

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Risks and Public Service Emergency Response Structure

MEETING: Public Services Select Committee

DATE: 27th July 2020

DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide members with the opportunity to consider the risks related to the coronavirus pandemic in Monmouthshire and the extent to which these may require a whole public service response in addition to those mitigating actions put in place by the local authority.
- 1.2 To provide members with an overview of the regional multi-agency structure for emergency response and recovery.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 The committee is invited to use the risk assessment to ensure that key risks have been identified, that risk levels are proportionate and mitigating actions are in place.
- 2.2 That any amendments requiring collaborative action across partners are shared with the Public Service Board while any suggested amendments that impact on Monmouthshire County Council are presented to Cabinet.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Coronavirus pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge to our way of life and the way in which we provide services. The need to preserve life and stop the spread of the virus, while continuing to support communities, has meant the need to redirect capacity towards the emergency response effort.
- 3.2 The Council has continued to maintain and adapt the structures and mechanisms in place to co-ordinate the emergency response whilst also tracking progress and ensuring we remain focussed on our purpose. Our risk management arrangements have also been maintained and adapted through this period.
- 3.3 The Council's Emergency Management Plan is operating and business continuity arrangements remain in place to deliver and coordinate the response, working across Council services along with our external partners such as the emergency services, neighbouring local authorities and Welsh Government. These continue to operate in a dynamic rapidly changing environment, evolving and adapting to manage and mitigate, as far as possible, a variety of risks to Council service delivery and the well-being of our staff and residents.

- 3.4 As the Council transitions from response to recovery the Council has also adapted the internal response structures that link into wider formal Gwent structures and directly into regional, Welsh and Central Government. A diagram of the structure and arrangements in place can be seen in Appendix 1 of the report.
- 3.5 In the immediate response phase this was co-ordinated internally via the Emergency Response Team (ERT). The ERT was formally stood down on the 29th May 2020 and the Council's Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) took on the ongoing responsibility to oversee the ongoing response. SLT continues to meet twice a week currently.
- 3.6 A COVID-19 Coordinating Group has also been established, chaired by the Chief Officer for Resources, and that comprises the Head of People Services (as Vice Chair of the Gwent Local Resilience Forum) and the Council's Emergency Planning Manager. The Group meets on a weekly basis. The role of this group is to maintain oversight of the ongoing emergency response including receiving updates from the Gwent Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) and determining any matters needing to be reported on weekly Welsh Government returns.
- 3.7 The Emergency Response Team was guided by an established risk register. Subsequent to the ERT being stood down COVID-19 related risks are being assessed by the COVID-19 Coordinating Group. The residual risks have now either transferred to the Council's strategic risk register or where risks are operational in nature they have been transferred into service business plans. There is clear and identified accountability and ownership of these risks and they are being monitored on an ongoing basis. An overview of the key risks related to Coronavirus is shown as appendix 4.
- 3.8 The Council's other established risk management arrangements continue to manage a range of strategic risks across service areas. The strategic risk register continues to be reviewed and updated and resulting from an assessment of potential COVID related impacts on the Authority, the wider Monmouthshire economy and its communities.
- 3.9 The ERT and any sub-groups can quickly be reconvened if the situation arises and will remain under constant review. However, the 'battle rhythm' has naturally slowed as we transition towards the recovery phase.
- 3.10 The Council has a long-standing purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities. The nature of the pandemic meant a need to adjust our focus and accordingly cabinet has established a clear purpose and strategic aims to respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic. In the first phase this was to protect life and support our communities to be sustainable and resilient in these challenging times. As the nature of the pandemic changed, pupils returned to schools and non-essential retail began to re-open this was revised to reflect the need to re-establish community confidence. The purpose became 'we want everyone in our community to feel safe, to support each other and to reach out to those who need help'. Appendix 2 shows the two iterations of the Council's strategic aims.

