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## CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

**Committee** COVID-19 SCRUTINY PANEL

**Date and Time of Meeting** TUESDAY, 9 JUNE 2020, 2.00 PM

Please find below correspondence sent by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact [scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk)

6 **Correspondence Following Committee Meeting** (Pages 3 - 26)

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My Ref: T: Scrutiny/Committees/Covid-19 Panel/20-06-09

Date: 10 June 2020



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Councillor Huw Thomas,  
Leader,  
Cardiff Council,  
County Hall,  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Dear Huw,

### **Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel: 9 June 2020**

On behalf of the Council's Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel, representing Cardiff's five scrutiny committees, a sincere thank you for your commitment to ensuring measured and proportionate scrutiny of the business critical decisions to be made by the Cabinet on 11 June 2020. Please also pass on our sincere thanks to your Cabinet colleagues and all senior managers that joined the meeting in support of the four reports considered.

Our terms of reference agreed by Council require that we consider all Cabinet reports and therefore our comments, concerns and observations are constrained by the remote operation and limited time available for scrutiny. However the Panel considers the scrutiny was effective in the circumstances and provides a level of assurance that scrutiny can examine Cabinet decisions in a time of crisis. This letter sets out our comments for each item and recommendations where appropriate, in the order they were taken at the meeting.

### **Restart, Recover, Renew: Next steps for Cardiff during the Covid-19 crisis**

Thank you for explaining the principles and planning assumptions against which the Council's strategic approach to delivering a 'new normal' in service delivery has been developed. We note the next phase of the crisis presents a significant challenge for the Council in adhering to national guidance, ensuring mandatory social distancing

for services in the drive to bring down infection rates. We have some concerns, recommendations and observations to pass on for the Cabinet's consideration as follows:

### **Covid -19 and BAME communities**

The Panel is concerned about the spread of Covid-19 within deprived communities and those with high numbers of BAME residents as evidence suggests they face a higher risk of death from Covid-19. We are seeking reassurance that the Council has in place sufficient arrangements to protect these communities and also to protect its own BAME staff. We were surprised to hear that at present officers consider there is no clear correlation between rates of infection/deaths and levels of BAME in Cardiff communities, particularly as that has been identified to be the case on an all Wales level. We would therefore request that you research this matter further. We are aware of a letter from Professor Keshav Singhal to the Chief Executives of all Health Boards in Wales on 24/4/20 that references this correlation. We suggest that you make contact with Professor Singhal and request more specific Cardiff data. **As a Panel, we recommend that you produce a comprehensive evidence based report of the impact of Covid-19 on deprived and BAME communities taking note of Professor Singhal's input.**

We heard of your commitment to ensure the safety of BAME Colleagues via the workforce assessment of vulnerability of services and staff.

### **Education – Health & Safety**

The Panel welcomes measures to prioritise health and safety when pupils return to school, but we consider it important that priority in testing for Covid-19 symptoms, in antibody testing and in tracing contacts, is given to teaching and support staff. We are reassured that the Council has a positive experience in respect of testing and is at the heart of the Track Trace Protect (TTP) effort in Cardiff as a result of its positive working relationship with the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. We note that TTP is already in place and a significant amount of work has been undertaken over the last 3 weeks leading to the opening of the service. We note also that 150 Council staff have already been redeployed to the service and 300 staff in total will be deployed to support this service over a 12 month period. This gives us reassurance that the Council will be prepared by the time schools re-open.

**Additionally the Panel urges the Cabinet in consultation with the regulators to re-instate the Council's statutory children's care duties that have temporarily been relaxed during the crisis.**

## **NEETS**

The Panel highlighted that the Restart, Recover, Renew strategy anticipates a high risk of an increase in the number of young people not in education, employment or training going forward and sought reassurance of plans to mitigate against this risk. We note that two special needs hubs have now opened to support vulnerable pupils with the transition into work. We also note that the Cardiff Commitment into work service has significant capability and a focus on school leavers. We are therefore reassured that the Council recognises the need to support and engage with those school leavers whose final careers of choice have been impacted by the pandemic.

**We recommend that a NEET action plan, related to the crisis, be developed and circulated to reassure schools, parents, pupils, communities and their representatives.**

## **Test, Trace, Protect (TTP)**

Members are aware that the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) is managing the TTP service, and are concerned as to whether there are enough Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) available to do this, given that the service has been under-resourced in the past. We note that work is underway to bring students and other professions on board to assist SRS in delivering the four strands of regulatory activity, the TTP service, Environmental Health hubs that will provide advice on settings, testing, and data collection to provide national surveillance data.

