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Monday, 21 September 2020

Notice of Reports Received following Publication of Agenda.

Adults Select Committee

Tuesday, 29th September, 2020 at 10.30 am
Remote Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attached are reports that the committee will consider as part of the original agenda but were submitted to democratic services following publication of the agenda.

Item No	Item	Pages
5.	Monmouthshire Track, Trace and Protect Service Position report - Scrutiny of a position report following scrutiny on 2nd July 2020.	1 - 4
6.	Monmouthshire County Council's Public Protection response to the Covid-19 pandemic - April to September 2020 - Scrutiny of the progress report and any implications arising.	5 - 12

Paul Matthews
Chief Executive

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SUBJECT: Test Trace and Protect – progress report

MEETING: Adults Select Committee

DATE: 29th September 2020

DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide the committee with a progress report of the Test Trace and Protect system for Monmouthshire.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The committee is invited to comment on the Authority's current role undertaking contact tracing work for both Monmouthshire and the wider Gwent region.

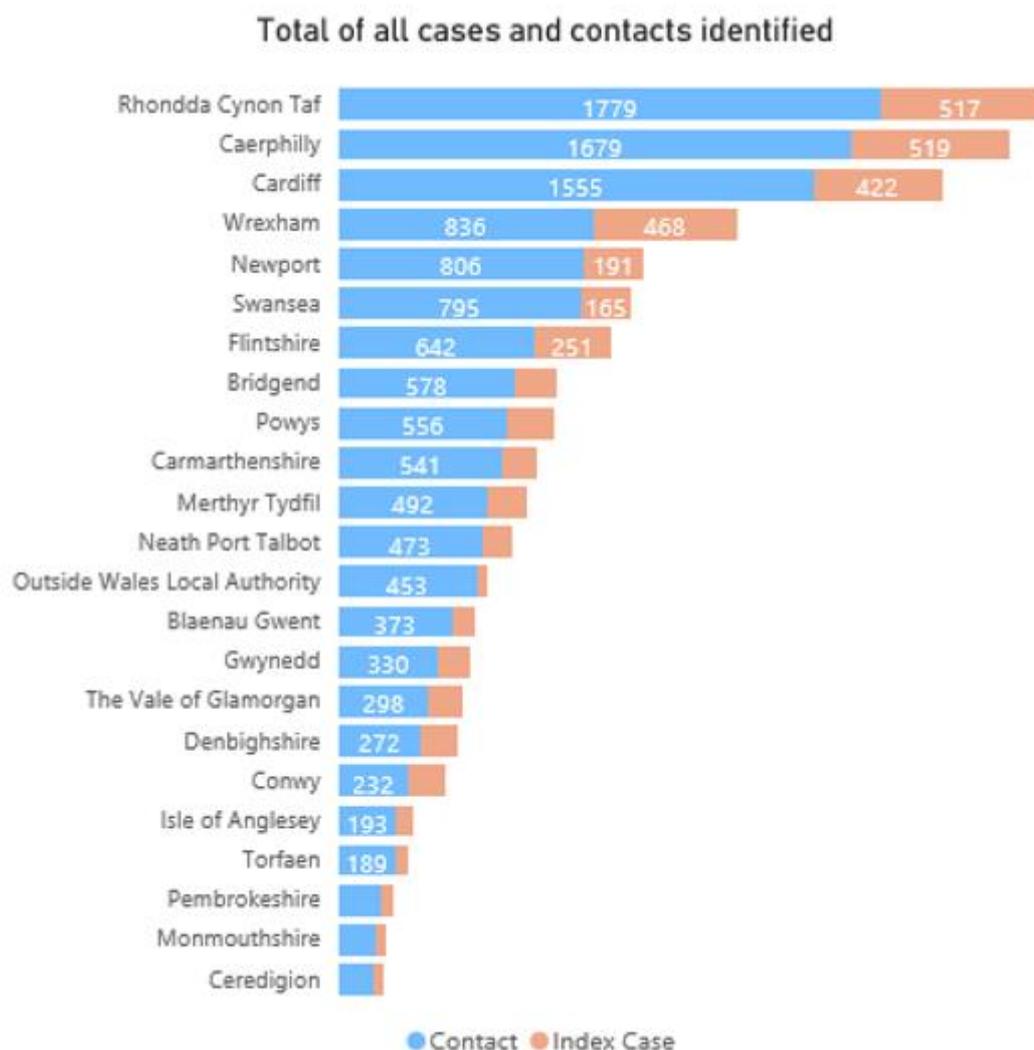
3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) scheme involves contacting people who have received a positive test and gathering information about those who they may have been in contact with while they have been contagious. A *Contact Tracer* makes the initial call to any positive Covid-19 cases. In Monmouthshire Environmental Health staff perform this role alongside their existing workload. Once we have details of the people who the infected individual may have been exposed to, the process of tracing and contacting all of these people begins. This is done by a larger team of *Contact Advisors*, made up of staff recruited specifically for the role, and some re-deployed Officers, for example, from the Borough Theatre. Those contacted are assisted to book tests and are required to self-isolate for up to 14 days. All contacts receive daily follow-up calls to check on symptoms so the virus can be tracked and those who are infected can be prevented from spreading the virus to the wider population.
- 3.2 Monmouthshire County Council has partnered with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Public Health Wales and neighbouring local authorities to collaborate on a Gwent-wide approach. This 'mutual support' model has been key in swiftly dealing with cases anywhere within the Gwent area, with staff deployed from neighbouring areas to assist those in greatest need.
- 3.3 Our TTP service was set up at the end of May 2020, as reported to this Committee on 2nd July 2020. Now the service has been operation for nearly 4 months, this is a good opportunity to reflect on what work has been undertaken and outcomes achieved.
- 3.4 On 2nd July we reported contact tracing 12 cases up to the start of July for MCC and a similar number for outside the area helping colleagues in North Wales, Newport, Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent. Since then, and assisted by moving to remote working, we have increased our numbers of tracers and advisors steadily. There's a regional