- 3.11 Monmouthshire links with external responding organisations via the Gwent Strategic Co-ordinating group (SCG). The SCG is chaired by Gwent Police and covers their geographic footprint. Representatives from the Emergency Services, local authorities, health organisations, military, Natural Resources Wales, utilities and Welsh Government sit on this group. Monmouthshire's representative is the Head of People Services. The SCG are responsible for setting the strategic objectives and coordination of the partner agency response to COVID-19.
- 3.12 There are specific sub groups that sit beneath the Gwent Strategic Coordinating Group that support this strategic group. The Council are represented on these groups as necessary. The Council now provides a weekly situation report to the SCG and these are collated and sent weekly to the Emergency Coordination Centre Wales (ECCW). The ECCW reports to Welsh Government (WG) who then report to COBR – the Cabinet Office Briefing Room. The SCG can also escalate concerns directly to Welsh Government through the formal meetings in addition to the weekly situation reporting mechanism.
- 3.13 In addition to the above, the Leader of the Council also meets with other council leaders and Welsh Government ministers to discuss the response on a weekly basis.
- 3.14 SCG are now only needing to meet on a weekly basis, again resulting from the change in battle rhythm and as we see the move and transition towards recovery. The focus of SCG now is to both plan ahead and to ensure that robust arrangements are in place to respond to any further outbreak or second wave, and to ensure that all necessary criteria have met before it stands down. These criteria comprise:
- A Recovery Coordination Group being fully established with TOR and subgroups
 - SCG risks being either mitigated, accepted or transferred
 - An Outbreak Control Plan and protocols with SCG being in place
 - SCG stand-up triggers being agreed, to determine when the SCG might have to reconvene
 - SCG being satisfied that mitigation plans for risks to vulnerable groups are in hand
 - SCG having been de-briefed and lessons have been captured for the LRF to take forward
 - The SCG cost recovery plan having been discussed and implemented
 - A hand-over certificate being completed between SCG/RCG
- 3.15 The number of COVID-19 cases and deaths continues to decline in Wales and Gwent enabling Welsh Government to continue easing the lockdown restrictions that have been in place since March. The risk now concerns any resultant resurgence of COVID-19 cases, whether it be through a local outbreak or a second wave as we move towards the Autumn and flu season where the capacity of the NHS will be reduced.
- 3.16 In order to respond to these risks, the following measures continue to be essential to maintain a reduced level of transmission and avoid resurgence of COVID-19 cases and deaths:

- A robust monitoring framework to closely monitor the situation, rapidly detect increased transmission, assess the impact of the interventions in place and avoid a resurgence of COVID-19.
- An expanded testing strategy aimed at comprehensive testing of all individuals displaying symptoms compatible with COVID-19
- A framework for contact tracing, based on extensive testing, active case finding, early detection of cases, isolation of cases, quarantine and follow-up of contacts.
- Prompt identification and investigation of clusters/outbreaks associated with specific settings, with implementation of tailored control and prevention measures to minimise onward spread to others in the setting and to the wider community.
- Long-term sustainable implementation of essential NPIs (non-pharmaceutical interventions), irrespective of transmission rates, and the ability to amend strategies rapidly in response to indications of increased transmission, if appropriate, only restricting those to local areas.
- A strong risk communication strategy reminding citizens that the pandemic is not over

3.17 Welsh Government and the Gwent SCG and its partners are co-ordinating this aspect of the response. The Council continues to play an active role on SCG and in ensuring that all necessary arrangements are put in place.

3.18 Attached to this report as appendix 3 is a letter from the Minister for Housing and Local Government, Julie James MS sent to chairs of Public Service Boards. It highlights the important role of the Board in considering and co-ordinating the longer term response to the impacts of Covid-19 on communities. This presents an opportunity to reflect on whether the current well-being objectives and priorities set Monmouthshire's Well-being Plan remain the right areas of focus. The collaborative effort to address the virus and the impact on the work of the PSB will be considered at its next meeting later this month.

4 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

4.1 The risk management arrangements aim to identify and assess risks robustly, drawing on a range of evidence both internally across all service areas as well as well as externally through the Gwent SCG and other sources.

4.2 These arrangements form part of the emergency response and the aim is to put in place risk controls that are appropriate and proportionate to the issues they are mitigating. The legislation and the council's responsibilities in all these areas continue to remain an important part of our response and as it continues transition through to recovery.

4.3 The Council's other established risk management arrangements continue to manage a range of strategic risks across service areas. The strategic risk register continues to be reviewed and updated and resulting from an assessment of potential COVID related impacts on the Authority, the wider Monmouthshire economy and its communities.

5 EVALUATION CRITERIA

5.1 The strategic risk register remains a live document that undergoes ongoing and frequent review by the Council's Strategic Leadership Team. Audit Committee also maintains

oversight and review of the Council's risk management arrangements and an update of the strategic risk register is being considered at its meeting on 30th July.

5.2 Operational risks are managed at a directorate and departmental level. Where risks are contained within service business plans these plans are updated on a quarterly basis and monitored through Directorate Management Teams and the Council's performance team.

5.3 COVID related risks are assessed on a weekly basis and as required by the Council's officer led COVID-19 Co-ordinating Group and reported into, considered and acted upon by the Strategic Leadership Team.

6 REASONS:

6.1 To ensure delivery of the Council's restated strategic purpose and strategic aims as the county transitions towards recovery.

We want everyone to feel safe in their communities, to continue to support each other and to reach out to those who need help.

