

Minutes



Council

Date: 26 January 2021

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors J Cleverly, P Cockeram, D Davies, M Al-Nuaimi, C Evans, M Evans, C Ferris, D Fouweather, J Guy, D Harvey, I Hayat, Councillor R Jeavons, M Kellaway, M Linton, D Mayer, R Mogford, Councillor J Mudd, M Rahman, J Richards, M Spencer, T Suller, H Thomas, K Thomas, C Townsend, Councillor R Truman, T Watkins, M Whitcutt, R White, K Whitehead, D Wilcox, D Williams, J Clarke, V Dudley, Y Forsey, R Hayat, T Holyoake, P Hourahine, J Hughes, J Jordan, L Lacey, S Marshall, W Routley, H Townsend and J Watkins

Apologies: Councillors M Cornelious, K Critchley, G Giles and G Berry

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Councillor Dudley's attendance was corrected to show that she was present.

Item 12 Council Representation on the Board of Newport Transport

The following sentence was removed:

After lengthy discussion by all parties on the matter, Cllr Mayer moved a closure motion in accordance with Standing Order 6.12.

And replaced with:

There was a discussion on the matter and, in the course of the debate, Councillor Mayer moved a closure motion in accordance with Standing Order 6.12.

Resolved: That the Minutes of 24 November 2020 were agreed subject to the above.

2. Appointments

To consider the proposed appointments set out in the report

Councillor Harvey moved the appointments set out in the Report, as agreed by the Business managers,

Resolved: That the following appointments be agreed.

Governing Body Appointments

Organisation	Nominations Received	Number of Vacancies/Replacements
Llanwern High School	Appointment	Mandy Shide
Glan Usk Primary School	Appointment	Lisa Hodge
Caerleon Comprehensive School	Appointment	Caroline McLachlan

Newport High School	Appointment	Janet Cleverly Paul Cockeram
Lliswerry High School	Appointment	Gaynor Edwards
Maindee Primary School	Appointment	Maddy Cameron
Alway Primary School	Re-appointment	Deborah Harvey
Caerleon Lodge Hill Primary School	Re-appointment	Kailey Pritchard-Parton
Fairoak Nursery	Re-appointment Appointment	Carmel Townsend Emma Garland
Lliswerry Primary School	Re-appointment	Maggie Bain
Malpas Park Primary School	Re-appointment	James Clarke Hazel Allen
St Michael's RC Primary School	Re-appointment	Michael Allen
Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed	Re-appointment	Ibrahim Hayat
Malpas Church Primary School	Re-appointment	Iain Riley
High Cross Primary School	Appointment	Caitlin Woodland

In addition to the above appointments, Councillor Harvey informed Council of the need to agree dispensation for Councillor absence, due to ill-health in accordance with section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972:

Resolved:

To approve six month's absence for Councillor M Cornelious.

3. Police Issues (30 minutes)

Superintendent Mike Richards was unable to join the Council Live Event. The Chief Executive of Newport City Council had been contacted by the Superintendent to advise that they had been attempting to join the meeting but had failed. The Chief Executive advised the Mayor that she had also tried to contact the Chief Superintendent to arrange a meeting with him to ensure attendance by the Police at February Council as it was important that members had the opportunity to raise matters of concern with the Police.

Councillor Al-Nuami referred to a report published on Wales Online recently regarding the Stop and Search numbers in Newport, which were quite high, particularly in the Stow Hill Ward. As a ward member, this was of some concern and Councillor Al-Nuami requested that it be raised at next Council. Councillor Harvey suggested that Councillor Al-Nuami email the Superintendent who will contact the Councillor regarding this issue. Any other members that so wished to contact the Police were also advised to do the same.

4. Notice of Motion: Questions at Council to the Leader

The Council considered the following motion, for which the necessary notice had been given. The motion was moved by Councillor Routley and seconded by Councillor M Evans.

That this Council Resolves:

To amend Council Standing Order 4.2 (b) to change the time limit for Questions at Council to the Leader from 15 minutes to 30 minutes.

Speaking to present the motion, Councillor Routley highlighted that the extension from 15 to 30 minutes would afford a greater opportunity for opposition leaders and other members to ask questions of the Leader in Council as there was currently insufficient time for all questions to be heard. This was considered to be in the public interest and improve transparency and accountability.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Marshall and seconded by Councillor Hughes.

This Council Believes:

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 will effect the way that we as a council operate.