expectation we have a TTP service providing an 8am to 8pm, 7 day a week cover, from 1st October. All tracers have an Environmental Health background which has been invaluable for detecting the links to premises and work places, and to act on the information immediately without delay. The close working with advisors ensures a quick, effective tracing service.

3.5 From the 1st July we have contact traced 27 cases for MCC which has created 120 contacts that were eligible for follow up, as they had been in contact with the original index positive case. Certain cases are ineligible for tracing as they were hospitalised, deceased or a resident in a care home, hence the discrepancy between the 41 (figure below) and the 27 cases traced.

3.6 Local Authority Comparison 01/7/2020 to 17/09/2020



Cases identified in Mon county 41 – Contacts identified in Mon – 141

3.7 Since the 3rd September there has been a serious escalation of cases, in particularly Caerphilly and Newport, and more recently Blaenau Gwent. Noting our current low

numbers, we have been mobilising the team to assist other Gwent TTP teams. In a two week period, from 3rd to 17th September, Monmouthshire TTP team traced 134 cases, and provided advisory calls to 322 non-Monmouthshire residents. In addition, we have undertaken 97 'warning and informing' calls to persons who, for example, may have visited an affected public house.

- 3.8 Monmouthshire TTP now has a Programme lead/contact tracer, a Regional Cell EHO seconded from team, (full time specialist advisor for MCC and Gwent cover), and by the 1st October will have a further two contact Tracers. The Commercial team of remaining 7 Officers have been working on a shift rota to assist with the rest of Gwent, and these two further external tracers are required to relieve pressure off the team due to the immense workload still coming in that is Covid related.
- 3.9 Out of the original Advisor team of 22 (mainly 0.5 FTE) all but 12 have returned to substantive posts. The shortfall has been made up with employing 8 new full time starters from the 1st September and, to increase capacity for predicted workload from PHW/ABUHB, we are having 3 advisors from redeployment, 3 new starters from 1st October and an additional 7 posts are currently being advertised. This will bring our staff numbers to the levels modelled by Health sector partners.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 4.1 National modelling indicates that the virus appears to have a disproportionate effect on BAME groups and older people, while younger people are less likely to experience the worst health impact. Care homes have received priority and specific information, testing, etc. to protect older people in such settings.

5. REASONS:

- 5.1 To ensure that Members have an understanding of the arrangements in place to deliver effective contact tracing in our county, and recognise the contribution of various Council Officers in reducing the spread of Covid-19 in various settings.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 The Monmouthshire TTP service is largely funded by Welsh Government (WG). All additional work, by both tracers and advisors, including evening and weekend working, will be reimbursed by WG, including all ICT costs. The cost of Environmental Health Officers, and other Council staff, undertaking this work during normal core hours is not reimbursed. The current agreed funding from WG comes to an end on 31st March 2021.

