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**THE COUNCIL'S PANDEMIC RESPONSE: IMMEDIATE ISSUES  
AND ACTIONS****COUNCILLOR HUW THOMAS (LEADER)****AGENDA ITEM: 3**

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**Reason for this Report**

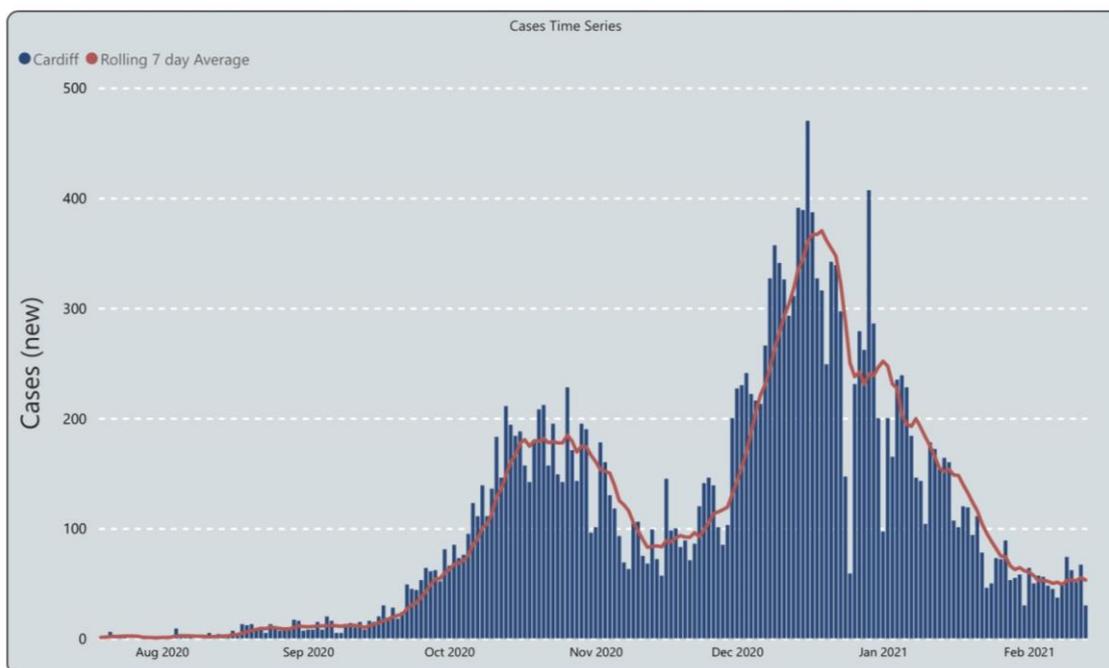
1. To enable the Cabinet to agree an approach which responds to the urgent issues facing the city as lockdown restrictions are eased. These include:
  - Measures to continue to manage the pandemic, to prevent the spread of the virus, keep citizens and staff safe and to support the roll-out of the vaccination programme;
  - Ensuring the safe reopening of schools to all learners; re-engaging pupils; and maintaining access to learning and building the physical, emotional and mental well-being of children and young people.
  - Continuing to support businesses and workers most greatly impacted by the pandemic, particularly young people.
2. To outline a timetable of further strategic reports that deal with long-term city renewal, aligned to the strategic direction of Welsh and UK Governments.

**Background**

3. At midnight on Saturday 19 December 2020, Wales entered into a national lockdown in response to rising infection rates and the discovery of a new, highly-infectious, strain of Covid-19 circulating in the UK. In response to the restrictions, the Council once again transitioned to an 'essential services' model, with the following three core principles continuing to guide the Council's response:
  - Preventing the spread of infection
  - Ensuring the health and safety of staff, service users and citizens
  - Prioritising key frontline services and support for vulnerable people

4. The latest data published by Public Health Wales and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicates that as a result of the interventions put in place, daily case numbers have decreased, as depicted in Figure 1. Cases rates in Cardiff have fallen steadily since the beginning of 2021, and now stand at 103.6 per 100,000 population. Test positivity rates have also continued to fall with testing rates currently at 9.9% positivity.