**This, again, is a project that needs to be highlighted and communicated due to its importance, to provide assurance.**

## **Care home fatalities**

The Panel is seeking further evidence as to the disparity between fatalities in care homes and hospitals, noting that fatalities in Cardiff care homes stand at 35% compared with a national Welsh average of 28%. Our concern is whether the Council is aware of patients having been transferred from hospital into a care home and later died testing positive for Covid-19. We note officers are unaware of any such cases and in fact have commissioned specific care home beds to comply with the strict

guidance to ensure a 14 day isolation period is possible when care home residents are discharged from hospital. We also note management confidence in the effective multiagency work in this area.

**We would however like to clarify that these patients were tested both on leaving hospital and on leaving their isolation beds. We request that evidence is provided regarding our concerns on this matter.**

### **Homelessness**

All Members agree that one positive outcome of the pandemic has been the provision of accommodation for 140 homeless people. Members note the rapid decrease in numbers of rough sleepers, and are keen that the Council builds on this success and continues to see an increase in the numbers of rough sleepers seeking support for drug addiction. We heard that you are in discussion with Welsh Government to secure continuing funding for homelessness pressures. You also indicated that the Council is launching a public campaign to discourage giving money in response to begging but to ask people to contribute differently to the welfare of those affected, explaining that begging is often used to buy drugs and support continuing addiction.

**The Panel requests that this project and its outcomes become publically prominent and receives publicity and promotion. We will welcome future reports to scrutiny on outcomes recognising that this could become a significant initiative in the fight against homelessness and drug dependency.**

### **Flexibility of the strategy**

The Panel recognises that the Restart, Recover, Renew strategy is a citywide approach with caution at its heart. We note that it is a living document with tightly defined phases designed to give confidence that businesses can restart safely, and as such you have engaged with over 7,000 businesses in the last 3 months. However we urge it is important that this strategy retains flexibility should the recovery phase move faster than you anticipate.

### **Advice to small business**

Members heard that straightforward mechanisms are in place for grant applications from small companies and that these are subject to a rapid turnaround. However we consider that the strategy is light on evidence of measures in place to consult small

independent businesses on the level of support they need to recover. We note there is considerable work underway around road space interventions, particularly consulting with city centre premises and in relation to local district centres.

**At the meeting you suggested this would be the case across the City and we urge that you include small independent businesses in your ongoing conversations.**

### **Capturing the transformation**

The Panel recognises the speed with which the Council has had to become agile in its delivery of services in the current crisis. We commend the supportive approach taken by the trade unions and how that support has enhanced the agility of the organisation. We encourage you to consolidate this transformation to a new normal through home working and digitalisation. There are also aspects of the crisis which have impacted on culture. Those which are positive should be captured and consolidated as things could easily return to the pre-crisis status quo.

**We would like to hear at scrutiny in the future how these benefits including flexibility, speed of response, new working practices and leadership approaches can become the new cultural norms.**

### **Cardiff Council's Response to the Covid-19 Crisis from a Financial Management Perspective.**

The Panel's overarching view following its scrutiny of the Council's financial perspective on the crisis was that the position feels uncertain and unclear at present. We heard that a great deal of modelling and important projections are underway, however in respect of the impact of the crisis on the Council budgets going forward, at this point we would have expected a clearer picture of the financial challenge ahead. The reasons we have arrived at this conclusion are set out below.

### **Impact of the crisis on future budget strategies**

The Panel recognises that the Council is at an early stage of managing the 2020/21 budget, but we are seeking reassurance that you have a handle on the additional costs we are having to meet now that will need to be factored in to future budget strategies. We note that homelessness provision, food deliveries, PPE purchase and

social distancing measures are likely to factor into work currently underway to assess additional costs to the end of quarter 2 of the 2020/21 budget year.

### **Loss of income**

What is clear, despite it being early in the 2020/21 budget year, is the loss of income to the Council and the likelihood of falling council tax collection rates. We understand that financial projections are only available for quarter 1 of the 2020/21 budget year at this stage. There is uncertainty as to how and whether services will bounce back, many dependent on Welsh Government announcements as to when they can restart. Therefore we look forward to you providing us with an in-depth insight when you report in July 2020.

The Welsh Government has announced a £78m fund earmarked to support Local Authorities' potential loss of income up to the end of June 2020. That figure appears low to the Panel. We are therefore pleased to hear that, through the WLGA finance leads, Welsh authorities are starting to assess the longer term impact on income. You project that a much larger fund will be required. We note you have submitted further information to Welsh Government on potential loss of income to the end of September, both income that may be delayed and income lost. You suggest that it will be the lost income that is likely to be reclaimable. It is presently unclear to us what proportion of the Council's losses will be reclaimable and I trust that these uncertainties are being transmitted to Welsh Government ministers for clarity.

We note the impact of the closure of Council hubs on collecting council tax, particularly where residents prefer to pay by cash or cheque and the reality of falling household incomes leading to difficulties paying council tax bills. We also note the Council's move to allow deferment of payment where households do have difficulty paying and that collection rates for April and May are unlikely to be a reflection of collection rates over the year. We heard that you will need to focus on reclaiming deferred and unpaid council tax and to resource that initiative.