7. AUTHOR:

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With contributions from Gill Dicken (Tracer Lead) & Richard Drinkwater (Advisor Lead).

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SUBJECT: MCC's Public Protection response to the Covid-19 pandemic – during the six months March to August 2020

MEETING: Adults Select Committee

DATE: 29th September 2020

DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an analysis of the Public Protection response to dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is invited to use the information to inform its understanding of the role of Public Protection in preventing the spread of the virus and enforcing the measures put in place by Welsh Government.
- 2.2 Noting the importance of protecting the public, including our most vulnerable, a further report be submitted in another six months' time, to allow further scrutiny of our performance.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Public Protection division consists of Environmental Health – two sections 'Commercial' and 'Public Health' – Licensing and Trading Standards. This report serves to illustrate the work of these teams in direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.2. Environmental Health (Commercial)

- 3.2.1 The team has been instrumental in setting up and running the contact tracers for MCC TTP, as outlined in the earlier report to this Committee, 'Test, Trace & Protect – progress report'. The expertise of the team has ensured cases and contacts have been dealt with swiftly and professionally, essential to minimise the spread of Covid-19. In the months of July and August the team covered over 300 hours of TTP work.
- 3.2.2 Numbers of service requests have doubled with the extra being related totally to Covid-19 advice and compliance. Keeping up with the various changes to the Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations in Wales has proved challenging, and time consuming when relaying this information to local businesses, community groups and the public. Work currently involves ensuring compliance with the regulations and dealing with care home and school queries.
- 3.2.3 In addition to the cases traced within Monmouthshire, the team provided crucial support to the other four Gwent TTP teams. For example, over the two week period

3rd to 17th September, the team contact traced 134 non-Monmouthshire cases, with 322 advisory follow-ups and 97 'warn and inform' calls.

3.2.4 Some of the areas of work that the team have been heavily involved with include -

- Covid in care homes (Members of this Committee received a report on this specific topic on 2nd July 2020) - continuing to support with controls and investigation of any cases, working closely with the Commissioning team
- Providing open 'Q and A' fora for all care providers on a weekly basis
- Providing open Q and A for businesses and also ones for educational establishments
- Key worker accommodation approval during full lockdown
- Legionella advice to all business before reopening
- Identifying and verifying business for grants
- Providing advice to many new businesses setting up and those wishing to diversify
- Providing regional Gwent specialist EHO cover during evenings and weekends
- Prioritising high risk premises for inspection
- Fielding large numbers of complex queries from schools
- Responding and visiting businesses regarding Covid-19 non-compliance in businesses as lockdown continues to be eased
- Event advice and enforcement – agreeing the cancellation of various events that contravene the Welsh Coronavirus restrictions regulations.

3.2.5 A comparison of the last six months and the same period in 2019 is provided below –

Service Request type	1/3/2019 - 31/8/2019	1/3/2020 - 31/8/2020
Food	401	225
Covid	0	416*
Other	76	51
total	477	692 **

*By 17/9/2020, this figure has gone up to 519

**By 17/9/2020 this figure has risen to 795

This represents a 45% increase in complaints this year compared to last.

The dedication of the team during this period has been immense, with many needing to work late into the night and weekends, to assist the pan-Gwent TTP work.

3.3 Environmental Health (Public Health)

3.3.1 The reactive work undertaken by the team has continued throughout the pandemic, a period which has seen a substantial increase in some complaints types and a 19% overall increase as illustrated below:

Service Request type	1/3/2019 - 31/8/2019	1/3/2019 – 31/8/2020
Noise nuisance complaints	197	248
Smoke nuisance complaints	41	113
Fly tipping	110	188
Rats and mice	38	68
Total service requests	1018	1208

In view of the restrictions on movement during the lockdown period the team have had to be flexible and smart in investigating and dealing with these complaints.

- 3.3.2 In addition Officers have liaised with the owners of our 18 licensed holiday caravan sites in the County regarding their responsibilities, outlining latest Covid guidance regarding reopening. A number of sites have decided to remain closed until next season but the majority are open for business. These have been risk assessed for Covid compliance.
- 3.3.3 Three EHOs in the team are now contact tracers for MCC TTP, helping ease some of the existing pressure on colleagues in the Commercial team.