**Figure 1:** Covid-19 Cases in Cardiff to 13<sup>th</sup> February 2021



*Source: Public Health Wales*

5. The city's vaccination programme is proceeding at pace and scale. In line with the national picture, by 19 February 2021, over 114,000 vaccines had been administered in Cardiff and the Vale, with all those in priority groups 1 to 4 offered a vaccine.
6. In response to the improving position the Welsh Government have indicated that there will be a gradual and cautious lifting of restrictions over the coming months. In preparation for this the Council has been undertaking detailed planning work. In doing so, the Council has continued to use the 'Restart, Recover, Renew'<sup>1</sup> framework, approved by Cabinet in June 2020, to plan the restart of council services in response to the easing of national lockdown measures, alongside identifying medium and longer term priorities for recovery and renewal.
7. The Restart component of the Council's Covid Response Framework established planning principles to inform the safe resumption of business as usual activities in the event of a Council service being adapted or

<sup>1</sup> [Restart, Recover, Renew: Next Steps for Cardiff during the COVID-19 Crisis](#)

suspended to contain the spread of the virus. This disciplined and coordinated corporate process for reopening services, consistent with legislation and the latest Public Health Wales advice, applied in the release from earlier lockdowns will once again be adopted by the Council as social distancing restrictions are gradually lifted over the coming months.

8. Recovery priorities for the year ahead are established in the Council's new Corporate Plan subject to Council approval in February 2021. These recovery priorities have been identified through a cross-Cabinet portfolio and department exercise on recovery planning, setting out clearly how Covid-19 has changed the operating environment for services, and what needs to be done, by when and by whom over the course of 2021-22 in order to restart and recover Council and partners' services.
9. A programme of 'city renewal' which sets out a Cardiff response to the significant longer-term shifts in the way in which people live, work and travel as a consequence of the pandemic and how the Council will lead a greener, fairer recovery from Covid-19 will be published in May 2021. This will include reports on the following:
  - The future of Cardiff's economy, and how the city should respond to the economic crisis in order to build a stronger, more inclusive and sustainable post-pandemic economy.
  - Delivering a Child Friendly Recovery, including the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's education, rights, well-being, and future pathways into employment and how the Council and city partners will collaborate with school leaders to refocus the Cardiff 2030 priorities for education and learning.
  - A programme of action to address the climate emergency and deliver the One Planet Cardiff vision agreed by Cabinet in autumn 2020.
  - The future of local public services, including the shift towards being an agile organisation, the increased use of digital technologies and data in service delivery, and the application of locality working for front line community services.
10. The Council will run a programme of engagement with the public and with city stakeholders on its proposals for city renewal over the summer. The outcome of this work will be presented to Cabinet in September.
11. In addition to the above, there is a need to take immediate steps in a limited number of areas, including:
  - **Continued management of the pandemic**, including the formalisation of the Council's role as host of the Test, Trace, Protect National Surge Capacity and its support of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board in the roll out of the vaccination programme;
  - **Re-opening schools for all learners and re-engaging children and young people**, including safely re-opening schools and supporting the wellbeing of younger people, particularly the most vulnerable

- **Continuing to support businesses and people, particularly young people**, impacted by the pandemic, including Council engagement in the UK Government Kick-Start scheme

The Council's response to these areas is set out below.

### **Ongoing Pandemic Management**

12. As the lockdown restrictions are gradually released there will be a continuing requirement for the Council and partners to ensure that measures are in place to manage the pandemic, to prevent the spread of the virus and keep citizens and staff safe. Allied to this, the Council will work continue to work in close partnership with the University Health Board on the roll-out of the city's vaccination programme.
13. The increased transmission rate of variant strains of the virus has put further emphasis on infection prevention/control measures in workplaces, particularly open plan offices and communal areas. The Council is working with Public Health Wales and the Health and Safety Executive to maintain Covid-safe workplaces across services. In relation to core office accommodation stringent controls remain in place to regulate numbers of staff in Council buildings that remain open, and it is anticipated that these will continue for the foreseeable future.
14. Following HSE guidance considerable emphasis is being placed on levels of ventilation required in buildings to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus. Due to this change and as a compensatory measure where ventilation is not to the required levels, the guidance on the type of face masks to be worn in Council buildings and when they should be worn has been strengthened, with more widespread use of medical face masks whilst working in communal offices as well as while moving around buildings.
15. School staff have been advised to wear a disposable medical face mask where 2m social distancing cannot be achieved. This advice to Cardiff schools has been in place since autumn half term, due to the rising infection rates at that time. Welsh Government guidelines to support restart of schools on 22nd February states that where social distancing cannot be maintained, face coverings should be worn, including in the classroom by staff.

### Test, Trace and Protect – National Surge Capacity

16. Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) is a crucial part of the Welsh Government's approach to limiting the spread of COVID-19 and reducing the need for restrictions on people's lives.
17. Contact tracing is a well-established mechanism to control the spread of infectious disease. It involves contacting and providing advice to people who have tested positive, finding out who their close contacts have been, and reaching those close contacts to advise them on what they need to do. Tracers play a key role in advising people of the importance of self-

isolating and can flag up with wider public services where additional support may be needed.

