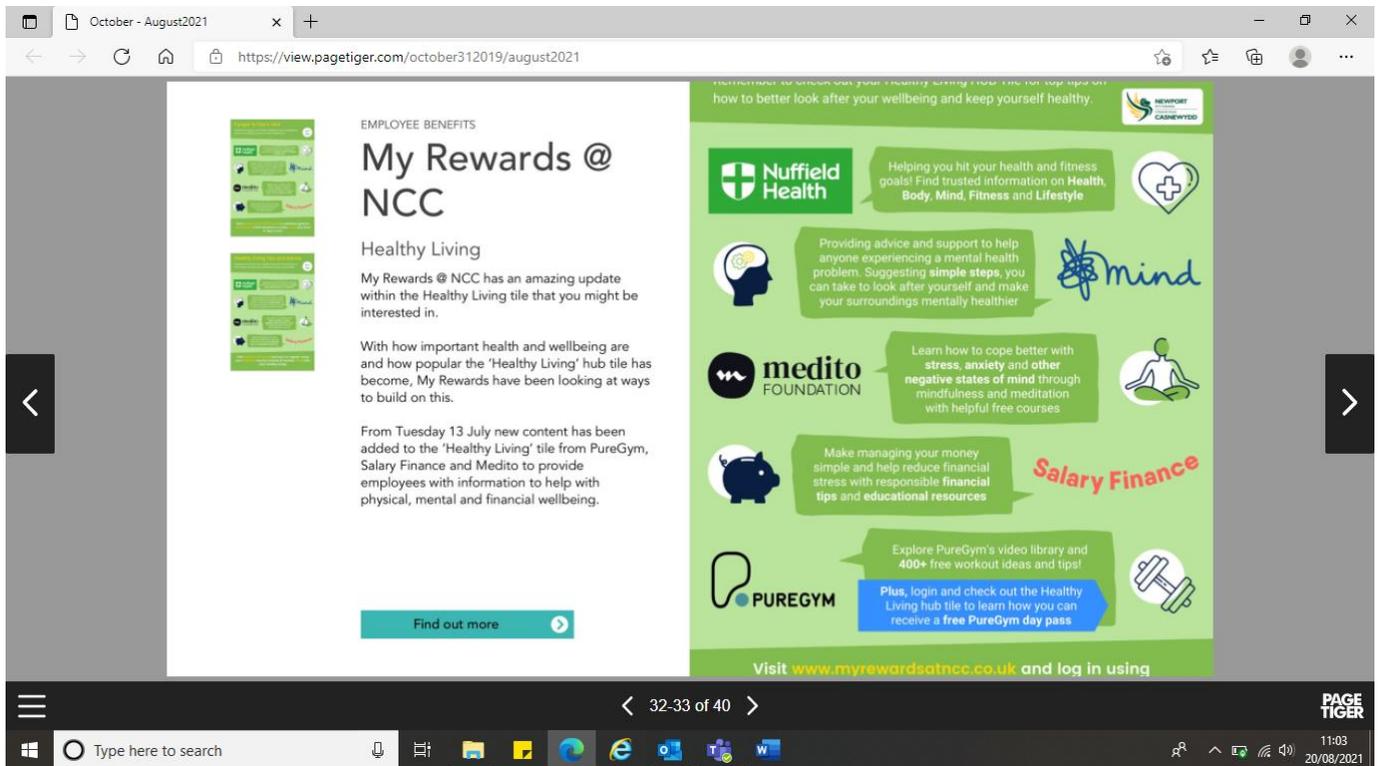
Update 30 July 2022 - All adults who have been fully-vaccinated will no longer have to self-isolate if they are identified as close contacts of someone with coronavirus from 7 August. The most recent Welsh Government guidance can be found here: <https://media.service.gov.wales/news/changes-to-self-isolation-for-fully-vaccinated-adults>

Update 8 June 2021 - Wales moves from Alert Level 2 to Alert Level 1. The most recent Welsh Government guidance regarding the restrictions from June 7th can be found here: <https://gov.wales/restrictions-7-june-2021>
Newport City Council is required to operate in the safest possible way.