This council further believes:

- The council is committed to improving democracy and believes that any changes must be scrutinised within the terms of reference of the Democratic Services Committee.
- That this is the opportune time to review the proposed standing order 4.2(b) within the context of the introduction of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and existing procedures including the Newport City Council Remote Meeting Attendance protocol.

This council resolves that:

The Democratic Services Committee review both the impacts of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and any proposed changes to the standing orders together in line with the work plan of the said committee within their normal reporting to full council.

Comments on the amendment from Councillors:

Councillor C Evans supported the amendment, reminding Council that it was the Newport Independents that requested Leaders Questions at Council in 2017 He felt that opposition Leaders did have the time to question the Leader and considered however that the time ask questions was also at Scrutiny. This forum would be an ideal opportunity for councillors, within the remit of the relevant Scrutiny Committees to ask more in depth questions as well as hearing from members of the public. Councillor Whitehead considered that both points were valid. However, he agreed that the amendment would provide a better forum to hear the voice of others and the general public. Councillor Whitehead considered that there was an opportunity for further in depth consideration at Democratic Services Committee with, it was hoped, a satisfactory outcome and therefore he supported the amendment.

Councillor J Watkins referred to the original motion and supported extending the time slot allocated to a further 15 minutes and agreed with Councillor Whitehead's previous comments. Councillor J Watkins referred to her time in Portsmouth as a Councillor where other members had a 30 minute time slot to put questions to the Leader. Councillor J Watkins therefore supported the original motion put forward by Councillor Routley.

For clarity, the Chief Executive asked whether the debate was for the amendment to the motion, rather than the original motion. The Monitoring Officer advised that the debate was on the amendment and if the amendment failed there would be a further debate on the substantive motion. Again, for clarity the Monitoring Officer reiterated that the debate was on Councillor Marshall's amendment that the matter be referred back to the Democratic Services Committee.

Councillor Williams supported both the increase the Leader's Questions time to 30 minutes as well as referring the matter to the Democratic Services Committee.

Councillor Mogford considered that the process was long overdue whether it was dealt with through the Democratic Services Committee and applauded Councillor Routley for raising the issue to ensure it went forward and would get to a point where more questions could be put to the Leader at Council, which would help the running order of questions. Both issues were however well meaning

Councillor Wilcox thanked Councillor C Evans for reminding council of the request made in 2017 for Leader's Questions, which were at the time, the first Council in Wales to do this.

Councillor Wilcox spoke in support of the amendment to the motion and referred to the LG Bill and its major reform. The changes would see an increase in public participation and more consistent and coherent collaboration. The Bill would also see more accountability and performance to provide a more accessible high quality service to the public and move councils forward and improve transparency. It was felt that it would be right to wait for the full merit of the Bill in operation and then refer to the Democratic Services Committee. To conclude Councillor Wilcox advised that there were plenty of opportunities to raise questions and accountability within the existing Council's processes and that members take advantage of these processes.

Cllr Fouweather saw the merit of the amendment and agreed that change was coming our way and it would therefore be sensible to have a proper debate within the Democratic Services Committee to make an informed decision. It was felt however that in addition, it would be a gesture of good will if the time extension could be agreed immediately.

Councillor M Evans supported the additional 15 minutes to the Leader's Questions as well as the amendment and was disappointed that it could not be agreed because presently the leader's question time was just being used as an opportunity to raise issues of interest as well as any good news such as Heritage Lottery Funding for members of the public. It was therefore hoped that the extension would be accepted and that the council could move forward with the amendment.

Councillor Forsey considered that the 15 minutes allotted gave plenty of time for opposition Leaders and back benchers to ask questions and she had been successful in the past in putting questions to the Leader.

Councillor Hughes took the opportunity to remind members that a written response to questions put to the Leader was available if time had expired. A direct motion to council may not always afford the desired outcome. Previous improvements had been submitted in the form of fully researched and scrutinised reports from committees to members in full Council. The reason for this was to maximise the impact in order to fully understand the consequences of motions on the workings of the Council. Councillor Hughes therefore wished to support his colleague by seconding the amendment and refer the amendment through the appropriate committees; in this case, the Democratic Services Committees and report back to Council in due course.

Councillor Marshall proposed motion allowed amendment to be considered as part of a wider review of the wider impact and changes to the way that we operate as a council and agree that the proposal should be considered but also be reviewed as part of the wider review; the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. It was felt that by not going through the proper channels it would undermine democracy and therefore to move the amendment through Council was more effective.

Councillor Routley thanked the Mayor for his right to reply and agreed with many of those that had spoken of the need for the extra 15 minutes, which it was felt would not hamper the proposed amendment and would be the democratic thing to do. Councillor Routley referred to earlier comments made by Councillor Wilcox in relation to changes within the new Bill and the processes already in place for members to ask questions. In summing up, Councillor Routley requested that the 15 minutes be considered at council in addition to the amendment, in the spirit of democracy.

As a point of Clarity, Cllr Whitehead asked if an extension of 15 minutes be agreed with immediate effect and amendment could be referred to the Democratic Services Committee.

The Monitoring Officer advised the Mayor that there were two distinct motions and an amendment. Therefore, unless Councillors Marshall or Routley were prepared to amend either the motion or the amendment to include both of what Councillor Whitehead had

requested then, in effect, Councillor Whitehead is moving another amendment, which was a composite of the two. Councillor Routley agreed to the amalgamation of motion and amendment which would see the extension of 15 minutes to Leader's Questions and a referral to Democratic Services Committee for further debate. The Monitoring Officer reminded Councillor Routley that the discussion was regarding the amendment and it was therefore up to Councillor Marshall to agree the new proposal from Councillor Whitehead.

Councillor Marshall advised that he would not make any changes to his original amendment.

The Monitoring officer further clarified that what would be put to the vote was Councillor Marshall's amendment which was to refer the matter back to the Democratic Services Committee.

Councillor M Evans, advised that the conservative group would withdraw the original motion and support the amendment and suggested that his colleagues raise their concerns if they had any issues. With this in mind, the Monitoring Officer suggested that there was not a need for a roll call and that members could vote by exception.

Councillor Routley withdrew the motion and the amendment was put to the vote.

The Monitoring Officer asked for those wishing to, state their objections, therefore with no objections, council agreed Councillor Marshall's amendment, which was then passed as the substantive motion, following the withdrawal of Councillor Routley's written motion.

Resolved:

That Democratic Services Committee review both the impacts of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and any proposed changes to the standing orders together in line with the work plan of the said committee within their normal reporting to full council.

5. Report on Treasury Management for the Period 30 September 2020

The Leader presented the report, which was to inform Council of the Treasury Management activities for the first half of the year to 30 September 2020. It was a backwards looking report and confirmed that the Council continued to follow its strategy of maintaining investments to a minimum, rather than taking out new long-term borrowing.

The report showed in the first half of the year there was a reduction in net borrowing from the end of March from £153.8 million to £121.1 million. The main reason for this decrease was the reimbursement of the extra borrowing the Council undertook at the end of March to front fund the business grants at the start of the pandemic which was subsequently reimbursed.

Welsh Government also front-loaded the revenue support grant in the first half of the year, meaning there was a positive cash flow. As Newport City Council moved into the second half of the year, it was anticipated that the level of investments would fall to the minimum level, with a need to undertake more borrowing towards the end of the financial year.

The report went to Audit Committee for their noting and comments, and their comments were included within the report for noting and consideration.

Overall, the report confirmed that the limits and indicators were met in line with the approved strategies. Council were therefore recommended to approve the report.

Resolved:

That Council noted and approved that the report on treasury management activities for 2020/21 were in line with the agreed Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21. The Council also noted the comments from Audit Committee on the report.

6. Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Leader presented the report, which referred to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021/22. The updated scheme that was introduced on 1st April 2015. The Council was not required to consult on the proposals of the new scheme as the changes made were in consequence of amendments made to the Prescribed Requirements Regulations. The local discretions that were available to the Council would remain unchanged.

The proposal set before Council was to approve the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021/22 in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Schemes) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 ("the Prescribed Requirements Regulations") exercising its local discretions as indicated within the report.

Resolved:

That Council approved the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021/22 in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Schemes) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 ("the Prescribed Requirements Regulations") exercising its local discretions as indicated within the report.

7. Director of Social Services Annual Report

The Leader was pleased to present the report which was delayed due to Covid, and was therefore a look back over the period of 2019/20.

This report was out of timescale with the Cabinet timetabling functions in 2019/20 due to Covid-19 measures imposed in March 2020 when it was due to be presented to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

The Leader invited the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor Paul Cockeram who also seconded the report, to say a few words on behalf of the services. The Leader also thanked the Cabinet Member for all of his hard work and commitment to the services.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services took the opportunity to say that Newport City Council had two excellent Heads of Services in Sally-Ann Jenkins and Chris Humphrey and thanked Chris for taking the role of Interim Director for People during this period of time. Councillor Cockeram made a couple of pertinent points within the report:

- There was an increase of 4038 Adult Assessments by 22% from the previous year.
- There was an increase of 5944 Children Assessments by 15% from the previous year.
- There was an increase of 188 Adult Assessments by 71% from the previous year.
- There was an increase of 3,000 Housing Support Referrals by 10%

There was a positive impact on Hospital discharge reflecting a the combined effort of Home First, as well as Reablement, as well as First Contact, Community Connectors and Residential Placement, which would be explained in more detail as Councillor Cockeram invited the Interim Director of Social Services to say a few words on the report.

The Interim Director of Social Services again highlighted that the annual report was delayed due to the pandemic and that safeguarding progress within the Council continued through the 'lock down' period and work that was planned was completed. For example the safeguarding champions were now embedded across the Council and currently met virtually.

The Scrutiny Committee received the full Annual Report on Corporate Safeguarding on 30 October 2020, with the caveat that progress was made in the intervening months.

Further progress was highlighted:

In Reach & Home First was continuing to support the development of integrated working practices by improving patient flow within the hospital. Home First prevented unnecessary admission (1167 safe discharges out of 2714 referrals between April 2019 and Feb 2020) through the offer of Information and Advice (IAA) and In Reach ensured planning for discharge was commenced at the earliest point.

Reablement was offered to everyone whether they had a care and support plan or not. This was an intake model and offered support to all older persons upon discharge in order to improve and maintain independence.

Frailty Reablement Specialist Dementia Service which commenced in 2020 and was operational from September. Full reporting was available during 2021/22.

First Contact provided information and advice to 4,588 citizens in 2019/20 – plans to develop further in with the integration of Falls, Physiotherapy and Reablement to the multi disciplinary team to further strengthen the availability of good quality advice and support at the front door.

Community Connectors offered an IAA service to 2,007 citizens in 2019/20 through telephone advice and one to one support. The team maintained the Dewis database, published newsletters, attended community events and supported local groups.

Carers 188 carers assessments were undertaken in 2019/20, an increase of 117 from the previous year. The Carers Network had 510 members and represented the work that had been done to extend the reach of the service through improved methods of communication. The recording processes was improved. Community Connectors provided advice and assistance to 422 carers during the year 135 more than in the previous 12 month period.

Intermediate Care Fund

Step Down beds: Parklands Five new bed spaces were funded by the Intermediate Care Fund (ICF) in 2019/20.

Transitional Planning A specialist Occupational Therapist was funded from the ICF in 2019/20 to improve the planning associated with a move into adulthood and the support required to achieve independent living.

The Head of Children and Young Peoples Services was invited to say a few words in relation to her section of the annual report:

Directors Report Highlights - Children

Increasing Residential Placement Opportunities Rose Cottage opened in 2019/20 and offered 4 children previously placed in out of county settings the opportunity to return to Newport. Two more Newport properties received capital funds from the Intermediate Care Fund (Rosedale and Windmill Cottage) and would deliver a further 8 beds in 2020/21.

Foster Carers Payment rates were increased to improve recruitment and retention of carers and six new foster placements were approved in 2019/20. The Council currently had 248 approved foster placements.

MyST (My Support Team) would be implemented in 2020/21 that offered a multi agency therapeutic approach for children with complex needs. This provided better support for Foster Carers and prevent placement breakdown.

Family & Friends Team was established in 2019/20 utilising Intermediate Care Funding (ICF). This service enabled kinship foster carers to become special guardians and reduced the number of children on care orders.

Supporting families to stay together The number of children supported to remain with their family as at 31 March was 58%, which was 7% below target but a 1% improvement on 2018/19. Additional services implemented in partnership with Barnardo's during 2019/20 that support this outcome were Baby & Me and Family Group Conferencing. **Baby & Me** worked with pregnant women at risk of having their baby taken into care. An independent evaluation of the service was underway to demonstrate the impact of the service.

Family Group Conferencing (FGC) encouraged families to find their own solutions. There was a 22% reduction in Looked After Numbers following an FGC intervention. There were 52 FGC's during 2019/20.

Adoption 20 children secured permanent and stable futures in 2019/20.

Young Carers 299 young people were supported by Barnardos in 2019/20 with ongoing support and leisure activities.

Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements December 2019 Newport was the pilot city for the new inspection arrangements in Wales. The findings were positive and demonstrated positive and effective partnership working around abuse, neglect and child exploitation in Newport.

Councillor Fouweather could see the incredible amount of pressure that Social Services had been put under over the past year and commended the staff for managing those pressures. It was good that more people were willing to be foster parents. There was also concern that more pressure again around mental health would be increased and Councillor Fouweather asked if there was any measure put in place to address this in both Adult and Child Services.

Councillor M Evans and the conservative group welcomed the report and the honest appraisal during this difficult time and supported the report and recognised the stress that the services had been put under and thanked staff for their achievements during the time of national crisis. Welsh Government had recognised that performance indicators were not fit for purpose, as mentioned by the councillor last year. Councillor M Evans echoed Councillor Fouweather's concern regarding mental health as well as domestic abuse as a result of the Pandemic. There were some innovative projects taking place and it was hoped to see the development in the coming year.

Councillor Cockeram concluded by referring to the Youth Justice figures, where not one child had been put into custody, which was an important point.

Councillor Whitehead thanked Councillor Cockeram for his continued help in his role as Cabinet Member.

The Leader extended her thanks to both Heads of Service and the Cabinet Member and was very pleased with colleagues' responses.

Resolved:

That Council noted the Director of Social Services Annual Report for 2019/20.

8. Revised Statement of the Licensing Policy

The Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation, Councillor Truman introduced the report.

Under the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003 a local authority was required to publish its Licensing Act 2003 Policy every five years.

The revised policy before Council today went out to public consultation from 21 September to 30 October 2020, this included a consultation with all Responsible Authorities including Gwent Police.

The Policy was then presented to the Licensing Committee on 15 December 2020, where upon it was agreed by the committee to recommend that Full Council adopted the draft policy, but with some very minor amendments.

The minor amendments expanded on the importance for applicants to meet the public nuisance objectives; specifically regarding litter caused by Licenced Premises, and also to enhance engagement by applicants with local residents and communities when making an application.

The Licensing Committee considered the significant impact of Covid 19 on the licensed trade. The committee requested that the policy changes were monitored and that officers report to them after three to six months of the new policy being activated. This request was endorsed by the Cabinet Member.

In relation to the policy itself; it remained largely unchanged as served the council and the trade well over the years.

The main change however, was the removal of the Cumulative Impact Policy which affected Newport City Centre.

Previously, where a Licensing Authority implemented a Cumulative Impact Policy (CIP), there was a presumption that applications for new premises licences in that area would be refused.

The Policing and Crime Act 2018, then amended the Licensing Act, and changed the rules.

It stated that authorities should only have such restrictions following a Cumulative Impact Assessment. Currently, there was no evidence that the city centre had too many licensed premises and that such an assessment was required. Actually the reverse was true, and the council welcomed applications from responsible businesses. This would help the regeneration of the area and encourage a mix of visitors to the evening and night time economy and improve the variety of premises in the city.

The promotion and strict but sensible enforcement of the licensing objectives in Newport, and particularly the city centre, would seek to reduce disorder and nuisance. The city centre would be monitored closely as ever.

The Council's licensing authority were now seeking to adopt a special policy known as the 'City Centre Stress Area'. This allowed the authority to make decisions about appropriate opening hours and licensing conditions based on the local needs of the area.

This led the Council's licensing authority to propose a maximum "core hour policy" for the city centre, therefore, for new applications for pubs and bars, there would be a condition that all licensing activity must end no later than 2.30 am.

For new applications for nightclubs, there would be a condition that alcohol sales must end at 3.30 am and all licensed entertainment would end at 4.00 am. Further, patrons of the clubs would not be permitted entry or re-entry after 2.00 am.

It was felt that these changes would strike the right balance between;

- Encouraging businesses and improving the variety of the night-time offer; and
- The protection of customers and visitors and responsible management of premises.

Councillor Hughes seconded the report.

Comments from councillors:

Councillor Fouweather thanked the Cabinet Member for his presentation of a sensible report. Anything that helped bring back a vibrant night time economy was welcomed and there were also sensible proposals around closing time as well as sensible proposals for people re-entering premises after a certain time. This would hopefully reduce violence and crime within the city and resemble a thriving night time economy as it was in the 1980s when people had a good time and enjoyed themselves safely.

Councillor Al-Nuaimi welcomed the report on behalf of residents within the Stow Hill ward and it was hoped that a time when there was a vitality within Newport's night time economy, going forward and recovering from the pandemic. Councillor Al-Nuaimi considered that the proposed new times would have a positive impact on businesses and residents.

Councillor Routley also welcomed the sensible approach that was very well thought through rather than a knee jerk reaction, which would see a move to a more controlled night time economy. He echoed the previous councillors comments adding that it gave officers and applicants a clear understanding of the new licensing rules and therefore supported the very changes in legislation as set out in the report.

Councillor Forsey was pleased to note that some of the suggestions put forward by herself at the Licensing Committee review was incorporated within the report and the additional points referred to problems occurring on licensed premises such as litter and the impact on the community and measures would be taken to address this issue. Licensing was the responsibility of the local authority and therefore it was appropriate that different licensing times could be awarded, and not have to be the same across the UK.

Resolved:

That Council noted comments from Licensing Committee and approved the Revised Statement of Licensing Policy.

9. Council Schedule of Meetings 2021/22

The proposed schedule of meetings attempted to structure the diary with a series of meetings to facilitate the decision making process through the Council, Executive and Regulatory Committees. The schedule of meetings set a pattern of meetings for Scrutiny Committees and other bodies.

The diary did not include dates for meetings of individual Cabinet Members as Cabinet Members would take a view on when they needed to meet to make decisions, rather than be bound by a diary of meetings. This would of course, not affect members' opportunities for consultation on proposed decisions or to request to meet the Cabinet Member before decisions were taken.

It was suggested that the dates, times and locations of all meetings other than the Council meeting were to be left to each individual committee. It was suggested that the needs of Councillors who had work or other commitments at any time during the day were taken into account by the various committees and groups.

The schedule would remain a guide, was subject to change and amended to meet the needs of the work programmes of each committee or other group.

Resolved:

That Council adopted the schedule of meetings as the basis for arrangements for May 2021 to May 2021.

10. **Mayoral Nomination 2021/2022**

The Leader took great delight in moving the long serving dedicated ward member for Graig, Councillor David Williams should be Mayor of Newport during 2020/21.

This was seconded by Councillor M Evans.

Councillor D Williams was pleased to accept the nomination for this period and mentioned that he did not take up the post last year, and thanked Councillor Tom Suller for stepping in at the last minute and doing an outstanding job. Councillor Williams also thanked Councillor Cornelious who was not present, for initially inviting him to become a ward councillor for Craig.

Councillor D Williams declared a personal interest.

Resolved:

The Council unanimously resolved that Councillor D Williams be appointed to serve as the Mayor Newport for 2021/22.

11. **Questions to the Leader of the Council**

The Leader announced the following before proceeding with Questions.

- The Leader asked Council to take a moment to reflect on the lives lost and those fighting for their lives during Covid Pandemic. It was therefore important that we focus our minds on this serious issue and leave behind any unnecessary trivia.
- On this subject of this topic, the Leader was pleased to share with colleagues that Judith Paget, Chief Executive of Anuerin Bevan University Health Board, with herself, wrote to every household in Newport explaining the vaccination programme. This was repeated in all Councils across Wales, led by Public Health Wales and Health Boards.
- The Leader was also pleased to share with colleagues that the Lockdown was having the desired impact and there was a slow down in cases across the City, however it was important that residents continue to observe the lockdown restrictions.
- There were temporary testing facilities within Newport important that residents access these facilities, these were situated in Tredegar House Car Park, Rodney Parade, Pillgwenlly, Duffryn, Lliswerry and Rogerstone. The Leader stressed the importance of residents taking advantage of these facilities to get hold of the situation.
- The Leader was pleased to announce that the vaccines were well underway in Gwent with a central vaccine centre. Vaccinations were also going well in care homes as well as for front line staff.
- The Leader gave her personal thanks to Gwent Police and Chief Superintendent Harding and Superintendent Richards for their outstanding contribution in their support to Newport in support of enforcement and the regulations.
- Wednesday 27 January, would see the lighting the Civic Centre clock tower in purple to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day and “shine a light in the darkness”.

Colleagues we were not able to gather this year for the service at Newport Cathedral so this was our way of bearing witness to the many, many victims of genocide.

The Holocaust Memorial Trust was livestreaming a national service tomorrow evening and asking people to shine their own light in the darkness by putting a light in their windows at 8pm following the conclusion of the service.