3.4 Licensing

- 3.4.1 The Licensing team has strived to keep businesses running throughout this difficult time. Guidance was provided to the trade immediately on receipt from Welsh Government via e-mails and website updates. Licensing continues to play an active part in Monmouthshire's Business Forum and Re-Opening Town Centre Protects, with the aim of keeping businesses as successful as possible during a pandemic.
- 3.4.2 Towards the end of March pubs, clubs and restaurants closed. Takeaway food was permitted, which resulted in licensing permissions being altered to accommodate this change. Immediate advice was given to the trade on our website, including risk assessment information. Spot checks and enforcement visits were carried out by Licensing and the Police to ensure Covid Regulations compliance.
- 3.4.3 To ensure taxi and private hire drivers could continue working, medical self-certification was permitted, and knowledge tests and safeguarding training were put on hold as the college closed. Licensing are currently working with Torfaen Training to introduce on-line training and safeguarding. Vehicles had MOT testing delayed, which was permitted by DVSA. As a result of this we permitted a delay in taxi tests.
- 3.4.4 At the request of the trade, free hand sanitiser was distributed (10 gallons) to taxi drivers, for which they were very grateful, due to a shortage in early summer. Licensing also allowed street traders to close and retain their pitches delaying payment until they were able to trade again, to support them through 2020.
- 3.4.5 Two 'Teams' events were held by Licensing and Environmental Health in the summer to engage restaurants, pubs and clubs, enabling them to ask any questions prior to

Welsh Government implementing a phased opening of the hospitality sector. Advice was given on grants available, Covid compliance and risk assessments. The events were very well received by the trade, with positive feedback and thanks for taking the time to provide this service.

3.4.6 Licensing issued guidance and procedures to the taxi trade if they requested temporary screens to be inserted into their vehicle, to provide some protection to both drivers and passengers.

3.4.7 On 13th July restaurants, pubs and clubs were allowed to re-open outdoors. Immediate advice was provided and monitoring conducted to ensure social distancing and compliance. Licensing played an active part with Highways to put in place pavement licences to assist premises to increase their trading area, and were consulted on 34 pavement applications.

3.4.8 On 3rd August 2020 restaurants, pubs and cafes were allowed to re-open indoors. Licensing actively assisted with queries and took part in the Re-opening Town Centres project.

3.4.9 A comparison of 'service request' and 'inspections' for the six month periods indicated is provided below. It shows very similar level of activity -

	1 st March to 31 st August 2019	1 st March to 31 st August 2020
Service Requests	456	390
Covid Service Requests	0	70
Inspections	112	60
Covid Inspections	0	42

3.5 Trading Standards & Animal Health

3.5.1 Our Trading Standards service has maintained its' key functions including responding to consumer issues especially where victims are vulnerable, or the issue is high risk such as scams/fraud, product safety or animal disease control.

Complaints and enquiries for the six month period 1st March to 31st August have seen an increase of 51% from the same period as last year -

	1/03/2019	31/08/2020	
Complaints/Enquiries	365	550	+ 51%

3.5.2 Protecting vulnerable residents, and prioritising high risk/harm issues - Several Coronavirus related scams, frauds and trading malpractices have been identified either locally or elsewhere in the Country.

3.5.3 Business advice e.g. supply chain issues, compliance, product safety etc.- This pandemic is affecting businesses very differently depending on their trade and has led to a number of approaches for advice.

3.5.4 Product safety, animal health, ongoing criminal cases and investigations - Several areas of our work have continued to ensure the ongoing safety of people and animals. It would also be inappropriate to pull away from work to investigate and prosecute criminal offences as this might further encourage criminals as they feel they can 'get away with' crimes.

3.5.5 Due to the typically negative effect on businesses, many have diversified into products they do not normally manufacture or import, without due regard to PPE or biocidal controls that apply. For example, Intelligence received resulted in hand sanitiser being sampled and submitted for analysis. This showed that the product did not provide the level of protection claimed putting users unknowingly at unnecessary risk. This led to a further six products being submitted for analysis and, whilst the levels of alcohol were above the minimum required to be effective, all products had either warning, other labelling issues or were misleading in their description.

3.5.6 Examples of Coronavirus related Scams –

Here are just some of the scams we are aware of, but please note that fraudsters come in all forms and can contact residents or businesses at the door, by phone, post or online.