Update 12 March 2021 - Information for protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 (known as 'shielding')

The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the search bar and various application icons. The system tray on the right shows the time as 11:02 and the date as 20/08/2021.

Our fortnightly staff newsletter continues to be issued via Page Tiger, an external web hosted platform which enables us to send communications to employees personal email accounts where they do not hold a Newport.gov.uk email account, which includes our schools based workforce. There is always an emphasis on wellbeing in each newsletter and different resources or signposting is made available.



Absence

- 3.5 The Council set a target of 9.98 days of absence per FTE in 2020/21 and this was achieved with an outturn of 7.12 days per FTE. This is the first time in many years that sickness absence levels were under target. There were some slight misses against target in Adults, Childrens and City Services which is to be expected given the high level of front-line work that has continued throughout the pandemic and the increased demand on the workforce in those areas. The first quarter of 2021/22 is showing a similar projection with Adults and City Services already slightly over target.

The total number of days lost to sickness absence in 2019/20 was 43,565, with 12,190 of those days due to short term absence such as viral infection, sickness/diarrhoea and ear/nose/throat. Comparing these figures to 2020/21, the total number of days lost was 31,736, with 5,837 of them due to short term absence. This is a 52% decrease in the number of days lost due to short term absence and a 47% drop in the number of occurrences. However, the number of days lost due to stress and anxiety remains the most common reason for absence with 12,407 days lost in 2019/20 and 11,184 in 2020/21, a drop of 11%.

Whilst it is highly possible that absence levels are lower due to social mixing being restricted throughout much of 2020/21 and less transmission of colds, influenza and other viruses, it is perhaps possible that some illness is being masked by homeworking. It is less challenging to work from home whilst feeling unwell compared to commuting to a workplace and working with

colleagues. It is also possible that some reasons for absence are mitigated by working from home such as less opportunity for poor working relationships which can lead to absence.

It should be noted that the Council's approach towards absence management has been a traditional method commonly used by employers, focused on calculating the numbers of days and occurrences of absence each year and applying a blanket policy to issue formal warnings to individuals hitting these 'triggers.'

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of living and working as part of a community that protects those who are vulnerable, cares for those who are in need, and supports those around us. As a responsible employer we should be role modelling these values to our workforce and a fundamental shift in the way we manage absence is both timely and necessary to show that Newport City Council is an employer of choice, recognising that illness is something to be supported through and not sanctioned by.

We are now developing a new approach to managing absence that will modernise the way in which we treat illness at work and transform our methodology towards maintaining wellness whilst in work as opposed to managing absence from work.