The Leader hoped members and residents would participate in this because, as well as remembering those who lost their lives or had their lives changed forever in the past, the language of hate and intolerance that, sadly, persists today should be challenged.

- Comments and responses by colleagues on the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill Consultation had been submitted to Welsh Government. The Leader thanked colleagues for their contribution. The Leader also met earlier with the Minister for Local Government and went through the proposals and hopefully this was a step closer collaboratively in embedding this new legislation. On that note, the Leader reminded colleagues that there was no time limit on Scrutiny, there was a number of scrutiny committees in place where all members could challenge all aspects of the Council. There was also Questions at Any Time. The Leader also thanked the back benchers for putting their time and effort into the scrutiny committees, as well as Questions to the Leader.
- The Leader was delighted to announce that at the end of last week, the council successful secured £8.75 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to make our famous Newport Transporter Bridge into a major tourist attraction. This was the third biggest investment the NLHF has ever made in Wales and was a tribute to the hard work, determination and commitment of the council team behind the bid. The Leader thanked Councillor Harvey for all of her hard work and effort, including officers and Friends of Newport Transporter Bridge.

This would will allow us to repair and preserve this important landmark and open a new visitor centre, which would be linked to the bridge by a walkway. The centre would bring the history of the bridge to life by show casing the personal stories of those who designed, built and used the bridge.

There would also be more car parking spaces for visitors and an exciting activities programme including theatrical performances, art classes and mindfulness sessions.

The restoration of the bridge would include work on the gondola, which would see the reinstatement of a number of its architectural features, as well as improvements to the approach road on the eastern side of the bridge. Refurbishment would also be carried out on the main boom, and a number of cables replaced.

The development of a new visitor centre should create both job and volunteering opportunities and enhance the city's reputation as a visitor destination, both of which would bring wider economic benefits to Newport.

The Leader was sure this wonderful and exciting news was welcomed by members, officers and residents as well as the bridge's many admirers across the world.

- Finally, work was completed on a new active travel path in Coed Melyn Park. The council carried out improvements after listening to feedback from people who use it. This was already a well-used walking route, the path was also identified as a potential off road cycling route from Risca Road through the open space down to Western Avenue. Funding was secured from Welsh Government to implement enhancements to create an active travel route which resulted in a wider, smoother path surface that benefits users of all abilities. The construction of the new path surface also incorporated special measures to protect roots of nearby trees. The low level lighting installed on the path has been designed to minimise effects on wildlife and the environment.

Leader's Questions

- Councillor M Evans mentioned that transport emissions were considerably higher in Newport than Welsh average and a recently published draft strategy issued by Welsh Government had admirable aims and objectives. Safe, attractive, well managed infrastructure was a key priority for the Council and we supported these aims and welcomed more people walking, cycling to work and using public transport or working more from home. Councillor Evans felt that there were lots of sticks but few carrots. The introduction of congestion charges and other workplace charging initiatives would have a devastating impact on economy and drive businesses away from Newport, when economic growth must be a top priority. As a Council, we always supported an M4 Relief Road, therefore Councillor Evans asked the Leader did she still support an M4 relief road.

The Leader advised that in response to the draft strategy, Newport City Council developed a response and the Leader took the opportunity to thank Councillor Jeavons, Cabinet Member for City Services and Councillor Davies, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development for their continued contribution within their respective portfolios.

In response to the M4 relief road, the City Council had voted unanimously for this, however the decision was not supported by Welsh Government and a review was undertaken by the South East Wales Transport Commission. The Council therefore had a responsible approach to address the issues mentioned by Councillor Evans and move forward and take forward the review by the South East Wales Transport Commission. The Council had recently agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding with Welsh Government to work on these recommendations to ensure best possible outcomes for the citizens of Newport.

Supplementary Question:

Councillor M Evans asked how would we do this and whilst there were new projects such as the Ebbw Vale rail link, however the projects along the outskirts of Newport corridor such as the World Conference Centre, were designed with the M4 relief road in mind. Would Newport therefore be competing with other towns and cities within the UK for business as a result of this. How could we encourage economic development without an M4 relief road.

The Leader looked at this in the context of collaboration not competition. On the subject of collaboration the Leader met with other Leaders across the UK earlier at a discussion forum to talk about exactly that; how to support economic growth within Newport. This forum also included the deputy chair of Conservative political party who also recognised, along with other leaders, the importance that improved connectivity formed part of the investment within the region. Newport was one of the cities within the Western Gateway region and one the priorities was to improve connectivity within the region, as was the recommendations of the South East Wales Transport Commission report. We would all like to see improvement with connectivity and could achieve this at local level and national level and could achieve this by working in collaboration with Welsh Government. Finally on the matter of rail, it would be remiss of the Leader not to mention the lamentable level of investment in rail infrastructure in Wales by UK Government and therefore called on the Government to invest in rail and connectivity in Newport.

- Councillor Whitehead believed that as an Independent Group it was important to work together and find common ground, particularly in the current crisis. Would Council therefore join Councillor Whitehead in welcoming Uskmouth Rotary Club campaign, providing for laptops for children that needed them for home schooling. With that in mind, how many children within Newport did not have laptops or to access to remote learning and how was it being addressed.

The Leader had interviewed the young people working on the Rotary Club project. Overall, there was around 94% of pupils had access to connectivity with around 95% having access to devices for home learning. It was therefore important to focus our attending on the remaining of those pupils without access and there were measures in place to address this, such as schools loaning devices. A Myfi device provided by the Council gave 4G access to pupils to continue their home schooling. Some pupils who were vulnerable were invited into school to receive face to face learning. We also provided blended learning activities as well as making use of the Welsh Government's Ed Tech fund for over 3,000 devices and we received 400 and were expecting more in the near future as well as a further 1300 devices which were being rolled out to schools.

Supplementary Question:

Councillor Whitehead asked if the council could provide background for children using Teams, for those in particular who might be embarrassed about their home environment.

The Leader recognised this issued and advised that there was guidance on suitable backgrounds for children however the Leader would feedback to schools and would be happy to share images of Newport, should they wish to use them.

- Councillor C Townsend asked the Leader to provide an update on when the new Household Waste and Recycling Centre in Telford Street would open.

The Leader advised that she did not have that information to hand but would provide a written response.

Questions Ballot

- Councillor Lacey asked the Leader if she provide an update to members on the preparation of Brexit.

The Leader advised that there had been a constant changes with an agreement in place. As a city we had a long heritage of forging trade with the rest of the world and actually enabled people all over the world to work and live in our city. It was important to promote small business within Newport to thrive. There had been collaboration work with Welsh Government and partners on this particular issue with a thorough Risk Assessment. This work was also monitored through Gold Command, who regularly monitored the pandemic and Brexit, which was in the corporate risk register and monthly updates were provided to Cabinet. The Community Cohesion team worked very closely with food banks and the EUSS working group to support new citizens and asylum seekers and encourage EU settled status in Newport to live and work here. Working with Gwent Police and other multi agency groups to identify any issues of hate crime and discrimination.

12. Questions to the Cabinet Members

Councillor Ray Mogford put the following question to the Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member for City Services:

Could the Cabinet member give an update on the recent Flooding Emergency in Newport that took so many by surprise. In his overall response could the Cabinet member include a response to the specific questions below

- What lessons have been learnt?
- What actions are subsequently being taken to avoid repetition of such severe flooding
- What funding or reserves can NCC tap into to the improve the resilience to these types of emergencies going forward?

Response:

Like many other areas across Wales and the UK over the last few years, Newport did experience sudden and heavy rainfall and incidences of flooding at Christmas. Such major flooding events are subject to a section 19 investigation and those in relation to the recent incidences in Newport have commenced, and the findings will be made public in due course.

Whilst led by Newport City Council, these also involve all other relevant bodies, including NRW and Welsh Water. In terms of infrastructure, the Council's 5 year capital funding programme is set out in the Highway Asset Management Plan, on which Members were consulted, but the majority of large scale flood defence work is carried out by NRW. It is, however, important to be aware that there will always be a limit to the capacity of drainage systems across the country and in instances such as those recently experienced, which are unfortunately likely to become more common due to climate change, it is likely that the sheer volumes of water will be the key issue.

Supplementary:

Cllr Mogford, asked who was in charge of the emergency over that period, for Newport City Council's Gold Command and could the Cabinet Member pass on thanks to staff involved on behalf of the ward councillors of Langstone.

Councillor Jeavons did not have to hand which senior officer covered Gold Command during this period but would email Councillor Mogford once he was in receipt of this information. Councillor Jeavons would also pass on the thanks to the staff involved.

13. **Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 3 March 2021 at 5pm.