18. The Cardiff and Vale TTP service is delivered in partnership by Cardiff and Vale Councils and the Local Health Board. The Trace and Advice service is hosted by Cardiff Council bringing together capacity from all partners, including public health and environmental health services. The staff group, some 300 strong, is made up from staff from within the partnership which has been supplemented by external staff as and when required. The service launched in June 2020 and since then (June 2020 – Jan 2021) has managed some 30,000 Index cases and 50,000 contacts.
19. As part of the strategy of Test, Trace and Protect program, Welsh Government have requested that Cardiff Council be the hosting body for a National TT&P (Trace and Advice) Team, initially referred to as the “surge” team. Due to the urgency of the request the team was set up as a subsidiary of the established Cardiff and Vale TT&P team. The team started with 30 contact tracers, 20 contact advisors, 4 team leads and 1 team manager to meet the demand from across Wales, and now consists of 60 contact tracers, 35 contact advisors, 8 team leads, 1 team manager and 2 part time administration roles.
20. The primary work of the team is to provide additional support to regions across Wales when their case demand outstrips capacity. An additional Enforcement Element was added to the surge team in January 2021, through which the four police forces across Wales are able to check whether a “person of interest” should be in isolation by contacting the National Surge Team. The National Surge Team now needs to be expanded to manage Arriving Travellers ensuring that all travellers returning to the UK self-isolate for 10 days.
21. Despite the roll out of the vaccine, there will be a continued requirement for a National Trace and Advice team to support limiting the spread of the virus. The arrangements with Welsh Government in relation to the National Team, including arrangements for the staffing of the service, must now be formalised, and the service put on a sustainable footing. This is based on a full cost recovery model from Welsh Government. Cost recovery will be required not just for the establishment (resource) but for further expenditure including hardware, software and administrative costs.

#### Supporting the Roll-out of the Vaccination Programme

22. The roll-out of the vaccine programme in Cardiff has been implemented at scale and pace since January 2021. At the time of writing, over 114,000 people in Cardiff and the Vale had been given a vaccine, and all citizens over 70 years old, those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and health and social care workers have been offered a vaccine. The Council has supported the programme, with the two operational mass vaccination centres hosted in Pentwyn Leisure Centre and the Splott Hub and supported by Council staff.

23. The Council will continue to support the University Health Board over the months ahead, in particular in supporting the expansion and acceleration of the programme as more vaccine supply becomes available through the provision of Council buildings and staff to support the city's mass vaccination centres and through the provision of ongoing ICT support on the development of booking systems and public communications and engagement. Planning discussions about the next phase of the roll-out are continuing and highlight the need for the Council to be able to deploy flexibly staff and resources, as appropriate, to facilitate any further acceleration of the programme.
24. National trends suggest that the uptake of the vaccine is lower amongst certain demographic groups, notably those from a Black and Minority Ethnic background, people living in more deprived communities and more vulnerable groups of people such as those who are homeless or rough sleeping. The Council will work in close partnership with the University Health Board to ensure that Council services support the vaccination of vulnerable groups and that the Council's strong links to community leaders, networks and groups is utilised to increase levels of vaccination in all communities across the city.

### **Re-opening schools for all learners and re-engaging children and young people**

25. Whilst children and young people are generally less clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 than the adult population, the wider effects of the pandemic have disproportionately and negatively affected the younger generation. Since March 2020, children and young people have experienced several extended periods of school closures and the routines of their daily lives have been upturned. While the pandemic has impacted upon all children and young people, the greatest impact has been felt by the city's most vulnerable children and young people.
26. The Council is therefore committed to delivering a Child Friendly Recovery that ensures that the well-being of children and young people is at the forefront of the city's approach to recovery and renewal. As noted in paragraph 9, a comprehensive report will be published as part of the Council's wider renewal programme, with engagement with children and young people to take place in the spring and summer. In the immediate future, as restrictions gradually lift and children and young people are allowed to return to school, commencing with the return of Foundation Phase pupils from the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, the Council's priorities will be:
  - Ensuring that all school buildings and learning environments are safe and COVID secure;
  - Maintaining access to learning for all;
  - Re-engaging children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable, and
  - Building the physical, emotional and mental well-being of children and young people.