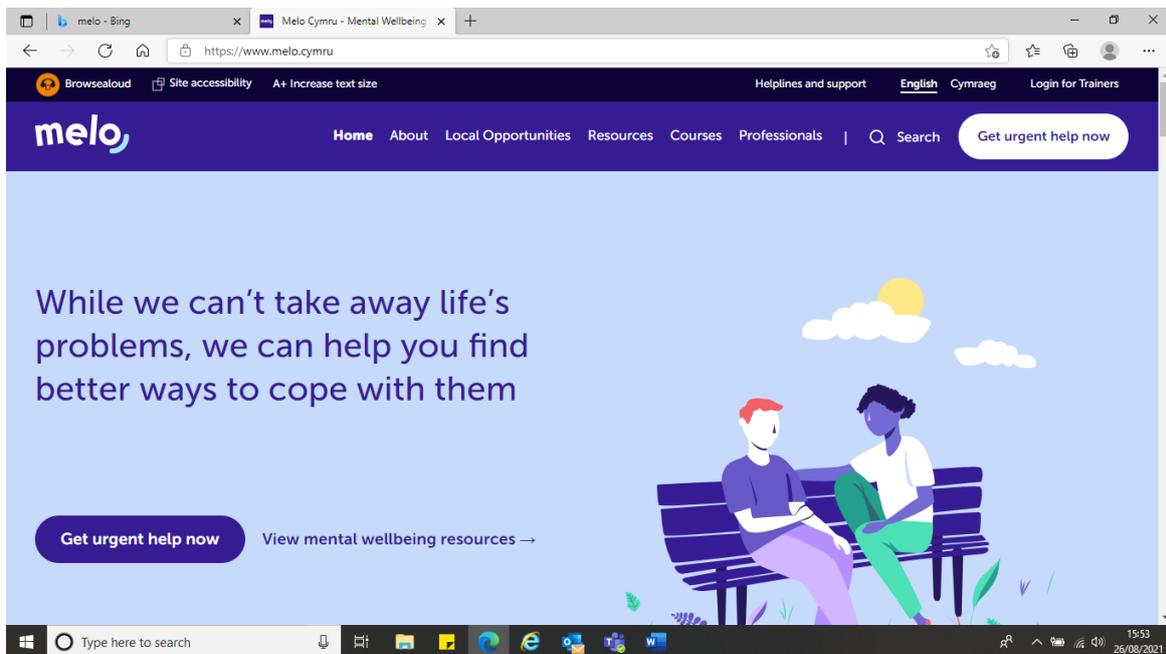
4 Future Developments

We will be reviewing our wellbeing offer this year and assessing the effectiveness of the tools currently available. This includes a new occupational health contract, a review of the EAP and the way in which we promote wellbeing to the workforce. We will be putting a wellbeing programme together where all aspects can gather in one clear document. Feedback from our surveys has suggested that information can be challenging to locate and is not always clearly linked to other areas of support, so we intend to rebrand the wellbeing offer in one location on the intranet and make it available via Page Tiger for all employees to access from any device at work or at home.

Newport's PSB has welcomed an offer from ABUHB to roll out Connect 5, a mental wellbeing workforce training programme which is being jointly funded by the health board and Welsh Government. Connect 5 is the first, and only, evidence-based training programme available in the UK which aims to promote mental health and wellbeing. It has been developed using and incorporating evidence-based theory and tools, and is guided by the principles of 'Making Every Contact Count' (MECC).

As a key partner we welcome the work that colleague in health have developed to support this area and will engage in the programme for the benefit of our workforce. We will commit to identifying colleagues to be trained in being able to deliver training themselves across the Council. The programme aims to improve mental wellbeing within a work environment, have quality conversations about mental health and wellbeing and share information on where to find free resources, local opportunities to help and additional support for mental health where it is needed.

In addition to this new area of learning and development, we will commit to signposting www.melo.cymru across our staff communications as the primary source for help and guidance with mental health support.



4. Suggested Areas of Focus

Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee in considering the report is to:

The Committee is asked to:

- Consider the evidence presented
- Assess whether staff welfare issues have been sufficiently highlighted and mitigated
- Assess whether there are further opportunities to support the workforce during the ongoing pandemic.
- Conclusions:
 - What was the overall conclusion of the Committee?
 - Is the Committee satisfied that it has had all of the relevant information to base a conclusion?
 - Do any areas require a more in-depth review by the Committee?
 - Do the Committee wish to make any Comments / Recommendations to the Cabinet Member/ Head of People and Business Change?

Suggested Lines of Enquiry

4.1 The Committee may wish to consider the following:

Tudalen 27

- Has sufficient emphasis been made on the wellbeing offer to the workforce since March 2020?
- How confident are we that support has been available to all who need it?
- What concerns are there over staff welfare?
- What are the considerations for the future?

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Supporting Information

5.1 Included within the attached paper

6 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- People and Culture Strategy 2018-2022
- Wellness at Work Policy/Management of Attendance Policy
- Learning and Development Directory 2021/22

7 Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act

7.1 General questions

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 came into force in April 2016 and is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act is designed to support and deliver a public service that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As one of the 44 bodies named in the Act, we must consider the Act in everything we do.

Seven well-being goals give clarity of the shared purpose of the public bodies listed in the Act for the long-term well-being of Wales. The council's approach to supporting members and staff to work remotely must support the well-being goals.