### **Domiciliary care recommissioning strategies**

Members are keen to establish the impact of the crisis on the work already underway on the recommissioning of domiciliary care strategies. We note officers response that there is currently a willingness from care providers to engage with the Council,



however there is now likely to be a 6 month delay in the implementation of new contracts. We also note the clear requirements the Council has issued to care providers to separate out additional costs attributable to the Covid-19 pandemic.

**We look forward to a greater insight into the impact of Covid-19 on these markets as a part of the Medium Term Financial Plan report to Cabinet in July.**

### **Children's Services budget**

The Panel wishes to point out that the Children's Services budget is already challenging without extra pressures created by the crisis. We note that the crisis has led to less flexibility for the Council in delivering the service and in placing children where there are preferable solutions.

**The Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has indicated that he would like sight of a more comprehensive breakdown of the costs of placement.**

### **Procurement of PPE**

The Panel is concerned to ensure that the Council has effective procurement plans in place for PPE, particularly for schools. We note the Council has its sights on a 3 month supply line and is undertaking further modelling on school requirements, based on a similar model to that of social services. We note also that the Head of Health and Safety is working closely with the Council's procurement service, undertaking extensive modelling of infection risks and also working closely with Welsh Government central stores to ensure the supply line works more effectively.

## **Cardiff Recovery Strategy**

Members recognise the importance of reopening Cardiff in a safe manner, building confidence and trust amongst residents, commuters, businesses and visitors that the city is safe, well managed and welcoming. Panel Members will be interested to see the work to date on how best to encourage organisations in the private and public sector and support changes in behaviour, such as promoting home working, staggering start and finish times, designing in social distancing measures and providing easy and safe access to the workplace. It is critical that appropriate

support, adaptations and mitigations are put in place and our questions sought to explore and test these.

## **Transport**

Several of our questions focused on transport related issues, including the need for sustainable and viable public transport, active travel and support for car users. Members note that work is ongoing with Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and Cardiff Bus to put in place plans to ensure train and bus operators work in a complementary manner and address the very concerning challenges facing public transport because of the pandemic. We note that the Council's proposals regarding access to Cardiff aim to support public transport without undermining other modes, such as active travel or car use. It is seeking to promote non-polluting forms of travel and make such travel safe and sustainable.

**Members recommend that potential and expected changes in commuter travel be carefully monitored and that the impact of these alternative modes of travel on the service provision and profitability of TfW and Cardiff Bus are closely measured.**

## **Cardiff Bus**

With regard to Cardiff Bus, we note that the Council is looking at what support it can offer in the short to medium term and that Welsh Government funding is anticipated longer-term. This is in addition to the Council's pensions' liabilities and planned investment in fleet modernisation that formed part of the February 2020 budget report.

**Further data on the financial impact on Cardiff Bus, its potential need for further loans or reduction of services and staffing is requested by the Panel.**

## **Active Travel**

As regards Active travel, Members would like to receive more details and evidence on what Nextbike are doing to address the need for increased hygiene measures, caused by the pandemic; please provide this in the response to this letter. Members were pleased to hear Cllr Caro Wild state his intention to take forward the idea of a free trial of Nextbike to encourage take-up and support the recovery, as we recognise Nextbike as a useful transport option.

In terms of car use, Members note that car parks in the city centre will reopen with reduced capacity to ensure social distancing and that additional parking is being identified near to the city centre to enable commuters to park & ride or park & stride. Whilst recognising the need for additional parking, given that not everyone will be able to use public or active transport, Members are concerned to ensure that residents in inner-city wards will not be subjected to increased traffic congestion and reduced air quality.

**Members recommend that local ward councillors are consulted on the proposed locations and plans for Park & Ride and Park & Stride.**

Given the fast-changing nature of the pandemic and responses to it, Members are concerned to ensure that the Council is able to flex its response pragmatically to changes in commuter behaviour.

**Members recommend that Cabinet tasks officers to scenario-test and plan for the possibility of higher car usage than hoped-for in order that mechanisms are available to quickly address and avoid chronic traffic issues that may otherwise develop.**

### **Spatial impact**

In terms of wider spatial impacts of the pandemic, Members are interested in the proposals for improvement plans and mitigations, such as putting the city into Event Mode and altering the layouts of local centres e.g. Wellfield Road pilot. Members are clear that it is imperative that robust processes are put in place to ensure equality impact assessments (EIAs) are undertaken and discussions held with stakeholders, to ensure unintended negative consequences are identified and addressed.

Members are pleased that fortnightly meetings will be held with an Access Forum and that detailed plans will be subject to EIAs and consultation with stakeholders; we are surprised that this did not take place for the Wellfield Road pilot phase one and expect it to take place retrospectively and for phase 2 onwards.

Members explored the proposed approach for a Green Recovery, supporting active and sustainable travel to boost the resilience of Cardiff and using green solutions to support social distancing in public places. Members are interested in the One Planet report that officers explained would take learning from this pandemic to build a strategic and operational model.

**We recommend that the One Planet report be built on, by developing an Action Plan that capitalises on the potential to pursue a green recovery.**

### **Business support**

A strong economy is, of course, central to the recovery of Cardiff and Members are pleased that the Council has met with business partners across the spectrum to discuss how best to restart Cardiff. Businesses need to know their employees, suppliers and customers can travel safely and easily and we note assurances at the meeting that the proposed approach is shaped by discussions with business. It is also clear that businesses will need strong support over the coming months to navigate the many challenges posed by the pandemic. Members note the explanation at the meeting that the role of the Council's Economic Development team will need to adapt to meet these needs with a particular emphasis on supporting small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). As explained at the meeting, this may require additional resources being directed to this area; this is something Members will monitor in future budget proposals.

**Members recommend that the Council actively consult SMEs on what support, help and assistance from the Council would most assist them, in order that Council resources can be targeted efficiently and effectively. Finally, Members note that the Indoor Arena project is progressing, with partners keen to meet target deadlines.**

### **Response to the Impact of Covid-19 on Cardiff Council's Housing Delivery Programme.**

Members recognise that the need for affordable housing will increase because of the pandemic. Members sought to understand the impact of the pandemic on the Housing Delivery Programme and note that there will be ongoing monitoring to assess any impact on delivery targets. We also explored the principles underpinning the proposed new approach to deliver future housing development sites.

### **Timing of the decision**

Members debated whether the Council should be acquiring sites from Wates at this stage or whether the Council should wait to see how the housing market responds to

the pandemic. Members note that during the Panel meeting it was indicated that no assessment has been undertaken on the impact of purchasing now compared to purchasing later when the impacts of the pandemic are better known. We note the explanation given that properties on these sites are sold off-book, that marketing should be happening imminently but is unable to because of the pandemic, and therefore Wates has approached the Council to ensure sites do not stall and that properties become available at the agreed time. Members recognise the importance of ensuring delivery of affordable housing, supporting jobs and supply chains and can see these benefits if acquisition takes place.

**However, we have concerns about the impact on the Housing Revenue Account, due to the initial outlay costs and potential impact on land values. Members note that the report to Cabinet states that detailed due diligence will be undertaken on the proposed acquisitions to ensure the HRA budget is sustainable and that proposals demonstrate value for money and evidence market opportunity. Members expect due diligence to be as robust and thorough as possible and wish to see its conclusions when available.**

### **Children's Services**

Members asked whether there was a possibility of using any of the properties on the sites to assist in meeting needs arising from Children's Services; we note the explanation given that this is happening on other sites but is not feasible on these particular sites.

### **Proposed New Approach**

With regard to the proposed new approach in respect of future housing development sites, Members note that local authorities with an HRA will next year be able to apply for Welsh Government Social Housing Grant. Members explored the opportunity this may offer to create tenure neutral housing, thus increasing choice, encouraging affordable home ownership, helping people stay in their local area and delivering mixed communities. Members are supportive of this proposal and believe that it offers an opportunity to look again at the definition of affordability and how the Council promotes and markets affordable housing to ensure the Council targets all those who would benefit from this, in terms of renting, buying and downsizing.

Members asked whether the new approach would support training and apprenticeships, thus helping economic regeneration. Members are pleased to note that the Rumney training college will support sites across Cardiff.

Finally, Members note that it is planned to take a report to Cabinet in September providing further details of the proposed approach for sites at Channel View and the Gas Works site.

**To recap, our recommendations are that Cabinet:**

- Produces a comprehensive evidence based report of the impact of Covid-19 on deprived and BAME communities
- Develops a NEET action plan, related to the crisis, and circulates to reassure schools, parents, pupils, communities and their representatives.
- Carefully monitors potential and expected changes in commuter travel and measure the impact of these alternative modes of travel on the service provision and profitability of TfW and Cardiff Bus.
- Consults with local ward councillors on the proposed locations and plans for Park & Ride and Park & Stride.
- Tasks officers to scenario-test and plan for the possibility of higher car usage than hoped-for in order that mechanisms are available to quickly address and avoid chronic traffic issues.
- Builds on the One Planet report, by developing an Action Plan that capitalises on the potential to pursue a green recovery.
- Actively consults SMEs on what support, help and assistance from the Council would most assist them, in order that resources can be targeted efficiently and effectively.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope the Panel's observations and recommendations add value to your decision making. I was struck by the number and quality of questions coming from the Panel's consultation with all scrutiny members, as required in our Terms of Reference.

As I have already discussed with you, we would all welcome earlier access to papers, even in draft form, for forthcoming Panel meetings.

The Panel discussed the option to hold our meetings on a Monday, as discussed with you. We decided to do so next month on 13<sup>th</sup> July and will be writing to interested parties to set this up. It will provide more time for Cabinet to consider and respond to recommendations and comments before you meet. I am hopeful that this will be viable for everyone and we will assess how well it proceeds from the scrutiny effectiveness standpoint and decide about the timing of future meetings.

Once again, on behalf of all scrutiny members, my sincere thanks for your support of effective internal challenge in difficult times. This letter contains a number of recommendations and we request formal responses to each of them. There are also other concerns, requests for action and additional information which are set out in bold lettering. We would also like responses to these points.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER**

**CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Scrutiny Chairs, Members of the Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel  
Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance  
Councillor Russell Goodway, Cabinet Member, Investment & Development  
Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member, Strategic Planning & Transport  
Councillor Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member Housing & Communities  
Paul Orders, Chief Executive  
Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources  
Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities  
Neil Hanratty, Director of Economic Development  
Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport & Environment  
Richard Portas, Programme Director, SOP  
Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnerships  
Dave Jaques, Operational Manager, Development & Regeneration  
Angela Bourge, Operational Manager, Resources, People & Communities  
Davina Fiore, Director, Governance & Legal Services  
Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services  
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager  
Debi Said, Cabinet Support Officer  
Andrea Redmond, Committee Support Officer

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**SWYDDFA'R ARWEINYDD  
OFFICE OF THE LEADER**

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM43712

Eich Cyf / Your Ref: T: Scrutiny/Committees/Covid-19 Panel/20-06-09

Dyddiad / Date: 22 July 2020

Councillor David Walker  
Chair  
Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel & Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
Cardiff CF10 4UW

Annwyl / Dear David,

Thank you for your letter dated 10 June 2020 following the first meeting of the Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel on 9 June 2020.

The Scrutiny Panel discussed the following four reports that were considered by the Cabinet on 11 June 2020 and made a number of recommendations and observations in relation to various aspects of these reports to which I would respond as follows:

**1) Restart, Recover, Renew: Next steps for Cardiff during the Covid-19 crisis**

**Covid-19 and BAME communities**

The Council, like the Scrutiny Panel, is extremely concerned about the link between deprived and BAME communities and a higher risk of death from Covid-19, and would agree with the Panel on the urgent need for further research on this. I can therefore commit to the production of a report, which brings together the available evidence on the impact of Covid-19 on deprived and BAME communities in Cardiff as further data at the local authority level is published.

This research and the Council's response will be informed by the work of the Welsh Government's Covid-19 BAME Advisory Group, which is chaired jointly by Judge Ray Singh and Dr Heather Payne. This will include the work of Professor Singhal, whose sub-committee has developed a Covid-19 workplace risk assessment, which has informed the development of the Council's own staff risk assessment that is currently being implemented. Our response will also take into account the work of the other sub-committee on socio-economic issues relating to the BAME community, led by Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna from Cardiff University, whose report was published on 22 June 2020. I can therefore commit to writing to the chairs of the BAME Advisory Group to ensure that the Council has access to all available data and learning from across the Advisory Groups work to inform our response in the city.

**GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI**

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

**WORKING FOR CARDIFF, WORKING FOR YOU**

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh, English or bilingually. We will ensure that we communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.



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## Education – Health & Safety

The Welsh Government has decided to temporarily relax some of the requirements in the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare during the Covid-19 crisis in order to help address some immediate difficulties and to facilitate the continued provision of key childcare provision in Wales. Any relaxation is restricted to Welsh Government guidelines and subject to local authority approval on a case-by-case basis. Approval should only be granted on the basis that the measures being proposed by the childcare provider are reasonable and proportionate in responding to local circumstances and ensuring the provision of childcare to the children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

In addition to seeking local authority approval, the applicant must also seek approval from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as the regulatory body for the childcare sector in Wales. The responsibility for ensuring the safety and the welfare of the children in their care will remain with the registered childcare provider.

Since this relaxation by the Welsh Government, the Council has received two requests from childcare providers to relax the National Minimum Standards. These have been necessary to enable the childcare provider to remain operational and viable during the pandemic. One of these applications has been approved in full and one has only been partially approved. All approved requests are reviewed on a monthly basis.

The ability for providers to apply for a relaxation of the National Minimum Standards does not mean a relaxation of all standards and requirements; only those standards that will enable a provider to continue to operate safely. These relaxations in some cases are necessary to enable the sector to restart their provision to offer childcare to support the wider economic workforce and maintain viability in the short term.