## Re-opening schools safely

27. Throughout the course of the pandemic to date, the Council has worked with schools and partners to make sure as much support as possible has been available to all children and young people to keep them safe and to ensure that learning can continue.
28. Rigorous health and safety procedures, equipment and resources have been put in place, to ensure the safety of all children, young people and staff when schools and education settings have been able to open. Schools have been equipped with PPE, resources and advice to support social distancing and clear guidance on how to respond should they be faced with positive cases of COVID-19.
29. Pupils eligible for free school meals have been provided for throughout school closure periods. Since January 2021, eligible pupils have been provided for through the Council's Supermarket voucher system which has ensured that every eligible pupil has received a benefit.
30. School leaders have adopted new blended learning approaches, to support children and young people to continue their education at home and positively, many children have responded extremely well, embracing new technology. Some school leaders have reported positive gains in pupils building resilience, learning new skills, developing independence and demonstrating charity, empathy and a sense of community in getting through this period together. In many cases, schools have reported improved relationships with parents and families which will need to be further harnessed and developed when schools re-open
31. The Council has provided over 20,000 digital devices to schools, for distribution to learners and staff without access to equipment at home. The digital skills of both pupils and school staff have rapidly accelerated to support continuity of learning. Some pupils, such as those educated other than at school, have responded very positively to online learning and engagement levels have increased.
32. The Education Welfare Service has continued to complete welfare visits on behalf of schools where they have been unable to contact families.
33. The school workforce has risen to the challenge, showing dedication and commitment to children and young people they support. Teachers and their teams have taken the opportunity to improve their own professional learning, to expand their knowledge, to research new teaching techniques, and to put them into practice.
34. Special schools have reported excellent collaboration with multi agency services, including health and social services, which has enabled the very best levels of care, support and learning for their pupils.
35. Schools, colleges, youth services and post 16 providers continue to work hard to ensure that ongoing education, training and employment options are available for young people leaving statutory education, drawing upon

the excellent partnership networks formed through The Cardiff Commitment.

### Examinations and Progression Post 16

36. GCSE and 'A' Level examinations were cancelled in Wales in 2020 and have been cancelled again for 2021. In place of exams, the Welsh Government will work with schools again this year to take forward teacher managed assessments linked to a national approach to provide consistency across Wales. The well-being of learners and ensuring fairness across the system has been central to this decision making process. In the light of these decisions, some young people have expressed anxieties regarding the absence of examinations and are hugely concerned about how the grades awarded to learners in 2020 and 2021 will be perceived by universities and employers. Some fear being labelled as 'the COVID generation' and find it very difficult to remain optimistic about their futures.
37. Due to the significant resource and commitment channelled into supporting the transition of Year 11 leavers into education, employment or training during the summer of 2020, the number of Year 11 'NEETs' in October 2020 were maintained at just below 2% (57 young people). However, concerns are growing regarding the retention of Post 16 destinations, with increasing numbers of young people dropping out of their places or at risk of dropping out. This is being caused by several factors including the loss of jobs, a restricted education experience due to school closure and the lack of access to practical aspects to vocational courses.

### Next Steps:

38. As children and young people are allowed to return to school, commencing with the return of Foundation Phase pupils from the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, the Council will ensure that all school buildings and learning environments are safe and COVID secure.
39. Health and Safety risk assessments will be updated and workforce capacity levels will be carefully monitored to ensure that appropriate pupil/staffing ratios can be maintained. The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning has issued guidance to all schools, based upon the most recent TAG and Welsh Government advice. Health and safety updates will be continually shared with schools through webinars and online materials; and ongoing support to ensure compliance with Track and Trace requirements.
40. The Council is supporting the implementation of regular testing of staff across education and early years settings, using rapid Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits. Staff will be provided with a stock of personal testing kits, as well as detailed instructions and on how to undertake the tests and record results. Testing will be undertaken twice per week for those staff working directly or in regular contact with children, this also includes indirect staff such as cleaners, transport provider staff etc.

Those who may be required to attend schools or early years settings on an ad-hoc basis such as central education staff, consortium advisors, Council contractors working inside the school etc. will be required to undertake a test before they attend. Settings will also need arrangements in place to test visitors.

41. A positive LFD test result will require precautionary isolation of the individual, household contacts and cohort/bubble from the school or setting, where relevant, until a PCR test is undertaken via a local testing centre and laboratory test results are confirmed.
42. Schools and day care settings will receive their testing kits directly from the Department of Health and Social Care. For smaller childcare settings Council Officers and Council contract staff tests will be distributed via Central Stores who are increasing their distribution capacity to support the implementation.
43. Consideration will be given to options for safely re-introducing school catering, and continuing to provide free school meals benefits for all eligible pupils. Safe school transport will also need to be remobilised.
44. The well-being of the school workforce will be prioritised. School leaders are calling for vaccinations for all school staff which is subject to decision making by Welsh Government.
45. The Council will fully engage Head teachers and Governors in planning and decision making as schools re-open, to ensure that all staff are supported appropriately to recover from the experiences of the pandemic. School staff will be provided with access to all necessary training to support the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of children and young people, including training such as Thrive, ACE / Trauma Informed programmes and Domestic Violence awareness.