The Act also puts in place a sustainable development principle, which sets out the way we must go about meeting our duty under the Act.

7.2 The Well-being Goals and the Sustainable Development Principle

An increased focus on workforce wellbeing will have **long-term** and **preventative** benefits to the health and well-being of staff, will primarily support the well-being goal: *A Healthier Wales* and does not adversely affect any of the others. The focus also supports the Council's Corporate Plan well-being objective

To enable people to be healthy, independent & resilient;

In addition, the council is working with partners in a **collaborative** way through the One Newport Public Services Board (PSB) and the implementation of the Local Well-being Plan Well-being Objectives.

Our wellbeing work supports that of the Local Wellbeing Plan objectives:

- 1) Everyone feels good about living, working, visiting and investing in our unique city.

- 2) Everyone has the skills and opportunities to develop, prosper and contribute to a sustainable, thriving city.
- 3) Everyone belongs to friendly, connected resilient communities and feels confident and empowered to improve their well-being.
- 4) Newport has healthy, safe and resilient environments with an integrated sustainable travel network.

8. Background Papers

Include all additional documents that are referenced in the report, and those that you have used as background reading. Hyperlink to online versions of them if available.

- [The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)
- [Corporate Plan](#)
- Management of Attendance Policy
- Council's intranet Covid-19 page
- Learning and Development Directory 2021/22
- People and Culture Strategy 2018-22

Report Completed: September 2021

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn

Scrutiny Report

Performance Scrutiny Committee - People

Part 1

Date: 6th September 2021

Subject Scrutiny Adviser Report

Author Scrutiny Adviser

The following people have been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Role
Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser)	Present the Committee with the Scrutiny Adviser Report for discussion and update the Committee on any changes.

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is asked to:

1. Committee's Work Programme:

Consider the Committee's Forward Work Programme Update (**Appendix 1**):

- *Are there any amendments to the topics scheduled to be considered at the next Committee meeting?*
- *Are there any additional invitees that the Committee requires to fully consider the topics?*
- *Is there any additional information that the Committee would like to request?*

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 The purpose of a forward work programme is to help ensure Councillors achieve organisation and focus in the undertaking of enquiries through the Overview and Scrutiny function. Effective work programming is essential to ensure that the work of Overview and Scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
- 2.2 Further information about the work programming process, including the procedures for referring new business to the programme, can be found in our Scrutiny Handbook on the Council's Scrutiny webpages (www.newport.gov.uk/scrutiny).
- 2.3 The Centre for Public Scrutiny's Good Scrutiny Guide recognises the importance of the forward work programme. In order to 'lead and own the process', it states that Councillors should have

ownership of their Committee's work programme, and be involved in developing, monitoring and evaluating it. The Good Scrutiny Guide also states that, in order to make an impact, the scrutiny workload should be co-ordinated and integrated into corporate processes, to ensure that it contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.

Forward Work Programme Update

- 2.4 The Committee's work programme was set in June 2021, including estimated timescales for when the reports will be considered by the Committee. This programme is then managed and implemented by the designated Scrutiny Adviser for this Committee under the direction of the Committee Chairperson.
- 2.5 Attached as **Appendix 1** is the Committee's Forward Work Programme Update. The Committee is asked to consider:
- *Any amendments to the topics scheduled to be considered at the next Committee meeting?*
 - *Are there any additional invitees that the Committee requires to fully consider the topics?*
 - *Is there any additional information that the Committee would like to request?*

The Committee agreed to keep a degree of flexibility within its work programme to enable the Committee to respond to urgent / emerging issues. This item is an opportunity for the Committee members to raise any suggested amendments to the Work Programme.

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

- 3.1 The following information is attached:

Appendix 1: The Committee's Forward Work Programme Update;

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee in considering the report is to:

- **Forward Work Programme Update - Appendix 1**
Consider:
 - Are there any amendments to the topics scheduled to be considered at the next Committee meeting?
 - Are there any additional invitees that the Committee requires to fully consider the topics?
 - Is there any additional information that the Committee would like to request?