6.2 There remains significant ongoing challenges that must be responded to. The arrangements ensure that risks are identified and assessed robustly by the authority, that accountability for risks are clearly understood and that risk controls are put in place that are appropriate and proportionate to ensure, as far as possible, risk reduction/risk management.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 Specific activity to mitigate/manage risks continues to have significant resource implications that includes:

- Increased costs to maintain current service delivery and demands in setting up new or amended services.
- Significant reduction in income generation as a result of the COVID-19 emergency response and where services have been reduced or closed entirely.
- An inevitable delay in budget savings plans in some areas and that adds to the financial challenges that were already being faced by the Council before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted.
- As the county transitions to recovery the impact that a sharp recession has on Monmouthshire communities and which in turn places increased demands on services that look to support those most vulnerable groups.

7.2 A specific risk on the financial impacts to the Council has already been identified and continues to be managed. A specific strategic aim has been identified to ensure the Council remains financially sustainable as an organisation.

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

8.1 The risk management arrangements aim to identify and assess risks robustly, drawing on a range of evidence. These arrangements form part of the emergency response and the aim is to put in place risk controls that are appropriate and proportionate to the issues they are mitigating. The legislation and the council's responsibilities in all these areas will remain an important part in our response now and as it continues to transition through to the recovery phase.

9 CONSULTEES:

Strategic Leadership Team

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

11 AUTHORS:

Peter Davies, Chief Officer for Resources
Richard Jones, Performance Manager

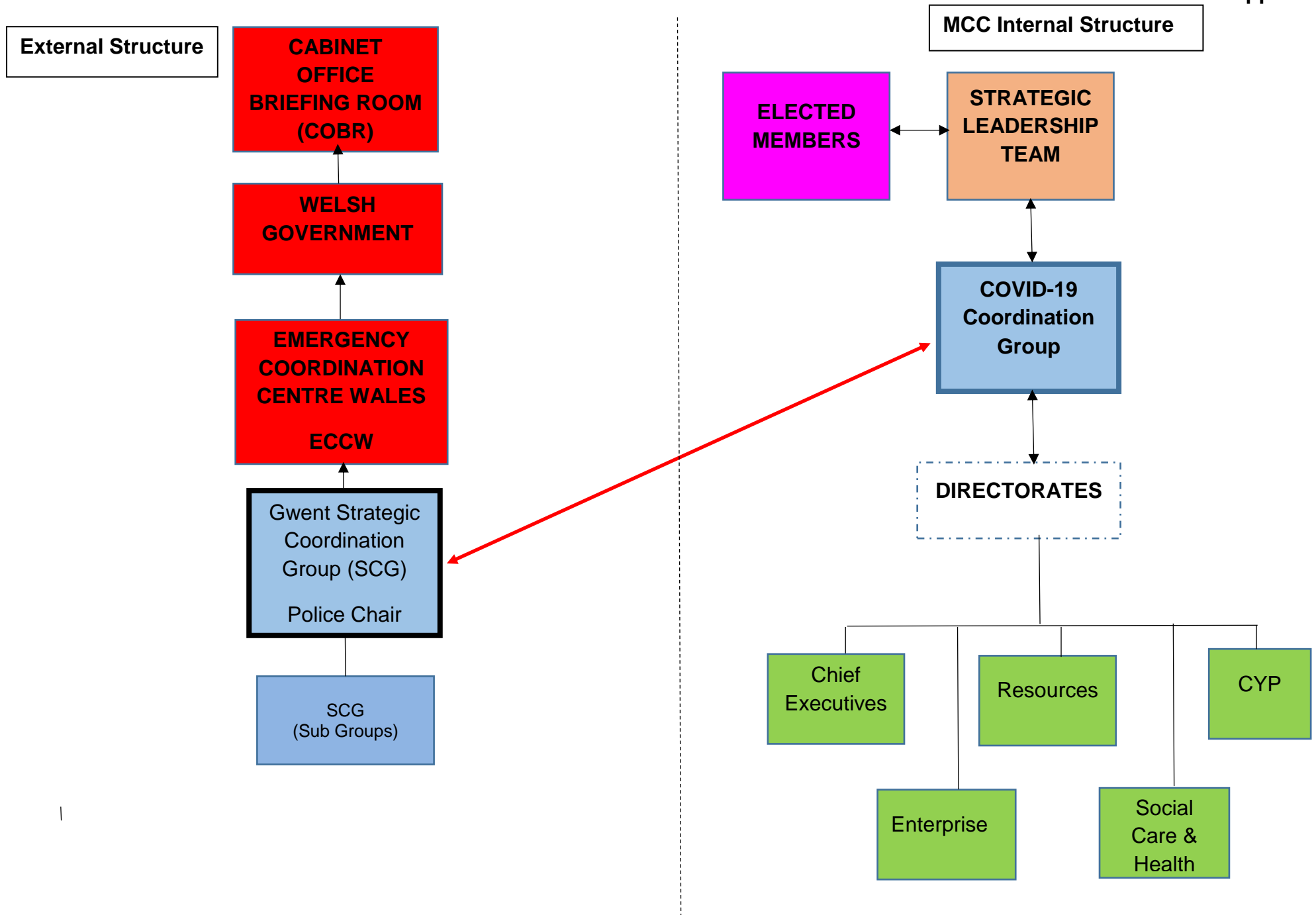
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CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY RESPONSE STRUCTURE