#### Re-engaging children and young people

46. Whilst children and young people are generally less clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 than the adult population, the wider effects of the pandemic have undoubtedly disproportionately and negatively affected the younger generation. Since March 2020, children and young people have experienced several extended periods of school closures and the routines of their daily lives have been upturned.
47. Some children and young people are reported to be quite happy at home with their families and are being well supported to engage in learning and maintain their physical and emotional mental health and well-being through family led activities, however many vulnerable children are accessing hub based provision at schools which is also making an important difference in maintaining learning and well-being.
48. Of significant concern is the impact of the pandemic upon the most vulnerable children and young people with many families faced with additional pressures and strains through loss of support networks,

isolation, money worries, housing insecurity, family breakdown and reduced access to health services. Many families will also be coping with bereavement and loss. This all creates 'trauma' in children and families. The second lockdown is reported to be having a far more detrimental impact than the previous lockdown.

49. The Children's Commissioner's national 'Coronavirus and Me' survey January 2021, provides an insight to the views of children and young people at this time. The summary of findings reports that:

*'Life has been difficult for all age groups. Strong negative feelings were expressed by many children and young people. They expressed frustration and sometimes anger, about the impact of the pandemic on their lives. 3 – 7 year olds spoke about missing friends, family members and experiences. 7-11 year olds' most common comment at the end of the survey related to missing friends, followed by missing their teacher or school and thirdly enjoying time with their families. From mid-teens on, we saw signs of additional distress potentially compounded by worries about exams and their futures. 30% of 17 and 18 year olds who took part are worried 'most of the time'.*

*Loneliness rates are high and not being able to see friends is having the biggest impact on children's lives, followed by not being able to see other family members and the impact of school and college closures.*

50. Though attendance rates in the autumn term were higher than anticipated, many learners encountered frequent disruption to their education as a result of requirements to self-isolate at home as contacts of positive COVID-19 cases. Between September and December 2020, 23,637 learners were required to self-isolate at intervals. Due to concerns regarding virus transmission, many parents chose not to return their children to the classroom when schools re-opened.
51. Most schools have adapted well to enable the delivery of distance learning to their pupils, with school surveys showing that approximately 62% of schools are engaging over 80% of their learners with the distance learning opportunities offered. However, in some of the more disadvantaged areas of the city, the engagement figures are much lower than this; in a few schools engagement levels are below 50%. Teachers report that the hardest to reach learners are not engaging despite extensive efforts.
52. A similar pattern can be seen in school attendance figures. The average school attendance figures recorded in the autumn 2020 term were – 89% Primary, 81.3% Secondary and 73.1% in Special schools. However, there were 318 learners with attendance below 25%, 84 of these were in Year 11. Furthermore, since September 2020, a further 159 children have become 'Electively Home Educated' in Cardiff. Of these, 58 are due to a fear of COVID-19
53. At present referrals to School based counselling are down. Children and young people are saying that they will wait until they can see a

counsellor face to face. This is reasonably consistent across Wales. A huge spike in requests for counselling services is expected when children and young people aged 11-18 return to school.

54. Child and Adolescent and Primary Mental Health Services have seen a 30% increase to primary services and increased waiting times at present. In October 2020, the 28 days to assessment target were being met but this time is now closer to 56 days. Waiting times have also increased for specialist CAMHS services and have been up to 24 weeks. The Health Board are running waiting list initiatives to recover the position.
55. Children and young people undergoing statutory assessment have been seen by the Education Psychology team where possible and a number of cases have been given advice but this will need to be 'topped up' when it is safe to do so. However, a marked increase in the number of statutory assessment requests is expected as children and young people return to school and parents and staff recognise the adverse impact the pandemic has had upon children and young people's educational, social and emotional development.
56. A backlog of children at 'school action plus' of the SEN Code of Practice is being reported by schools, due to the negative impact upon educational attainment in already vulnerable children. This will place additional demand upon Additional Learning Need support systems.
57. There has also been a rise in the number of children eligible for Free Schools Meals. At the start of the initial lockdown in March 2020 Cardiff provided for 11,500 pupils eligible for Free School Meals. At December 2020 there were 14,003 pupils now eligible for FSM in Cardiff. An increase of 21%. This figure may still be understated as the national furlough scheme has been extended to the end of April 2021 so may be masking the true impact of the economic downturn on this statistic.
58. Increasing numbers of Public Protection Notices (PPNs) are being received by Education Services from South Wales Police, as a result of incidents of children witnessing domestic abuse in the household. The conditions created by COVID-19 including unexpected prolonged periods at home, increased family tensions, unemployment and financial insecurity, anxiety and stress are the same conditions known to aggravate domestic violence.
59. The Council's Early Help and Family Support Services have reported noticeable changes to family need during COVID-19 including an increasing concern with well-being, resilience, child and parental mental health. Parents have reported increased anxiety and stress at home due to school closures, worries about supporting their child's education at home and an increase in unwanted behaviours from children and young people. However, calls to the Family Gateway Service and Cardiff Parenting Services are lower than pre-COVID. Most referrals usually come through self-referral routes, usually as a result of a professional (school teacher; GP; Health Visitor; youth worker etc.) speaking with a family directly and supporting them to make contact. As there are very

few community based services operating (even Health Visitors are making minimum home visits) the number of calls have reduced. Whilst the team has fewer calls, the cases handled are much more complex and difficult to support and there is currently a five week waiting time for a full assessment. A surge in demand is expected when schools re-open, as was experienced when schools returned last autumn.