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Corporate Assessment, and the subsequent [follow up assessment](#) provide background information on the importance of good work programming. Specific reference is made to the need

to align the Cabinet and Scrutiny work programmes to ensure the value of the Scrutiny Function is maximised.

5.2 The latest Cabinet work programme was approved by the Cabinet on a monthly basis for the next 12 months and includes the list of reports scheduled for consideration. Effective forward planning by both Cabinet and Scrutiny needs to be coordinated and integrated in relation to certain reports to ensure proper consultation takes place before a decision is taken. A link to the Cabinet work programme is provided [here](#) to the Committee as part of this report, to enable the Committee to ensure that the work programmes continue to reflect key decisions being made by the Cabinet.

6. Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- 6.1 Having proper work programming procedures in place ensures that the work of Overview and Scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council’s delivery of services, contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and ensures that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.
- 6.2 This report relates to the Committee’s Work Programme, Actions from Committee’s and Information Reports that support the achievement of the Scrutiny Committee, in accordance with the Law and Regulation Service Plan, Objectives, Actions and Measures and the Wellbeing objectives:

Well-being Objectives	Promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment	Improve skills, educational outcomes & employment opportunities	Enable people to be healthy, independent & resilient	Build cohesive & sustainable communities
Corporate Plan Commitments	Thriving City	Aspirational People		Resilient Communities
Supporting Function	Modernised Council			

7 Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act

7.1 The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 which came into force in April 2016 sets the context for the move towards long term planning of services.

7.2 General questions

- How is this area / policy affected by the new legislation?
- How will this decision / policy / proposal impact upon future generations? What is the long term impact?
- What evidence is provided to demonstrate WFGA has been / is being considered?
- Evidence from Community Profiles / other data?
- Evidence of links to Wellbeing Assessment / Objectives / Plan?

7.3 Wellbeing Goals

- How are the Wellbeing goals reflected in the policy / proposal / action?
 - *A prosperous Wales*
 - *A resilient Wales*
 - *A healthier Wales*
 - *A more equal Wales*
 - *A Wales of cohesive communities*

- *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language*
- *A globally responsible Wales*

7.4 Sustainable Development Principles

- Does the report / proposal demonstrate how as an authority we are working in accordance with the sustainable development principles from the act when planning services?
 - **Long Term**
The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs
 - **Prevention**
How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives
 - **Integration**
Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies
 - **Collaboration**
Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives
 - **Involvement**
The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

8 Background Papers

- [The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)
- [Corporate Plan 2017 - 2022](#)
- The Corporate Assessment and [follow up assessment](#).

Report Completed: 6 September 2021

Performance Scrutiny Committee – Place and Corporate - Monthly Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Monday, 1 November 2021 at 4pm		
Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
<p>21 - 22 Service Plan Mid-Year Review for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law and Regulation • People and Business Change 	<p>Performance Monitoring - holding the executive to account for the Council's performance, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of outcomes and actions within service plans; • Scrutinising progress in improvements to areas of poor performance; • Assessing the extent to which performance objectives are contributing to the overall objectives and priorities of the Council including an update upon Corporate Objectives, Actions and Performance Measures. 	<p>Head of Law and Regulation;</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation;</p> <p>Head of People and Business Change;</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Community and Resources.</p>

Monday, 15 November 2021 at 4pm		
Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
<p>21 - 22 Service Plan Mid-Year Review for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Services • Finance • Regeneration Investment and Housing 	<p>Performance Monitoring - holding the executive to account for the Council's performance, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of outcomes and actions within service plans; • Scrutinising progress in improvements to areas of poor performance; • Assessing the extent to which performance objectives are contributing to the overall objectives and priorities of the Council including an update upon Corporate Objectives, Actions and Performance Measures. 	<p>Leader of the Council</p> <p>Head of City Services;</p> <p>Cabinet Member for City Services;</p> <p>Head of Finance;</p> <p>Acting Head of Regeneration Investment and Housing.</p>

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn