

Report



Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 14 January 2022

Subject Newport City Council Covid-19 Response and Recovery Update

Purpose To present to Cabinet an update on the Council's progress being made towards recovering services and supporting Newport's communities as part of its Strategic Recovery Aims.

Author Chief Executive
Head of People and Business Change

Ward All

Summary Since the last report in December, Wales is now seeing the community spread of the Omicron variant. In response, the Welsh Government has reintroduced restrictions to mitigate this spread over the festive period and into the new year. These restrictions include schools and office social distancing, entertainment and hospitality venues.

The Council's Gold team has been monitoring the situation and as necessary complied with the changes announced by the Welsh Government. Council staff have also volunteered to support the NHS in the delivery of its vaccination / Booster programme. There is also a risk to the delivery of Council services should it also experience increased number of cases of staff self-isolating.

The report also includes a summary of activity across Council services in December 2021.

Proposal To consider and note the contents of the report and for Cabinet / Cabinet Members to receive updates from officers as part of their portfolio.

Action by Corporate Management Team

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Gold Recovery Group
- Corporate Management Team

Signed

Background

Since the last Cabinet Report on [15th December](#), Newport Council and its partners have continued to monitor the Covid-19 cases in the city through its role at the multi-agency Gwent Incident Management Team the Council's Emergency Response and Recovery Group (Covid Gold) and liaison with Welsh Government (WG), Public Health Wales (PHW) and ABUHB partners.

Wales Covid-19 Update (December/January)

In December, the Welsh and UK Governments announced that the Omicron variant of Covid was being transmitted in the community and is more virulent than previous variants (alpha and delta). Since this announcement, the Omicron variant is now the main variant being transmitted in Wales and across the UK ([Public Health Wales Dashboard](#)). As scientists are learning about the symptoms and the impact that the new variant is having across the country, guidance is likely to change over the coming months.

The initial response in Wales saw the booster programme being given more resources to increase the number of people to receive three doses of the vaccine as well as continuing to encourage those that have not received the vaccine to take up this offer. Households have also been encouraged to take regular testing using Lateral Flow Tests before and after going to events and potential crowded places.

Since 26th December the Welsh Government took Wales into [Alert Level 2](#) and has reintroduced several restrictions returning to minimise the impact of community spread in Wales. The changes at the time of writing the report are:

- **Education** – Schools given two additional days to prepare. Secondary school pupils required to take more Covid tests and reintroduction of staggered start / end times.
- **Office spaces (including NCC)** – 2 metre rule on social distancing in offices
- **Entertainment / Hospitality** – from 26th December nightclubs in Wales closed and a maximum of six people can meet in public premises.
- **Sporting Events** – All sporting events held behind closed doors.
- **Indoor / Outdoor Events** – Up to 30 people can attend indoor events and 50 attending outdoor events.
- **Self-Isolation** – If you have tested positive for Covid-19, you can leave self-isolation after 7 full days instead of 10 days.

These restrictions are in addition to the existing restrictions that were already in place such Covid passes and wearing of face masks in indoor areas and transport. The situation across ABUHB remains at a critical position which continues to also have an impact on the Council's social services particularly in adult care.

The Council's message to households and businesses across Newport remains to get vaccinated, adhere to the WG restrictions and to self-isolate and test if you and/or a member of the household think or are infected.

Newport City Council Update

Newport Council's Gold team has remained in place and throughout the pandemic and was already in a position to respond and support the emerging changes. With the additional pressure on resources in the NHS, public sector bodies including Newport Council have been asked to provide any spare resource / volunteers to support the vaccination/booster programme. At the time of this report, Newport Council has provided staff to assist with this effort.

For the Council's front-line services eg. Social Services, waste collection schools and community services the Council has adapted services to meet the WG requirements but it is also likely that services will be disrupted over the coming months due to staff having to self-isolate and additional pressures on services.

For all other staff in Newport the message remains for staff (where they can) to work from home. With the emergence of the new variant communications have been issued to provide staff updates on the WG

restrictions. This message equally applied to Members and access to the Civic Centre and democratic functions will continue to be undertaken virtually.

Risk assessments are in place for all the work that we do, and these take into consideration work environment and task, health and safety legislation and current Government guidance. In this way we can ensure that staff can safely undertake their duties, protecting both themselves and people they are working with. For the 5,500 staff employed by Newport City Council (including schools) approximately 1,200 have been regularly working from locations other than their usual place of work (including home working). The remaining staff and the services that they deliver have continued in line with the risk assessments in place and Government guidance during the Pandemic.

Where appropriate we have enabled teams to resume activity previously being undertaken from home as and when required. This has been possible because of the work done with service areas, Health and Safety, staff and Trade Unions to put in place robust risk assessment arrangements. We will continue this process over the coming months, whilst monitoring and responding to changes in the infection rates within the population. Services such as libraries and face to face customer services are currently operational and are providing in-person activity.

NCC and Welsh Government Support

At this difficult point in time, Newport Council is aware that many households and businesses in Newport will be concerned about self-isolating, money worries and/or need support. The Welsh Government, Newport Council and the third sector offer a range of services to households and businesses. Many of the Council's services can be found on the Newport Council [website](#). Some of these services include:

- [Winter Fuel Support Scheme](#) - to support households with winter fuel bills and applications will be open until midnight on 18th February 2022.
- [Covid-19: Self-isolation support scheme](#) – supporting people on low income and cannot work from home who have to self-isolate.
- [Council Tax and Benefits](#) – The team is available to offer support to households and businesses struggling to pay their Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and also can assist in signposting to other organisations offering money / debt support
- Business Support – Welsh Government have announced a package of financial support for businesses and two of these schemes will be implemented by the Council's Business support and revenues teams. Final details of the schemes are yet to be finalised at time of writing but will open in mid-January with eligible businesses having to apply or register for support. Details will be posted on the Council's website as soon as final eligibility and application details are available

A summary of the Council's activity since the last Cabinet Report is outlined below with a full update provided in appendix 1.

Strategic Recovery Aim	Summary of Council's activities to 1st January 2022
Strategic Recovery Aim 1 – Supporting Education & Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools will be making preparations to meet the new guidelines and potential online learning in the New Year. • Ongoing work to improve availability of the internet across NCC and community sites.
Strategic Recovery Aim 2 – Supporting the Environment and the Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good progress is being made on key city centre developments opening in the New year. • New footbridge over Newport Railway station was installed on Christmas day.
Strategic Recovery Aim 3 – Supporting the Health & Wellbeing of Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory Services continuing to support businesses and enforcement action where there is non-compliance. • Guidance has been updated to align with the Welsh Government's rule changes.
Strategic Recovery Aim 4 – Supporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing collaboration with Registered Social Landlords with housing and homelessness support.

Strategic Recovery Aim	Summary of Council's activities to 1 st January 2022
Citizens post Covid-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Justice Service collaborating and support Gwent Police identified as at risk of drifting towards criminality within the city centre. • Officers recruit volunteers and support workers who will patrol Newport city centre to identify young people who may be at risk or active in ASB and engage with them, suggesting alternative activities and otherwise offering safeguarding support. • Participatory Budgeting collaboration with Health that will enable local organisations and community groups to access NCC and Health funding to deliver projects in their local areas.

Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)

The Council's financial (revenue and capital) update is reported separately as part of the Council's regular budget reports to Cabinet. The Covid-19 impact(s) are considered in the finance reports and are closely monitored as part of the Council's financial management processes.

Risks

Through the Council's Risk Management process, the Covid risk has been monitored every quarter to the Council's Cabinet and Audit and Governance Committee. Below is the latest update taken from Quarter 2 (July to September '21) 2021/22 risk report update. Quarter 2 update to be provided in December.

Risk Title / Description	Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (1-5)	Risk Probability of risk occurring (1-5)	Risk Mitigation Action(s) What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	Risk Owner Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk?
Covid 19 Pandemic Risk (Corporate Risk)	5	4	Mitigation actions outlined in the report and managed by the Council's Covid Gold Group.	Head of People & Business Change

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Corporate Plan 2017-22
Strategic Recovery Aims

Options Available and considered

1. To consider and note the contents of the report and for Cabinet / Cabinet Members to receive updates from officers as part of their portfolio.
2. To request further information or reject the contents of the report

Preferred Option and Why

1. To consider and note the contents of the report and for Cabinet / Cabinet Members to receive updates from officers as part of their portfolio briefings.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

Welsh Government have been supporting local authorities through the pandemic with a Hardship Fund intended to reimburse for all Covid related spend over and above existing budgets and within a set criteria. The fund also includes loss of income compensation; again, within a set criteria. The fund ran for the entire 20/21 financial year and will continue until the end of March 2022, albeit with a reduced scope for the second half of this financial year. In addition, where relevant, Welsh Government have provided specific grant funding to fund particular costs arising. This means that, overall, the financial impact of the pandemic upon the Council has been largely mitigated and this remains the case while restrictions are

being reintroduced, which in turn places further pressure on enforcement services, as a result of concerns over the spread of the Omicron variant.

Close monitoring of the financial issues arising, as a result of Covid, will continue throughout the year and will be reported as part of the regular monitoring process. All activities up to December detailed in this report have either been funded via core budgets, specific grants or the Hardship Fund. To date, and in a similar vein to 2020/21, an overall underspend against the revenue budget is being projected. However, the underlying reasons for the underspend are not solely due to the effects of the pandemic and are largely one-off in nature. Also, there are a number of service pressures contained within the position and, therefore, this means that the medium term outlook remains challenging. Because of this, it will be important to identify and quantify any lasting financial impact of the pandemic, particularly in light of the Hardship Fund ending in March 2022.

Consideration will need to be given as to whether any of the issues require funding as part of next year's budget and it will also be necessary to continue discussions with Welsh Government regarding the need for financial support for pressures specifically linked to the pandemic. The draft settlement for local authorities in Wales was released on 21st December, details of which are currently being reviewed to determine the impact on the Council moving forward.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the Report, which provides an update on the actions taken to deliver the Council's Covid-19 Response and Strategic Recovery Aims and progress since the previous report. Any legal issues will be picked up at the appropriate time as part of the operational delivery of the individual actions, within service areas. The concerns about transmission of the Omicron variant and the introduction of certain control measures as from 27th December has impacted on the work of Environmental Health and Trading Standards teams in managing clusters, containing transmission and enforcing compliance with the new Covid restrictions. Previously, the Covid response work had been scaling-down and regulatory staff had been able to resume other enforcement work, but that will have to be re-assessed in the light of recent developments. The TTP team have been required to increase backward tracing in relation to contact cases for the new variant and Environmental Health are supporting closed care settings and schools. Enforcement staff are re-engaged in Covid inspection work, and are preparing for programmed inspections after 27th December to check closure of night-clubs, spectator bans at sporting events and social distancing in shops and offices. They are also preparing for any further escalation of the restrictions in relation to other hospitality premises. The policy will be to provide advice and assistance to ensure compliance and enforcement action will only be taken in the event of flagrant or persistent breaches.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

The Council's existing Gold structure is closely monitoring and reporting on the impacts of the new variant and restrictions on Council services. The Council maintains a policy for staff where they can work from home and for front-line staff to take necessary measures to maintain social distancing. There is likely to be an impact on the delivery of services and may require resources to be diverted and support key front-line services.

The Council's Human Resource team will closely monitor and report on staffing levels to the Gold group that will assist in identifying risk areas in the Council.

Scrutiny Committees

Not Applicable

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

The areas covered in this report demonstrate the progress being made against the Strategic Recovery Aims which also support the Council's Corporate Plan 2017-22.

In consideration of the sustainable development principle, 5 ways of working:

Long Term – The progress reported against the Strategic Aims support the long term aims of the Council to improve people’s lives.

Preventative – The preventative work outlined in the report support the Council’s approach to minimising future Covid 19 outbreaks and as necessary provide targeted support to those that need it. Re-establishing services in line with necessary legislation and regulation enables the Council to operate in the new normal.

Integration – The Strategic Recovery Aims have been integrated with the Council’s Wellbeing Objectives set in the Corporate Plan as well as Service Plans. Recommendations from the Community Impact Assessment will also shape how the Council can improve the delivery of services across communities.

Involvement – Included in this report are actions to involve Newport’s communities to provide assurance and shape the way in which services are being delivered by the Council. Their feedback and involvement in the process will enable the Council to consider how services are delivered in the long term.

Collaboration - The actions in the report are being undertaken in collaboration with partners from the Council’s Public Services Board but also strategic partners within each service area. The collaborative work enables the Council to share resources and build expertise and knowledge.

Consultation

Not Applicable

Background Papers

Cabinet Report (Strategic Recovery Aims) – July 2020

Corporate Plan 2017-22

Strategic Recovery Aims

[Responding to the ‘New Normal’ Report to Overview and Management Scrutiny Committee](#)

Dated: 6th January 2022

Appendix 1 – Progress of Delivery against Strategic Recovery Aims (to 1st January 2022)

Strategic Recovery Aim 1 – Supporting Education & Employment.

Understand, and respond to, the additional challenges, which Covid19 has presented, including loss of employment, impact on business and on the progress, achievement and wellbeing of both mainstream and vulnerable learners.

Supports Wellbeing Objective 1 – To improve skills, education and employment opportunities.

Strategic Aim Step	January 2022 Update (By Exception)												
<p>Support schools and other educational establishments to safely reopen for staff and pupils.</p>	<p>In preparation of schools coming back in January, WG gave all schools an additional two days preparation and reintroduced measures to mitigate against Covid outbreaks including increased testing from secondary pupils, staggered start / end times, masks worn in communal areas. There may be additional measures added as we go through the next couple of months.</p> <p>As previously reported, the supermarket voucher scheme was used to support free school meal eligible families over the two-week Christmas holiday period, and will continue to support eligible pupils who are prevented from attending school after testing positive for Covid or due to self-isolation during the Spring term.</p> <p>Free Breakfast Clubs are now operational at 37 primary, special and nursery schools across Newport, in accordance with local risk assessments undertaken and monitored by Headteachers. One private provision is also operational.</p> <p>The Commissioning Team is continuing to work with Chartwells to monitor supply chains and staff availability in relation to the school meals contract, with local adjustments to provision being made where necessary. Christmas Dinner days were offered to all schools, albeit with slight adjustments to arrangements in place in previous years to ensure a Covid-safe approach.</p>												
<p>Work to prevent and reduce inequality of progress and outcomes in education for mainstream and vulnerable learners.</p>	<p>There remains high levels of pupil absence across school settings. Education Welfare Officers continue to work closely with schools to support improved individual learner level attendance.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="562 1078 1167 1425"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Average % of pupils who were in attendance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>01/11/2021 to 05/11/2021 (r)</td> <td>88.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>08/11/2021 to 12/11/2021 (p) (r)</td> <td>89.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>15/11/2021 to 19/11/2021 (p) (r)</td> <td>89.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>22/11/2021 to 26/11/2021 (p)</td> <td>87.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>29/11/2021 to 03/12/2021 (p)</td> <td>87.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>(r) Revised (p) Provisional</p>	Average % of pupils who were in attendance		01/11/2021 to 05/11/2021 (r)	88.8	08/11/2021 to 12/11/2021 (p) (r)	89.4	15/11/2021 to 19/11/2021 (p) (r)	89.4	22/11/2021 to 26/11/2021 (p)	87.8	29/11/2021 to 03/12/2021 (p)	87.1
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Strategic Recovery Aim 1 – Supporting Education & Employment.

Understand, and respond to, the additional challenges, which Covid19 has presented, including loss of employment, impact on business and on the progress, achievement and wellbeing of both mainstream and vulnerable learners.

Supports Wellbeing Objective 1 – To improve skills, education and employment opportunities.

Strategic Aim Step	January 2022 Update (By Exception)
	<p>In November 2021, Education Welfare Officers attended 75 school meetings and completed 189 home visits. Where Education Welfare Officers engaged with parents and pupils to discuss the reasons for non-attendance, the main reasons given for persistent absence were: Covid 19 positive cases; Covid 19 self-isolation; Covid 19 anxiety; other illnesses; mental health issues related to the child or their family; and family holidays taken during term time.</p>
<p>Support schools to enhance and develop digital skills; digital teaching and learning platforms; and enhanced support for digitally excluded learners.</p>	<p>Recent issues with broadband connectivity have posed significant ongoing concerns for many schools in Newport and across Wales. The Public Sector Broadband Aggregation (PSBA) is a Welsh Government owned contract delivered by BT which provides schools with a curriculum broadband and web filtering service called Websafe. A Websafe failure has resulted in connectivity issues ranging from a slow connection in some schools, to intermittent connectivity in others and, in some cases, complete outage. The Welsh Government PSBA team is working closely with local authorities across Wales to address these issues. They recognise the unsatisfactory level of connectivity that some schools are experiencing and the disruption this is having on teaching and learning. The PSBA team now believe they have identified the root cause of the issues and are working to resolve these. They have also asked the Centre for Digital Public Services for support in addressing and managing full service restoration. The Welsh Government has confirmed that a full review has been commissioned to ensure these circumstances do not occur again.</p> <p>The project to migrate school users of @newport.gov.uk emails to Hwb using the @newportschools.wales domain is ongoing. In addition, schools continue to receive deliveries of EdTech funded devices with charging trolleys and laptops being delivered at the end of the Autumn Term.</p>
<p>Support and enable people that are digitally excluded to access community IT programmes, Council services and other public services.</p>	<p>Requests for devices for younger children needing to access speech and language sessions are being met and there continues to be a need for digital equipment and resources for relevant groups to provide them with a choice of how to engage with us and partners.</p> <p>Bandwidth has been increased in several public wi-fi community building to facilitate livestreaming of public events such as the Older Peoples Commissioner event. Local Broadband Fund application has been submitted on the 9th December to increase the current Digital Infrastructure in Adult Residential homes to Dark Fibre to facilitate the use of Technology enabled Care. The “Get Connected” cohorts have been booked to start in January to be delivered in community settings to bridge the digital skills gap in the community. Community Development Officers will go through a train the trainer course to deliver Get Connected.</p>

Strategic Recovery Aim 1 – Supporting Education & Employment.

Understand, and respond to, the additional challenges, which Covid19 has presented, including loss of employment, impact on business and on the progress, achievement and wellbeing of both mainstream and vulnerable learners.

Supports Wellbeing Objective 1 – To improve skills, education and employment opportunities.

Strategic Aim Step	January 2022 Update (By Exception)
Support people who have been affected by unemployment to access new opportunities through training and re-employment required for post Covid 19 businesses.	Recruitment drive for the Mercure hotel has been postponed to mid January 2022. The Kickstart scheme has been extended to March 2022 which means placements will now end June 2022.
Ensure our diverse communities are appropriately supported through tailored interventions specific to their needs, including consideration of language, culture and points of access.	In quarter 3 a new law was introduced requiring improved labelling for food in relation to allergens. The Trading Standards Service circulated to all relevant food operators a multi-lingual video training tool to help businesses with the changes. There has been an increase of requests from Playgroup settings for digital devices for those with younger children. Families are requesting these in order to access the speech and language sessions being delivered. As a result, the settings have now been given their own allocation of devices to loan out to families so it speeds up the request process and gets the devices directly to the families who need them quickly.

Strategic Recovery Aim 2 – Supporting the Environment and the Economy

Understand and respond to the impact of Covid19 on the city's economic and environmental goals to enable Newport to thrive again.

Supports Wellbeing Objective 2 – To promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment.

Strategic Aim Step	January '22 Update (By Exception)
Maintain our focus on regenerating Newport to deliver existing and new investment projects.	Planning permission was granted for the new leisure and wellbeing project on 3rd November and represents a positive step in the delivery of the Newport Knowledge Quarter. The Chartist Tower hotel development is on track to open in February 2022 and work on the Indoor Market and Market Arcade are due for completion in January 2022.
Enable and support the construction industry to re-establish the supply of new and affordable housing.	Welsh Government have announced a £45m package to train staff and help Welsh SMEs grow and meet current supply chain pressures and issues. Planning permission granted for Newport City Homes development at Old Town Dock.
Enable and support businesses to re-establish normal operations whilst maintaining	Officers continue to carry out interventions to assess compliance with risk assessment requirements related to Level Zero controls. Officers are now integrating these compliance checks into general working. Each regulatory intervention will now have at least two purposes; the COVID check and the "business as usual" check.

Strategic Recovery Aim 2 – Supporting the Environment and the Economy

Understand and respond to the impact of Covid19 on the city's economic and environmental goals to enable Newport to thrive again.

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Strategic Aim Step	January '22 Update (By Exception)
the health and safety of their workers and customers.	<p>Licensing Officers have carried out a 'test purchase operation' in the city's nightclubs. Two officers not known to the licensed trade attempted to enter the venue without a relevant COVID Pass (both officers were fully vaccinated). On each occasion the request to enter was refused. This is encouraging.</p> <p>Officers continue to carry out business enforcement work; issues under scrutiny; licensed premises adherence to conditions; taxis illegally plying for hire; rogue traders active at people's homes; and age restricted products to children and others. Routine food standards work continues; the emerging threat is a high proportion of businesses failing to deploy an adequate allergens protection system. Results have also been received relating to a food fraud sampling project. 6 out of 6 food premises sold food with misleading descriptions.</p> <p>A major day of action was undertaken whereby huge amounts of illegal tobacco were seized. Multi-agency operations have taken place focussed on scrap metal dealers. Officers attended the first session in many months of the city centre Pub Watch. Significant support was provided relating to compliance in general. The UK has seen an increase in illegal Disposable Vape Products; officers have carried out compliance checks at retailers and significant numbers of illegal product have been removed from the marketplace. Newport businesses have also been contacted and advised in relation to Avian Influenza.</p>
Enable and support businesses to prepare for future trade arrangements resulting from Brexit negotiations.	<p>See EU transition Cabinet Report. In Quarter 3 we received notification of the UK CRF funding which Newport received £2.8m. This funding will be given to the successful organisations that will deliver various projects to improve employment opportunities, re-skilling and training, improvements to local areas and research and development.</p>
Protect and improve the environment, including air quality and decarbonisation of the city for its residents, businesses and visitors.	<p>Trading Standards continue their work on the Operation Emerald project. An attempt to improve the energy efficiency of housing with poor and unlawful energy performance. Advice and warnings have been issued to 300 plus landlords and advice has been provided to 40 plus letting agents (in their gatekeeper role).</p> <p>Planning permission was granted for a 2.4MW solar farm on council land at December Planning Committee. Development of multiphase low carbon retrofit programme underway. Further funding being sought for low carbon heat installations.</p> <p>Council declared an ecological and climate emergency in November and the organisations Climate Change Plan is out for public consultation until 31st December, ahead of report to Cabinet on the final draft.</p>

Strategic Recovery Aim 2 – Supporting the Environment and the Economy

Understand and respond to the impact of Covid19 on the city's economic and environmental goals to enable Newport to thrive again.

Supports Wellbeing Objective 2 – To promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment.

Strategic Aim Step	January '22 Update (By Exception)
Continuing support and safe delivery of the Council's City services including waste, cleansing and highways.	The Council's City Services are continue to operate normally unless over the Christmas period they encounter pressures on staffing levels. Contingency measures are in place to manage this area.

Strategic Recovery Aim 3 – Supporting the Health & Wellbeing of Citizens

Promote and protect the health and wellbeing of people, safeguarding the most vulnerable, and building strong, resilient communities

Supports Wellbeing Objective 3 – To enable people to be healthy, independent and resilient

Strategic Aim Step	January '22 Update (By Exception)
Support people to remain living independently in their homes and communities.	<p>The continuing pressure within our provider services to continue to support citizens in their own homes is under significant pressure.</p> <p>Adult services are reviewing all package of care each week to ensure the most vulnerable are provided with services. Commission and brokerage continue to work in partnership with our providers to support them and ensure clear communication is in place. We have utilised covid recovery funds from Welsh Government to directly support providers of Domiciliary care and residential homes. We have a number of block placements with providers to ensure provision. Since the beginning of November, the number of outstanding Packages of care is 43 (3/01/2022) and there continues to be stringent monitoring continues to support the process within adult services each week.</p> <p>The pressure within the workforce and the inability to recruit continues, this is because of the hospitality and retail services offering enhanced packages of employment.</p>
Fully restore Children and Adult Services, supporting partners that have been impacted by Covid 19 and ensuring service users and staff are supported and protected.	<p>The workforce pressures across all of social care continue to present significant challenges in safely delivering services. The past twenty months has led to the workforce consistently working with higher levels of referrals while managing workloads against a backdrop of the restrictions and changing environment. The workforce was stretched going into the winter and the combination of the impact of the pandemic, the usual winter pressures and a return over the past month of heightened concerns because of Omicron are having a debilitating impact across the whole staff group.</p> <p>The additional funding to aid Covid recovery has been utilised to try to build in additional support for children, young people, families and vulnerable adults. However, the staffing challenges are making it increasing difficult to offer expansive services and are drawing service provision ever further away from preventative services.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention are a National issue and while we continue to explore a wide range of options to attempt to recruit and retain staff it is going to continue to be a challenging arena for many months to come.</p>

Strategic Recovery Aim 3 – Supporting the Health & Wellbeing of Citizens

Promote and protect the health and wellbeing of people, safeguarding the most vulnerable, and building strong, resilient communities

Supports Wellbeing Objective 3 – To enable people to be healthy, independent and resilient

Strategic Aim Step	January '22 Update (By Exception)
<p>Assess the impact and the long-term sustainability of the social care sector in Newport informing future service requirements.</p>	<p>Assessing individual need and prioritising care continues to drive Adult Services. The issues in accessing packages of care and the pressures of staffing have led to a greater emphasis on the prioritisation of work in order to meet the needs of the most vulnerable quickly.</p> <p>Across the region the LAs and the Health Board are working to manage the sustainability of the social care sector. The commissioning team are working flat out to negotiate resilient and safe packages of care. The use of additional grant monies and the winter pressures funding will contribute to being able to sustain care while negotiating contracts post the financial settlement and the introduction of the real living wage.</p>
<p>Safeguard and support children and young people to remain safely with their families.</p>	<p>Referrals in Children's Services are higher than they have ever been. In addition the complexity of cases means they require greater depth and longer term involvement and work.</p> <p>Assessments continue to be overseen by managers and as with adults staff are working to prioritise the most high risk referrals.</p> <p>Family Support services are continuing to operate and as we see change because of other agencies moving staff to other areas for example health visitors moving to the vaccination programme we will continue to work with partners to ensure wherever possible we are still seeing children regularly.</p>
<p>Improve opportunities for Active Travel and work towards improved air quality.</p>	<p>Following public consultation our Active travel network map review has been completed and our updated map of active travel routes (both existing and proposed routes) has been submitted to Welsh Government for approval. The map and routes within it will be used to plan future active travel developments over the next 5 years.</p> <p>Lighting on the new shared use routes through Tredegar Park and the Old Tredegar park golf course have been installed and switched on. As in the last update plans are in place to install the main sections of the shared use bridge over the railway over the Christmas period.</p> <p>Bridge segments have been delivered and lifting crane is being assembled. Main installation will commence on Christmas Eve and continue through the 72 hour railway closure until the Christmas bank holiday. The bridge will be lifted in five main pieces. Once in place works will commence on the connecting ramps and routes into 2022.</p> <p>Works to improve an Active travel link between the school drop off area in the Tredegar Park car park and St David's Primary School will commence in early January.</p>
<p>Regulate businesses and support consumers / residents</p>	<p>Officers continue to carry out interventions to assess compliance with risk assessment requirements related to Level Zero controls. Officers are now integrating these compliance checks into general working. Each regulatory intervention will now have at least two purposes; the COVID check and the "business as usual" check.</p>

Strategic Recovery Aim 3 – Supporting the Health & Wellbeing of Citizens

Promote and protect the health and wellbeing of people, safeguarding the most vulnerable, and building strong, resilient communities

Supports Wellbeing Objective 3 – To enable people to be healthy, independent and resilient

Strategic Aim Step	January '22 Update (By Exception)
to protect and improve their health.	<p>Licensing Officers have carried out a 'test purchase operation' in the city's nightclubs. Two officers not known to the licensed trade attempted to enter the venue without a relevant COVID Pass. (Both officers were fully vaccinated). On each occasion the request to enter was refused. This is encouraging.</p> <p>Officers continue to carry out business enforcement work; issues under scrutiny; licensed premises adherence to conditions; rogue traders active at people's homes; and age restricted products to children and others. Routine food standards work continues; the emerging threat is a high proportion of businesses failing to deploy an adequate allergens protection system. A major day of action was undertaken whereby huge amounts of illegal tobacco were seized. Multi-agency operations have taken place focussed on scrap metal dealers. Officers attended the first session in many months of the city centre Pub Watch. Significant support was provided relating to compliance in general and specifically on the issue of drinks-spiking prevention. The UK has seen an increase in illegal Disposable Vape Products; officers have carried out compliance checks at retailers and significant numbers of illegal product have been removed from the marketplace.</p>
Work with key partners to safely re-open cultural and leisure facilities including the promotion of the city's parks, open spaces and coastal paths.	Libraries, Museum and Art Gallery remain open within current guidelines.
Sustain a safe, healthy and productive workforce.	<p>The Council's message remains for Council staff to work from home (where they can). The Council has also updated its guidance for staff working in the office to meet the Welsh Government's rules. Ongoing communications are in place to remind staff about self isolation, social distancing and undertaking risk assessments.</p> <p>Staff absence levels are being monitored.</p>

Strategic Recovery Aim 4 – Supporting Citizens post Covid-19

Provide people with the resources and support that they need to move out of the crisis, considering in particular the impact that Covid 19 has had on our minority and marginalised communities.

Supports Wellbeing Objective 4 – To build cohesive and sustainable communities

Strategic Aim Step	January '22 Update (By Exception)
<p>Work together with our partners to reduce poverty, address homelessness and support our most vulnerable people as a priority.</p>	<p>WG hardship funding continues to be used to support the additional pressures on temporary accommodation due to the extended duty to accommodate anyone presenting as homeless. We continue to work in partnership with Registered Social Landlords to provide suitable, affordable move on accommodation, but supply remains a challenge. Additional funding has been provided by WG to prevent homelessness for those living in the private rented sector who have rent arrears because of the pandemic.</p> <p>The Housing and Homelessness teams are facing challenges with recruitment. This is a sector-wide issue.</p> <p>Material cost increases have resulted in average Disabled Facility Grant grant costs increasing significantly with longer contractor/material lead times. This has been evident since Covid-19 and Brexit.</p>
<p>Assess and address the inequalities that Covid 19 has highlighted or contributed to within our communities.</p>	<p>Inequalities highlighted by COVID-19 are included in the focus of work ongoing to embed the Socio-economic Duty in council decision-making processes. This will ensure longer term planning and policy aims to reduce inequalities that have arisen as a result of both socio-economic disadvantage and for minority/marginalised communities and encourage more effective engagement with those groups who are affected by council decisions. The council is currently refreshing its Covid-19 Community Impact Assessment to better understand enduring or emerging inequalities since its development. This will inform the allocation of funding made available in our second Participatory Budgeting programme (below).</p>
<p>Identify, develop and seek to sustain any positive developments emerging during the crisis.</p>	<p>More than ever, it has been important for us to develop engaging communications content that would improve our reach on such platforms in what was a particularly saturated environment.</p> <p>Our move towards using more graphical representations, animations and video content has been supported with additional training and upskilling of the team. In addition, we have just appointed an additional resource within the communication team with a specific focus on creating digital content. This will allow us to produce more content in-house and further develop our communication offering.</p> <p>The NCC and One Newport annual reports are now published highlighting a range of positive work in the last year.</p>
<p>Developing opportunities for people to access suitable and affordable housing.</p>	<p>The Social Housing Grant programme is funding the development of over 500 new affordable housing units with several schemes due to complete within the current financial year. Delivery schedules are impacted by the sector wide issues with materials and labour supply, along with associated increased costs.</p>

Strategic Recovery Aim 4 – Supporting Citizens post Covid-19

Provide people with the resources and support that they need to move out of the crisis, considering in particular the impact that Covid 19 has had on our minority and marginalised communities.

Supports Wellbeing Objective 4 – To build cohesive and sustainable communities

Strategic Aim Step

January '22 Update (By Exception)

Deliver a community cohesion programme that effectively responds to community tensions and creates a shared sense of identity across the city.

The council's Connected Communities Team continues to meet regularly with policing and other partner colleagues to monitor and respond to emerging community tensions. Funding from the community cohesion work programme has been utilised to support the second round of Participatory Budgeting and the team are engaging minority and marginalised communities across the city to ensure they are able to access and engage with the programme and its funding opportunities.

EU and Welsh Language community grant schemes have recently been launched to support grassroots groups to build resilience, cultural awareness and promote positive community relations across the city. Welsh language grants have been assessed with awards being made to 13 applications for a variety of activities and groups promoting the Welsh language in Newport.

Prevent and address instances of antisocial behaviour (ASB) impacting upon the residents and the business community of Newport.

Youth Justice Service - As identified in the Safer City Centre Group Action Plan

Young people and children participate in nuisance activity and ASB in the city centre and drift towards criminality Operation Ashton: Officers consider young people who have been identified as at risk of drifting towards criminality within the city centre to attend a Panel. The purpose of the panel is to identify diversion activities in the form of a plan consented to by the child and parent who both attend the panel. Business partners will be involved.

Young people and children are present in the city centre and are at risk themselves or pose a risk to nuisance and criminality and perceptions of safety; and lack support or guidance.

Positive Patrols: Officers recruit volunteers and support workers who will patrol Newport city centre to identify young people who may be at risk or active in ASB and engage with them, suggesting alternative activities and otherwise offering safeguarding support. This activity has similarities with Safer Streets plans for ambassadors and for the historical work of the Street Pastors.

Young people in the city centre have poor options for recreation so turn to nuisance, criminality or ASB

Young People Positive Activities and Experiences: To identify activities that ensure the city centre offers young people valuable and positive experiences and refer them to the Youth Justice Service. Various activities being considered, a meeting took place to consider a diversion multi-sport service with the city centre, will keep group updated.

YJS has identified a Community Project Officer to take the lead on this area of work. We are hoping to identify a pop-up shop via the local business community to provide a safe place for children to go for information, advice and support which is intended to allow all agencies to work together and provide a visual support to children in the city centre.

Strategic Recovery Aim 4 – Supporting Citizens post Covid-19

Provide people with the resources and support that they need to move out of the crisis, considering in particular the impact that Covid 19 has had on our minority and marginalised communities.

Supports Wellbeing Objective 4 – To build cohesive and sustainable communities

Strategic Aim Step	January '22 Update (By Exception)
	<p>The Youth Justice Service have now made links with Dan Smith from the M4 Property Consultants who has indicated he would be interested in working with the Youth Justice Service in a restorative way and may be able to identify a pop up shop for us to use for children to drop in to and allow us the opportunity of diverting them away from criminal behaviour in line with the Youth Justice Blueprint.</p> <p>Licensing and Trading Standards are working to reduce alcohol related ASB. Licensing Officers are active in improving the practices of businesses that facilitate drunken misbehaviour in communities and the city centre. The latest under-age-sales test purchasing operation took place on 28 October with Gwent Police. 14 premises were tested; 5 for knives, 2 for vape products, 1 for nitrous oxide and 6 for fireworks. There was one illegal sale. A shop in the Pillgwenlly ward sold a knife to the volunteer. Advice and follow up work will be carried out. Officers also participated in Operation Bang and investigated allegations of illegal fireworks sales.</p> <p>The response to addressing ASB is continuing to work dynamically, utilising a strong partnership approach through the twice monthly Problem Solving Group and information sharing meetings. These are led, chaired and facilitated by the ASB Liaison Officers in Law & Regulation.</p> <p>The Community Safety Warden Service will continue to respond to incidents of ASB as it has throughout the pandemic.</p>
<p>Re-establish Community Regeneration facilities and services where it is safe to do so for staff and its service users.</p>	<p>All hubs open and operating in accordance with risk assessments. Additional Covid support funding granted for Ringland Hub.</p>
<p>Develop opportunities for community involvement participation and engagement.</p>	<p>The Covid Recovery Fund to support grass roots groups and projects has been launched. The participatory budgeting approach will be adopted to help build social capital, deliver social value and bottom-up recovery. An updated Community Impact Assessment will inform the programme and a high degree of community involvement in planning and delivery will be a key feature.</p> <p>Applications are now open with a steering group established for voting events in January and closing date extended to 15th January. NCC webpage for further information: https://bit.ly/3ru3L53</p> <p>We are currently running a Perception of Newport Survey through Bus Wi-Fi and including questions showing 6 Council Services and asking users to choose their Priorities for the Council over the next 5 years.</p>