60. Children's Services have reported an increase in the number of children on the Child Protection Register since March 2020. Some schools in the most disadvantaged areas of the city have reported a doubling of their child protection cases. The numbers of children with a Care and Support Plan has also increased and the numbers of Children Looked After has also steadily increased during the same period.
61. There has been a substantial reduction in the number of young people entering the criminal justice system in Cardiff. A 60% reduction in the number of First Time Entrant's into the criminal justice system and a 59% reduction in the number of outcomes from court when comparing Q1-3 in 2019/20 and 2020/21. However, Youth Justice Services report that there have been issues with engaging young people on offending behaviour work and reparation activities with the duration of sessions being significantly reduced due to lockdown conditions. There are currently 188 cases open to the Youth Justice Service.

#### Next Steps:

62. Given the picture outlined above, in the immediate term the Council will prioritise supporting children and young people to re-engage in the daily routine of attending school, with a particular focus on ensuring that vulnerable learner are re-engaging with their schools. Learner well-being, confidence, self-esteem and happiness will be a primary focus. Head teachers have outlined a number of priorities for action including:
  - Attaching council workers to schools in areas of high deprivation where it may be particularly difficult to re-engage learners (Youth workers, Social workers, Education Welfare Officers, Family Support workers). The initial priority will be to get all pupils back into school and that may mean people on the ground calling and knocking on doors for a few weeks. Leaving schools to do this alone will be extremely difficult as they will also have to contend with the in school difficulties.
  - Making enhanced levels of specialist support services available to schools, including school counselling services, specialist teachers, access to CAMHS, bereavement and loss counselling and play therapists where needed.
  - Introducing an extensive programme of Summer Holiday provision across the city, which enables children and young people to socialise, to get active again, to access sports, leisure and recreational activities, to enjoy the outdoors, to feel safe and to build their confidence before entertaining a full return to school in September.

- Developing a diverse range of accessible extra-curricular activities which enable children and young people to catch up on time lost with friends enjoying activities that may have been missed for up to a year.
63. The Council will support schools to build upon the significant progress made in advancing digital learning. The programme to equip all learners with their own individual digital devices will continue, alongside ongoing training and support for teachers to deliver distance learning, ensuring the flexibilities of blended learning approaches can be maximised.
  64. The Council will work with Welsh Government and the Consortium to ensure that schools are adequately resourced and supported to provide 'catch-up' programmes for those learners that require it most. This will include essential support for Literacy & Numeracy catch up, for languages including Welsh where there have not been opportunities for children to use the language at home, and for basic skills which will need to be refreshed on a return to school. This could include support for After School Clubs and community learning.
  65. Head teachers have reported the huge significance of positive parental engagement in supporting children and young people to re-engage in school, to stay safe, to maintain their well-being and to catch up on lost learning. The Council will work with schools, governors and communities to improve relationships with parents, carers and families. This will include initiatives to support Family learning, to improve communication methods, family well-being, staying COVID safe and building confidence in re-engaging in city life post pandemic.
  66. The Youth Justice Service will continue to enhance its multi-agency approach to ensure that face to face contact with young people can occur where necessary and to provide a more co-ordinated and streamlined service for those young people assessed as high risk.
  67. In recognition of the challenges faced by some of the most vulnerable young people, the Council is proposing to create additional capacity in the Looked After Children in Education team, to employ Mentors that will support young people in secondary education to recover lost learning in their final years in school, in readiness for progression post 16. Additional capacity will also be deployed in the Youth Service to enable Mentors to identify, track and support the most vulnerable and hard to reach young people who have or are at risk of dropping out of destinations previously secured – for example jobs lost during the pandemic, or vocational training options that have proved inaccessible due to the pandemic.
  68. The steps outlined in this report represent the immediate actions the Council and schools will take to support children and young people as schools begin to re-open to all learners. The Cabinet recognises that, given the significant negative impact of the pandemic on children and young people these represent only the initial actions in what must be a concerted and sustained programme of support for all children and young

people, from early years through to transitioning into employment and education, as part of a Child Friendly Recovery.

