

COUNCIL: 28 JANUARY 2021

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER

Covid-19 Update

Following the end of the November firebreak lockdown and temporary reduction in the rate of Covid-19 infections, case figures began increasing steadily, prompting the Welsh Government to introduce strengthened public health measures on 4 December 2020, in the first instance. In the first two weeks of December, cases in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan rose by nearly 90%, resulting in the Welsh Government's implementation of a Level 4 lockdown from 20 December onwards, with an exception for Christmas Day.

The latest data indicates that the current lockdown is having a positive effect, with the rate of transmission on a clear downward path in Cardiff and Wales. As of 21 January 2021, the rate of new cases in Cardiff currently stands at 282.6 per 100,000 over the 7 day period to 16 January, down from a peak of 701.5 cases per 100,000 at the end of December. Nevertheless, we must remember that the situation in Cardiff remains extremely serious, as Wales is still under the highest alert level – Alert Level 4 – which the Welsh Government will review at the end of the month. In the meantime, it is absolutely essential that we all follow stay at home orders and public health measures to prevent the further spread of the virus, relieve the chronic pressures on the NHS and, above all, help save lives. Over the coming weeks and months, the Council will continue to work closely with its partners across the city to further reduce transmission of the virus and roll out the local vaccination programme, while maintaining our focus on the delivery of critical and essential services.

Mass Vaccination Programme

The rollout of the Mass Vaccination Programme is accelerating, as both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines are now being administered. Furthermore, the mass vaccination centre at Pentwyn Leisure Centre is expected to become operational on 1st February 2021, supplementing the mass vaccination centre already established at the former STAR Centre in Splott. Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (UHB) has also added two further vaccination centres – one at University Hospital of Wales (UHW) and another at University Hospital Llandough (UHL) – to support vaccination delivery to priority groups and work being undertaken by GP's across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. As of 20 January 2021, the UHB has given 31,624 vaccination doses and has made a commitment to ensure that all frontline social care staff will be vaccinated by the end of the month.

The Council has completed detailed planning with the UHB, which has enabled us to begin identifying those members of staff that can receive a vaccination as part of the frontline social care workers priority group. The staff vaccination programme is being carried out in line with the wider mass vaccination programme in Wales. Communication is essential for a successful rollout of the vaccine, and as such, a joint letter from me and the Chief Executive of the UHB has been sent to every household in Cardiff, setting out how the vaccination is being made available, the importance of vaccination and the details of the priority groups.

Brexit

On 24 December 2020, the UK and EU agreed a deal – now formally named the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) – to govern significant aspects of their trade relationship from 1 January 2021 onwards. While my administration welcomes the finalisation of a deal with the EU, as it offers citizens and businesses a degree of continuity and certainty, we must remember that we still find ourselves in an unprecedented situation. No major member state has ever left the EU, and despite an agreement being reached, Brexit will bring significant turbulence for businesses and communities.

Over the coming months, the Council will continue to work closely with local employers to identify areas of risk and help them adapt, which will involve continuing communications with local businesses and informing them of the new rules applying to trade. To this end, we are keeping our plans and mitigations for the EU Transition in place, while closely monitoring Brexit-specific risks, such as delays at the borders and the associated impact on supply chains. Moving forward, as details of the trade deal are analysed, work will be undertaken to ensure that the Council has a robust ongoing strategy to address both the challenges and opportunities that Brexit presents.

Beyond the economic impact, our exit from the EU has ended free movement, putting certain members of Cardiff's EU communities at risk. While 16,710 EU nationals living in Cardiff had applied successfully to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) by 30 September 2020, those who have not been able to do so face losing their residency rights beyond 30 June 2021, when the scheme will close. The Council continues to work with its EU communities to ensure that all eligible residents apply, with a focus on identifying and resolving the status of particularly marginalised groups; specifically, children looked after and adults who are supported by Social Services.

Nonetheless, reality is reality. Brexit has happened and we should seek to look to the future and make the best of our new relationship with the EU. Even though the UK has left the EU, we still consider Cardiff to be a European capital city, and the Council will continue its strong relationship with Europe through both the Eurocities network and the work of UK Core Cities. I also want to express my support for the letter sent by the First Minister on 20 January 2021 to the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, which emphasised the Welsh Government's commitment to Wales remaining an outward looking European nation and developing a constructive and positive future relationship with the EU.

To this end, Cardiff remains a progressive, internationally engaged capital city that is resilient and innovative. My administration will work constructively and make every effort to secure success and opportunities for Cardiff in this new reality, whilst ensuring that our city remains a diverse, safe and welcoming place to live.

Race Equality Taskforce

Membership of the new Race Equality Taskforce was confirmed in September 2020, following a public appointment process, which the Council openly advertised in August and September 2020. The Taskforce, which is comprised of the Chair, Cllr Saeed Ebrahim and 14 members, held its inaugural meeting on 1 December 2020, where members considered evidence from the public consultation process on priorities and approved the creation of three workstreams on the themes of Employment and Representative Workforce, Education and Young People's Experience of Services, and Citizen's Voice. Taskforce members also agreed to explore the possibility of creating two additional workstreams on Health & Social Care and Criminal Justice.

Since its meeting in December, the Taskforce has been assembling subgroups composed of relevant experts to manage each workstream. Members of these subgroups will have their initial meetings in February, with the aim of establishing the appropriate scope of their respective work programmes and producing impactful and actionable recommendations for the Taskforce to consider in their next meeting, which is scheduled to take place on 3 March 2021. Moving forward, sub-groups will report to the Taskforce with recommendations and progress updates, which the Taskforce will consider in its quarterly meetings and relay subsequently to the Cabinet for discussion. The Policy Review and Performance (PRAP) Scrutiny Committee was provided with an update briefing on progress against the Race Equality Taskforce's objectives on 20 January 2021.

Cardiff Bay Rugby Codebreakers

At the beginning of December, three of the greatest rugby league players in the history of the game – Billy Boston, Gus Risman and Clive Sullivan – were selected to adorn a statue commemorating the Cardiff Bay Codebreakers. Public participation in this initial phase of the project was exceptional, with members of the public casting nearly 14,000 votes for their preferred players. That a special panel of experts independently selected the same three players as the public bears testament to their iconic status. Beyond being immense figures in Cardiff's rich sporting history, they were trailblazers for black sportsmen during their playing days, breaking out of their local areas, overcoming racial prejudices and going on to become global superstars. Standing in the heart of the Cardiff Bay area, the statue will immortalize Billy, Gus and Clive's significant contributions to both sport and social justice, while hopefully acting as a catalyst for their old locality of Butetown and inspiring the youngsters from this storied area of Cardiff for many years to come.

A company limited by guarantee has been set up to deliver the project and raise funds towards the target of £300,000 which has been set to cover the costs of the statue. To support its efforts, the company has also partnered with the Butetown charity, The Heritage and Cultural Exchange Tiger Bay and the World. Fundraising has commenced with a private donation of £75,000 from the Chairman of the fundraising committee, Sir Stanley Thomas OBE. Furthermore, a funding application has been

submitted to Welsh Government and letters have been issued to business leaders within the city; however, due to Covid-19 restrictions, all other fundraising activity has been put on hold. Nevertheless, with strong support from the public, it is hoped that the project will be completed within two years.

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
21 January 2021