In terms of the Council's own statutory childcare duties, which have been relaxed temporarily, these relate specifically to the requirement to submit an annual update of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. This requirement has now been reinstated and an annual report is required later this year. As part of the response to Covid-19, the Council's Childcare Business Support team has been undertaking a regular assessment of the number of childcare providers in Cardiff that remain in operation to respond to the childcare needs of key workers and for vulnerable children. This information is routinely fed back to the Welsh Government on a weekly basis.

## NEETs

Priority actions to support school leavers this year are being brought together as part of a wider Economic Recovery Plan that is being developed by the Council, rather than through the development of a specific NEET action plan, as recommended by the Scrutiny Panel. This will include input from Cardiff Commitment partners, including the Youth Service, Into Work Services, Economic Development, Schools, Further and Higher Education partners, Careers Wales and business. Once these priorities are confirmed, relevant information will be shared in order to provide assurance and support to stakeholders.

## Test, Trace, Protect (TTP)

The Test, Track & Protect (TTP) scheme is a partnership programme involving Cardiff Council, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board, Vale of Glamorgan Council and Shared Regulatory Services (SRS). The organisation of contact tracing teams is the responsibility of partners within a Health Board regional area and the Welsh Government requires a consistent all-Wales approach. Cardiff Council has agreed to host the service for the Cardiff and Vale region.

The partnership is seeking to repurpose staff with the right skills and expertise into contact tracer or advisor roles to support the TTP process and a team of over 100 staff has been established to support the Cardiff and Vale TTP operation. These staff have been repurposed from within the organisations that make up the partnership and, as the service expands, additional staff will be taken on across all disciplines based on modelling against a number of scenarios and, of course, depending on the number of positive Covid-19 cases. Cardiff Council has trained 33 repurposed staff and has 15 support staff in place who are supporting the initial set up phase.

The delivery of the TTP process is being supported by professional advice from SRS and four Environmental Health Officers from SRS are currently engaged in the more complex tracing matters, as well as infection prevention and control at care homes. SRS is working with Public Health consultants to address any community transmission (i.e. clusters), provide guidance to stakeholders on infection control and escalate matters nationally when needed.

## Care home fatalities

Public health expert analysis has concluded there has undoubtedly been a significant number of additional deaths in care homes in Cardiff during the Covid-19 pandemic to date. Public health experts have advised that increases in deaths seen in Cardiff are comparable with other areas of England and Wales with significant coronavirus activity. Cardiff is not an outlier in terms of total excess deaths. The proportion of excess deaths in care homes in Cardiff that have been recorded on the death certificate as involving Covid-19 is high. Public health experts hypothesise that this pattern may be related to guidance released by the Coroner covering Cardiff and surrounding areas on how to complete a death certificate in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the Cardiff figures may more accurately reflect the true direct impact of Covid-19 on deaths. Data published by Public Health Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and the Office for National Statistics is monitored and there is a daily situation report that drives operational practice, including outbreak management arrangements and admission to care homes.

As noted by the Scrutiny Panel, the Council has commissioned isolation beds in care homes to support a period of quarantine for people who have tested negative for Covid-19 on discharge from hospital. This is to ensure that we are able to comply with Welsh Government guidance on hospital discharge, which requires patients not to be discharged from hospital if they are Covid-19 positive and to be supported to self-isolate/quarantine for a period of 14 days if they test negative prior to discharge from hospital. The isolation beds are for use if people are not able to safely quarantine in their usual residence. There is a requirement for people to be tested again at the end of the 14-day quarantine period. The Council is following the risk assessment process,

which includes the requirements around testing, that has been developed and agreed jointly with the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Cardiff & Vale University Health Board.

### Homelessness

I am pleased that the Scrutiny Panel members recognised the swift and positive response by the Council and partners to ensuring the safety of single homeless people during the pandemic to date. The positive outcomes for those who have come into treatment to address substance misuse issues is encouraging and we intend to build on that success. The Council launched the 'Real Change' campaign on 22 June 2020, which seeks to maintain the progress achieved by homelessness services during the lockdown period when the number of people sleeping rough dropped to single figures and more people than ever before started accessing life-changing services available in the city. The Council and its partners are determined not to lose the positive momentum achieved in supporting people away from life on the streets, as the city centre begins to exit lockdown. As part of this campaign, we want to make it clearer and easier for all those Cardiff citizens who want to help and support this vulnerable group to do so. We will ensure that future reports to scrutiny include this important development in our approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the city.

### Advice to small business

As part of the internal governance structure to support the city centre recovery work, it has been identified that further work is required to engage with businesses in the city's district centres, and work is progressing to roll out the exercise as plans progress. In terms of more general business support engagement, the Economic Development Team has compiled a contact database of some 7,000 businesses, which is being further expanded to ensure that the Council can both update businesses on relevant information and ensure their participation in any further engagement exercises. We are having direct contact with SMEs and also supported FOR Cardiff's business survey, which was extended beyond the boundaries of the city centre to include non-members of the city's Business Improvement District.