### **Continuing to support businesses and workers impacted by the pandemic**

69. Covid-19 restrictions have greatly impacted the city economy. Unemployment has roughly doubled over the course of the past year, and at 31 December 2020 over 18,800 people or 12% of the city's workforce remained on the UK Government's 'furlough' scheme. The impact has been felt most in sectors where there is direct person-to-person contact, such as retail, hospitality and close contact services. These are sectors that are major employers of young people, and form a significant part of Cardiff's city-centre economy.
70. In June 2020, Cabinet agreed to establish an Economic Recovery Task Force in response to the economic crisis, focused on supporting impacted businesses and workers, and supporting people, particularly young people, into employment or training.
71. This has included the scaling up of the Council's Into Work Team, who have delivered a range of employment support activities to business and workers, including: supporting circa 400 individuals into employment; developing industry-specific redundancy support for employers impacted by the current economic climate, such as Debenhams and Arcadia; and innovative digital engagement including Online Pop Up Business School, attended by 125 people, 21% of whom have since begun trading and 68 digital job clubs, which support individuals with Universal Credit applications and pre-employment support, such as CV writing
72. Through the Business Rates Scheme the Council's Rates and Economic Development Teams have supported over 16,000 businesses and paid out almost £100 million in financial support over the course of the pandemic. The Council has also helped deliver 4,000 grants for small businesses, around 800 Freelancer grants for the creative sector, as well as 200 grants for new starters. In total, the Council has provided approximately £10 million in financial support for small business in Cardiff, estimated to have supported circa 10,000 people to remain in employment.
73. A particular focus has been placed on creating additional opportunities for young people. This has included coordinating and promoting the UK Kickstart Scheme, which provides funding to create new six month traineeships for 16 to 24 years olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment. The Cardiff Commitment Team has also continued their work with young people and employers, including hosting a number of digital Employer Engagement Events since the summer of 2020, with each event attended by over 60 business attendees, and the delivery of the Council's first virtual 'Open Your Eyes' week took place in February 2021, with 500 pupils from Year 7 and 8 at St Teilo's CiW High School.

74. In addition to this work a project to develop the employability of young people, aged 18-24, in Butetown was established in December 2020, with funding provided by DWP. The aim of the project is remove barriers to sustainable employment. Throughout December, the project supported 25 new clients, a number of whom have already completed vocational training schemes. The Council's Youth Service has also expanded its number of mentors, enabling one-to-one support to be provided to 300 more clients a week. 22 Care Workers have been supported into work through mentoring projects and pre-employment training. Additionally, the Council has also commissioned 'One Million Mentors' to expand its mentoring programme for young people in Cardiff.

### Next Steps

75. In the immediate term, as the Welsh Government gradually releases restrictions allowing a greater level of economic activity and as the UK Government furlough scheme is wound down, the Council will continue to provide support for impacted businesses and workers.
76. This will include a further expansion of the Into Work Service, including:
- Promoting the DWP's Restart Scheme which will give Universal Credit claimants, who have been out of work for at least 12 months, enhanced support to find jobs in their local area;
  - Delivering an expanded Self Employment Advice service to support the Welsh Government's Barriers Grant which provides unemployed people with up to £2,000 to contribute towards the essential costs of starting a new business, with priority given to those most affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. This includes young people, women, disabled people and people from BAME background;
  - Continuing to deliver tablet gifting and loan schemes for individuals actively seeking employment or looking to upskill, as well as the general provision of online support. So far 110 tablets have been gifted;
  - Take forward sector specific programmes, including a Construction Academy South East Wales project, starting in March 2021, and funded by CITB and delivered by the Into Work Team, that aims to support 750 individuals over 3 years to obtain skills to work within the construction industry.
77. The Council's Economic Development Service will also continue to provide support to businesses, including:
- Delivering a third round of discretionary grant support for businesses. that will provide one off payments of £2,000 for businesses impacted by the pandemic restrictions.
  - To support its workshop tenants the Council will also seek to provide more flexible terms for tenants over the next financial year.
  - Creating a dedicated microsite to highlight and promote business support availability at all levels of government.

78. As part of its work to support young people into employment the Council has applied directly to the UK Government's Kickstart Scheme grant funding, to help create 30 Kickstart Corporate Trainee opportunities for those aged 16-24, claiming Universal Benefit and at risk of long term unemployment. In doing so, the Council has committed to top up the wage of these Kickstart trainees from national minimum wage to the living wage.
79. To increase the uptake of the scheme across the city a dedicated Kickstart landing page will be developed that will provide support and advice to enable young people to access the scheme. The site will be targeted at those aged under 24, but will also provide support for parents, carers, youth support services and businesses. In addition to the UK Kickstart scheme, the page will signpost towards wider support from the Council's Into Work services, our Youth Service and the Department for Work and Pensions. The page will also provide appropriate signposting for businesses who want to take part in the Kickstart scheme. Once the page is established, a dedicated communications plan will be put into place to promote the Kickstart Scheme on a weekly basis via Cardiff Council social media and other channels.
80. The Council is also exploring the potential to employ a dedicated Kickstart coordinator to: facilitate the recruitment of business offering Kickstart placements; support Youth Support Services helping young people to get placements; and develop a communications strategy to raise awareness of the programme for all stakeholders. To support the wider goal of retain as many young people as possible in appropriate education pathways a new Post-16 Project Officer post has also been approved. In the first instance, this Officer will be responsible for engaging all Cardiff 6<sup>th</sup> forms, Further Education and Work Based learning providers to increase the visibility and transparency of the range of post-16 opportunities available in Cardiff for 16-24 year olds.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