Appendix 1



Coronavirus Purpose and Strategic Aims

OUR CORONAVIRUS STRATEGY

The Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge to our way of life. By clearly setting our strategic aims we will focus on the things that matter most to our residents and businesses, shaping our immediate response and our transition into a re-launch.



OUR PURPOSE

To protect life and support our communities to be sustainable and resilient in these challenging times

OUR VALUES

OPENNESS

We are open and honest. People have the chance to be involved and tell us what matters.

FAIRNESS

We provide opportunities for people and communities to thrive. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently.

FLEXIBILITY

We are flexible, enabling delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

TEAMWORK

We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved. We'll make the best of the ideas and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

OUR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Working with and alongside local communities
- Being innovative and creative
- Learning and adjusting in real time
- Considerate of short-term response and medium-term recovery

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

- Provide clear purposeful civic leadership
- Provide childcare for children of key workers and ensure continuation of learning for all young people
- Help vulnerable young people and adults who need our support
- Help local businesses to survive
- Keep our neighbourhoods clean and tidy whilst managing waste as sustainably as we can
- Be a trusted partner for other agencies / organisations
- Sustain a safe, healthy and productive workforce
- Ensure we remain financially sustainable as an organisation

WHAT WE ARE DOING

- Ensure that every person or family in crisis that we're aware of receives support
- Provide vital social care services for all those who need them, including child protection, care at home and residential care, 24/7
- Deliver our part in COVID contact testing, tracing and community surveillance
- Provide hub schools enabling childcare for key workers' children
- Provide digital technology and connectivity so all pupils can access learning, minimising any potential digital 'gap'
- Ensure all our staff who have the need can access the right Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Provide access to emergency food parcels for shielded people who cannot leave home
- Coordinate community volunteering and support local food banks
- Support local businesses wherever possible and specifically through timely payment of COVID-19 grants
- Reconfigure our services so we can continue domestic waste and recycling collections
- Keep our roads and cemeteries safe by maintaining our levels of grounds maintenance
- Maximise our use of technology so our organisation can keep delivering the things that matter
- Influence and inform legislation changes so we can work effectively in our new context

OUR CORONAVIRUS 'TRANSITION' STRATEGY

The Coronavirus pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge to our way of life and the way we provide services. We are transitioning out of the first wave now and this plan sets our actions to re-build community confidence. This is not our Recovery Plan – that will follow when we are confident that COVID19 is manageable into the medium term.



OUR PURPOSE

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OUR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Working with and alongside local communities
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- Learning and adjusting in real time
- Considerate of short-term response and medium-term recovery

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

- Provide clear purposeful civic leadership
- Maximise the time children can safely spend in school and have consistent, high quality distance learning in place when they can't be in school
- Help vulnerable young people and adults who need our support
- Assist local businesses to reopen and ensure our towns are safe places for traders and visitors
- Keep our neighbourhoods clean and tidy whilst managing waste as sustainably as we can
- Be a trusted partner for other agencies / organisations
- Keep a safe, healthy and productive workforce
- Ensure we remain financially sustainable

WHAT WE ARE DOING

- Continuing to provide vital social care services, including child protection, care at home and residential care, 7 days a week
- Remodelling our town centres and encourage people to shop safely and shop local
- Supporting our hospitality and tourism sectors to re-open as soon as possible
- Maximising the time that learners can safely spend in school from September onwards;
- Ensuring that consistent, high quality distance learning is in place to support children when they are not in school
- Delivering with partner agencies an effective Test Track and Protect system so we can identify virus outbreaks quickly and contain them
- Preparing to provide services which support individuals and families that lose their job / income
- Preparing those services that support vulnerable / high risk groups for an increase in demand as 'lockdown' eases
- Ensuring our staff working in all services are safe
- Providing a full waste management service and continue to develop our approaches to enhance the biodiversity and ecology of our open spaces
- Digitising services where possible to make them readily available to citizens
- Preparing for the re-opening of all leisure / cultural services as soon as guidelines allow
- Supporting our community volunteering network to provide long-term benefit to our communities
- Beginning our financial recovery programme

Letter from Julie James MS, Minister for Housing and Local Government

Included as a separate attachment.

COVID-19 Related Risks

Appendix 4

Appendix 4 to follow. The detail is still being updated at time of agenda despatch