- People offering miracle cures for coronavirus – there is no specific treatment for coronavirus (COVID-19).
- The council DO NOT need to enter houses to do a deep clean
- Bogus healthcare workers claiming to be offering 'home-testing' for coronavirus
- Emails claiming that you can get a refund on taxes, utilities or similar are usually bogus and they are just after your personal and bank details.
- Fake products that say they can protect you or cure coronavirus. These will not help and are designed to just take your money
- New mobile phone apps that claim to give you updates on the virus, instead they lock your phone and demand a ransom
- People offering to do your shopping and ask for money upfront and then disappear

One incident included a lady in her 80s who, despite self-isolating, was compelled to answer the door by a stranger who tried to demand £220 in cash to complete a health and safety check. The team have experienced complaints of fraudsters trying to steal people's bank details by misleading families into believing they need to cover payments for school meals whilst the schools are closed, or business details being altered in order to obtain Government support funding by deception through multiple submission of false claims.

3.5.7 In addition the team have supported Public Protection colleagues by responding to non-food/non-licensed premises for any Covid related enquiries.

3.5.8. Animal Health and Welfare

Animal Health have continued to operate and deal with ongoing investigations and complaints despite the pandemic. Whilst there were some initial reductions in attendance at market it was soon encouraged by Welsh Government as intelligence

showed an increase in welfare problems both at market and in animals arriving at slaughter during that early period.

Most significantly was an ongoing farm welfare problem that resulted in the need to seize 128 cattle. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, there was a significant delay in the Court system and subsequent hearings so the case, now concluded, took several months.

3.6 WG – Covid Enforcement Data Return (25th March – 28th August)

For Committee Members information, the Public Protection section submits regular returns to Welsh Government. A five month period is captured below -

COVID-19: local authority enforcement activity

Public Protection

ID	Data Item	Public Protection	V
001	Number of accommodation premises directed to reopen	38	✓
002	Number of care homes contacted about infection control measures	44	✓

		Business closures	V	Social distancing	V	Total	V
003	Number of premises proactively advised	402	✓	286	✓	584	✓
004	Number of visits	28	✓	22	✓	47	✓
005	Number of warning letters issued	2	✓	2	✓	4	✓
006	Number of prohibition notices issued	0	✓	0	✓	0	✓
007	Number of fixed penalty notices issued	0	✓	0	✓	0	✓
008	Number of prosecutions initiated	0	✓	0	✓	0	✓
009	Number of premises closed voluntarily after the first contact	7	✓	0	✓	7	✓
010	Number of premises closed that had prohibition notice served	0	✓	0	✓	0	✓
011	Total number of enquiries	572	✓	512	✓	962	✓

ID	Data Item	Trading standards	V	
012	Number of price gouging / profiteering incidents reported	4	✓	
013	Number of COVID-19 related scams reported:	Online	4	✓
		Phone	1	✓
		Text	0	✓
		Email	4	✓
		On the doorstep	0	✓
		Other E.g. Post	1	✓
	Total number of COVID-19 related scams reported	10	✓	
014	Number of COVID-19 related breach of contract, refusal to refund and return deposit incidents about cancellation of holidays, events and provision of services reported	8	✓	

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDING SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

- 4.1 This report highlights the positive work undertaken in a range of different circumstances. Vulnerable people, be they in care homes, disturbed by neighbours, targeted by scammers, etc. are protected wherever possible. Business support has also been a priority during the pandemic, with interventions in place to assist people to continue operating, and hence helping to protect valuable jobs.

5. REASONS

- 5.1 To ensure Members have an understanding of the comprehensive work undertaken by relatively small teams. The total staff number for the teams referred to in this report (front-line Officers) is 26 full-time equivalents. Timely and effective responses to the large number of Covid-related queries and complaints, together with our proactive work, is key in attempting to prevent the spread of the virus.
- 5.2 Noting the very dynamic nature of the virus, our response will vary based on number of cases, local intelligence received, etc. So a follow-up report in six months' time would serve to keep Members informed of this essential element of Council work.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Certain TTP related work is funded through Welsh Government. The increased work, as a direct consequence of the current pandemic, is certainly impacting on these small teams. This will be kept under review, and substantive posts back-filled where necessary, eg. when EHO's undertake TTP work.

7. AUTHOR

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With relevant sections completed by Gill Dicken and Huw Owen, Environmental Health; Linda O'Gorman, Licensing and Gareth Walters, Trading Standards & Animal Health