81. To enable the Cabinet to agree an approach which responds to the urgent issues facing the city as lockdown restrictions are eased.

### **Financial Implications**

82. The report sets out a series of actions that have been taken or will be taken as a result of the pandemic crisis. The funding of each of these actions has been identified through a combination of support provided by the WG Hardship Fund, specific WG support through grants, the budgetary allocation of the current year 2020/21 and the proposals taken forward for the 2021/22 budget report. The budget report of 2021/22 sets out the risks associated with the pandemic and this will include the sustainability of WG support and funding and the impact on Council services. There will be a need to regularly review the funding means of these actions over the forthcoming weeks and months in order to maintain a level of financial sustainability. All claims to Welsh

Government will be subject to potential review at a later point and evidence held of spend and additional need.

83. The report also highlights the significant delivery of Grants to businesses and these processes continue to require a level of control to ensure that only those eligible are paid with the appropriate amount.

### **Legal Implications**

84. Directorates continue to seek ongoing legal advice and support in relation to proposals to deal with issues arising from the pandemic, and will continue to do so in relation to proposals set out in this report. Consultation and equality impact assessments will be completed where necessary and decision takers will take consultation responses and any equality impacts into account in taking decisions. This is because the Council has to satisfy its public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties) – the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED). These duties require the Council to have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of ‘protected characteristics’. The ‘Protected characteristics’ are: • Age • Gender reassignment • Sex • Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality • Disability • Pregnancy and maternity • Marriage and civil partnership • Sexual orientation • Religion or belief – including lack of belief.
85. Account will also be taken of the Council’s duty under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which places a ‘well-being duty’ on public bodies aimed at achieving 7 national well-being goals for Wales - a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, has cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, and is globally responsible. In discharging its duties under the Act, the Council has set and published well being objectives designed to maximise its contribution to achieving the national well being goals. The well being objectives are set out in Cardiff’s Corporate Plan.
86. When exercising its functions, the Council is required to take all reasonable steps to meet its well being objectives. This means that the decision makers should consider how the proposed decision will contribute towards meeting the well being objectives and must be satisfied that all reasonable steps have been taken to meet those objectives. The well being duty also requires the Council to act in accordance with a ‘sustainable development principle’. This principle requires the Council to act in a way which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Put simply, this means that Council decision makers must take account of the impact of their decisions on people living their lives in Wales in the future. In doing so, the Council must: • Look to the long term • Focus on prevention by understanding the root causes of problems • Deliver an integrated approach to achieving the 7 national well-being goals • Work in collaboration with others to find shared sustainable solutions • Involve people from all

sections of the community in the decisions which affect them. The decision maker must be satisfied that the proposed decision accords with the principles above; and due regard must be given to the Statutory Guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers, which is accessible using the link below:

<https://gov.wales/topics/people-andcommunities/people/futuregenerations-act/statutory-guidance/?lang=en>

### **HR Implications**

87. The Trade Unions will be consulted on any employee implications of the detailed work which is set out in this report. Any creation of roles will follow the corporately agreed processes for evaluation and recruitment.

### **Property Implications**

88. There are no specific property implications in respect of this report from a transactional or valuation perspective. Where relevant, any property related elements that are required in respect of the re-opening of the council's estate should be done so in accordance with the Council's Asset Management process and in consultation with Strategic Estates and relevant service areas.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommend to authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance, Modernisation and Performance, and the Section 151 Officer to:

- Allocate resources, within the budgetary framework, to support the Council's continued response to the pandemic and economic crisis, including the provision of staff and buildings to support the ongoing vaccination programme;
- Formalise arrangements with the Welsh Government for the National Surge TTP service to be hosted by Cardiff Council;
- Approve the Council's involvement in the UK Government Kick-Start scheme.

<b>SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	<b>Paul Orders</b> <b>Chief Executive</b>
	19 February 2021

*The following background paper has been taken into account:*

Restart, Recover, Renew: Next Steps for Cardiff during the COVID-19 Crisis  
Cabinet report June 2020