### Capturing the transformation

The Council's response to the Covid-19 crisis has accelerated a number of digital initiatives and our approach to agile working. The move to remote working saw us increase our mobile enabled devices from 500 to over 3,300. In March 2020, we had 20 test users on Microsoft Teams, but by mid-May 2020 we had rolled this out to over 5,500 users to support calls and meetings being held remotely and to enable council business and services to continue. The workforce has risen to the challenges of rapidly embracing remote working technologies and at the same time we have seen more and more citizens access our services digitally whether that be through our online web service or by interacting with the Council's chat bot, Bobi. This crisis has seen a fundamental shift in how we operate our service and how we manage our staff. As well as deploying technology and operating the service desk, Customer and Digital teams also produced a number of guidance documents for staff assisting them with use of systems but also with how to keep in touch with remote users with staff well-being at the heart of our approach.

The Welsh Government Minister for Housing & Local Government has confirmed that she is keen to ensure that recovery planning is used as an opportunity to drive transformation in how services are delivered, recognising that there have been fundamental changes in how many services operate and the need to build on the new ways of working that responding to Covid-19 has required. The Welsh Government is working with the WLGA to draw out and share good practice, and to consider how best it can best support local government to do this.

I would be happy to ask officers to provide a presentation at a future meeting of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee on how services have adapted and innovated in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and, in particular, how they have been able to increase the use of technology to support the delivery of services.

## **2) Cardiff Council's Response to the Covid-19 Crisis from a Financial Management Perspective**

### Domiciliary care recommissioning strategies

Work on the recommissioning of a new Domiciliary Care model and the associated cost of care exercise was halted due to the onset of the Covid-19 crisis and this has therefore delayed progress. It is envisaged that the Cost of Care Exercise and corresponding Fee Setting Strategy will be implemented from 1 April 2021, approximately five months later than planned. It is increasingly evident that the Covid-19 crisis is likely to have long term impacts across many businesses and markets, and this will need to be considered when setting any fee strategy. Domiciliary Care budgets total £24 million and, as such, any changes to commissioning in this area may have significant financial implications for the Council. These are being kept under close consideration in the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

### Children's Services budget

The Cabinet Member for Children & Families would be happy to provide a breakdown of the costs of placement to the Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and to discuss these with him in more detail as required.

## **3) Cardiff Recovery Strategy**

### Transport

The Council will continue to monitor different modes of travel in the city and their respective usage. There is also ongoing and frequent dialogue between council officers and both Transport for Wales and Cardiff Bus about public transport safety and usage, as well as close cooperation on strategic projects and schemes such the Demand Responsive Transport trial in Gwaelod y Garth.

## Cardiff Bus

Covid-19 is a national issue for all bus operators and Cardiff Bus has been severely impacted as a result of a significant proportion of its revenue arising from paying passengers, rather than from Welsh Government grant or other public contracts. Key factors include:

- Patronage reduced by 90% across all services;
- Circa 66 buses (pre-Covid = 187) per day are operating as a requirement to meet essential services (e.g. free use by key workers in exchange for continued Welsh Government grants);
- Over 50% of the company's total workforce has been furloughed;
- The pandemic is resulting in trading losses and an impact on working capital; and
- Indications that the Welsh Government will introduce a new a Bus Emergency Support Scheme.

The Council has been working with Cardiff Bus and the Welsh Government on options to provide short and medium term support, to deal with Covid-19 impacts, to protect bus public transport provision in Cardiff and to allow sufficient certainty for the company to participate in Welsh Government Bus Emergency Support Schemes that may be considered.

In light of the impact of Covid-19 on future service delivery, the company's Board will, in the next few months, be considering the impact of the ending of the furlough scheme, seeking completion of the triannual pension fund valuation, considering the uncertain impact of social distancing rules on public transport and implementing a significant turnaround plan to ensure that the company remains financially sustainable. The financial package approved as part of the Council's 2020/21 budget will play a key part in options for the Council to consider, which will be the subject of a future report to Full Council.

## Active Travel

Nextbike have provided the Council with a detailed breakdown of hygiene and cleansing measures that they have implemented in response to the Covid-19 virus, which is provided on the company's website: <https://www.nextbike.co.uk/en/covid-19-information/> Nextbike have also posted on social media and sent regular emails to customers over recent months providing information about these enhanced cleaning measures.

A range of emergency temporary and permanent measures are being delivered in the immediate, short and medium term in order to mitigate against a significant increase in car traffic as lockdown restrictions are eased in Wales, which would have serious negative consequences for the local economy, environment and on public health. This includes a number of new and innovative measures, such as pop up cycle lanes, which will be closely monitored and may evolve in an iterative way to allow an appropriate response to changing circumstances. The Scrutiny Panel's recommendation about consultation with local ward councillors on Park & Ride/Stride schemes is also noted and accepted.

### Spatial impact

The One Planet Cardiff Strategy has been redrafted over recent months to make direct reference to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and to highlight opportunities for a green recovery that combines environmental benefits with economic recovery and social rebuilding activities. Work to develop the draft strategy is being undertaken in consultation with officers who are also developing the Council's Economic Recovery Plan to ensure that these two strategies are clearly linked for mutual benefit.

### Business support

The Council is actively developing its database of SMEs in order to consult and contact them, subject to GDPR regulations, to ensure that we can both update them with appropriate information, as well as engage effectively with them as we provide a greater emphasis on the city's SME base. In addition, a conference call with Federation of Small Business (FSB) members is being arranged and we want to ensure greater involvement of SMEs in developing the city's investment agenda. Officers will also work with partners in the city-region and with the Welsh Government to explore how to increase support for local businesses.

## **4) Response to the Impact of Covid-19 on Cardiff Council's Housing Delivery Programme**

### Timing of the decision

I appreciate that the time available to members to consider the detail of the proposal set out within the Cabinet report was limited, but the tone of the questioning by the Scrutiny Panel at the meeting on 9 June 2020 was disappointing. Wates Residential have requested that we apply a clause that is already built into our contractual arrangements in order to purchase additional properties in the city. The basis of the financial settlement is linked to actual build costs. The impact on land values linked to market sales in the current environment is precisely the reason why such a purchase would be in the Council's interests. As was clearly stated in the report's recommendations, Cabinet approval was granted in principle only and subject to due diligence. I will ensure that the information on the final settlement figure for each site is shared on a confidential basis with members as requested.

Finally, I am aware that the publication of reports ahead of the Cabinet meeting on 11 June 2020 did not provide the Scrutiny Panel with a lot of time within which to consider the various detailed reports in advance of your first meeting. We have previously discussed a number of matters relating to improving the effectiveness of the Scrutiny function in Cardiff and, as you know, I am committed to supporting the scrutiny process by giving appropriate consideration to the timing of meetings; providing earlier access to finalised reports, wherever possible, and ensuring effective consideration of recommendations and comments made by scrutiny committees prior to decisions being taken at Cabinet meetings.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on this and I have asked officers from the Cabinet Office and Democratic Services to review reporting timetables for both Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee meetings in the new 2020/21 municipal year in order to improve coordination of reporting cycles, as well as ensuring that Cabinet Members and lead officers meet regularly with Scrutiny Chairs to discuss forthcoming business and to ensure that the Council's Scrutiny function can contribute effectively to future policy development.

Yn gywir,  
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw Thomas', written in a cursive style.

**CYNGHORYDD / COUNCILLOR HUW THOMAS**  
**ARWEINYDD / LEADER**  
**CYNGOR CAERDYDD / CARDIFF COUNCIL**



## **APPENDIX A: Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel Recommendations (9 June 2020)**

### **Restart, Recover, Renew: Next steps for Cardiff during the Covid-19 crisis**

<b>Our recommendations are that Cabinet:</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>
Produces a comprehensive evidence based report of the impact of Covid-19 on deprived and BAME communities	This recommendation is accepted.	Cllr Huw Thomas	Gareth Newell
Develops a NEET action plan, related to the crisis, and circulates to reassure schools, parents, pupils, communities and their representatives.	This recommendation is not accepted as this work will be addressed as part of the wider Economic Recovery Plan that is being developed by the Council.	Cllr Sarah Merry	Nick Batchelar

### **Cardiff Recovery Strategy**

<b>Our recommendations are that Cabinet:</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>
Carefully monitors potential and expected changes in commuter travel and measure the impact of these alternative modes of travel on the service provision and profitability of TfW and Cardiff Bus.	This recommendation is accepted.	Cllr Caro Wild	Andrew Gregory
Consults with local ward councillors on the proposed locations and plans for Park & Ride and Park & Stride.	This recommendation is accepted.	Cllr Caro Wild	Andrew Gregory
Tasks officers to scenario-test and plan for the possibility of higher car usage than hoped-for in order that mechanisms are available to quickly address and avoid chronic traffic issues.	This recommendation is accepted.	Cllr Caro Wild	Andrew Gregory
Builds on the One Planet report, by developing an Action Plan that capitalises on the potential to pursue a green recovery.	This recommendation is partially accepted as the green recovery will be addressed as part of the One Planet Cardiff Strategy.	Cllr Michael Michael	Andrew Gregory
Actively consults SMEs on what support, help and assistance from the Council would most assist them, in order that resources can be targeted efficiently and effectively.	This recommendation is accepted.	Cllr Russell Goodway	Neil Hanratty

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