


REPORT TO STRONG COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

PUBLIC PROTECTION COVID RELATED RESPONSE TO 30th SEPTEMBER 2020

Environmental Health – Commercial

Work streams for Commercial during pandemic	Initial work load	Ongoing
Commercial work has moved towards being more reactive than proactive, noting surge in inquiries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early reactive work to pick up complaints of social distancing and open premises. • Advising on changing business types and diversifying for business to remain open 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints continued to be dealt with • Principal Officer more project lead and allocating tasks and lead roles to Officers on projects below
Contact Tracing (TTP)	<p>Setting up a tracing service from scratch, working with Health partners & 4 LA's in Gwent</p> <p>Setting up working procedures for all tracers and advisors in TTP service</p> <p>Initially entirely Commercial EHP's, but now includes a few from the other 3 PP teams</p>	<p>Getting capacity right for current number of Covid-19 cases, contacts of those cases, and ensuring balance right in team for winter 2020 and spring 2021.</p> <p>Various update training, scripts for telephone service, data management, reports to WG, etc.</p> <p>Challenge in providing a 77 hour a week service, 9am to 8pm 7 days a week</p>
Key workers accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacting all know holiday accommodation providers, informing of requirements of closing and availability of business grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with others to get list of premises taking key workers • Setting up procedure, protocol and templates for approval – sharing with Gwent LA's
Legionella	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers attended on-line training on risks of legionella from water systems in premises that have closed. • Identification from database of all premises that will be affected and need to carry out safety procedure before opening up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacting all premises to advise of risk of legionella in water systems through e mail, phone contact, social media – this is virtually every premises that has water on premises • Respond to enquiries received
Business grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All businesses recorded on data base contacted via e mail (707 identified) on availability of grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to call backs for advice and signposted to Enterprise section
Care Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New admissions guidance and working with PHW to raise awareness in care homes • 5 Officers up to speed on guidance and attend on-line training from PHW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closely working with Commissioning Officers in SCH • Regular Q and A sessions set up on Teams with care home providers • All contact details provided to homes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information sent out by Commissioning (SCH) Officers Regular contacts set up with care homes Liaison re PPE provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phone discussions also with care home providers Regular contact with care home Investigation of all cases and contacts Liaise with PHW/ABHB on cases in different closed settings (including assisted living and private hospital)
Dom Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold meeting with a number of Dom care agencies providing advice on PPE with SCH Commissioning Officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All EHO contacts send to Dom care agencies for support Providers forum attended by officers to answer questions
Diversification of businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses that had to close turned to delivery of meals and/or fruit and veg Identifying through contact, social media and public notification and providing advice Template advice drawn up and distributed through social media and used for all Wales advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of list of these providers for EP and volunteer groups Maintaining list as constantly changing Investigating complaints regarding SD and activities at these premises to ensure compliance
Responding to request from food banks running short of carrier bags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team contacting all supermarkets and charity shops for donations of carrier bags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaising with Des Mansfield and food banks to collect
Programmed interventions recording and risk assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> interventions and risk assessment for visits to high risk premises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveillance interventions being carried out and recorded
Loss of income for commercial		Quantity estimated loss
Food hygiene training	Hygiene and allergen courses cancelled	£4,336
Access	Average 10 per quarter	£500
Primary Authority work	Cancelled work	£600
Postponement of riding establishments licences	4 establishments	£828
Cellar safety training	cancelled	£300
Consultancy Private Water supply	Providing risk assessments for to 14 private water supplies for Newport City Council	£8,000
Good news stories		
Totally new business set up Wye Valley producers Click and collect	The following have collaborated so that you can order and pay on line and they will put directly into boot of your car at specified location- The Preservation Society , Wye Valley Mead , Silver Circle Distillery ,	On their web site --- We're working very closely with Monmouthshire Environmental Health and the Town Council to ensure

	Humble by Nature , Parva Spices , Untapped Brewing , Brooke's Dairy , Kontext Coffee , Chilli Rogues and Cottage Sweets	that we adhere to current Government requirements in response to Coronavirus.#keepsafe
See carrier bags above	Contacting all open premises that we can think off	
Local Gin distillery	Found out via 'Mind Mon' making sanitiser and delivering to care homes. They have made 400 litres so far, and distributed.	Owner very appreciative of call and we will be helping with distribution and guidance on financial assistance
	<p>Regarding a request to allow self-catering accommodation to be used for a couple from the USA to attend a local funeral -</p> <p>The owner of the accommodation was extremely complimentary about our service, saying that she was impressed with how quickly and efficiently we dealt with the matter, and she was really grateful for all of the advice we provided. She also felt we were really supportive, offering her further advice whenever she needs it by telephone or email.</p>	<p>Local café in Chepstow - 'so grateful for MCC and what we are doing for public protection and helping businesses, be it advice or timely financial help and she wants us to know her building is at her disposal for whatever MCC can use it for'.</p>

Service Request type	1 st April to 30 th September 2019	1 st April to 30 th September 2020
Food	393	229
Health, Safety & Welfare	59	66
Covid	0	558
Misc. Event/TEN's	349	53
Other	15	12

Total	816	918 This is a 12.5% increase.
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Environmental Health – Public Health

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

Comparison of service requests 1st April to 30th September 2020 with same period 2019

Service Request Type	1st April to 30th September 2019	1st April to 30th September 2020
Noise nuisance complaints	198	252
Smoke nuisance complaints	50	113
Fly tipping	128	187
Rats and mice	44	70
Total service requests types	1015	1231. This is a 21% increase.

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

Proactive visits such as private water supply investigations and inspections of our 24 industrial / commercial permitted sites and 20 petroleum sites have not been progressed during the 'lockdown' periods. Effort has been focused on catching up on these when movement restrictions eased in August and September.

The 3 month public consultation on a proposed Public Spaces Protection Order for dog controls (dog fouling, dogs on leads and dog exemption areas) endorsed by Strong Communities Select on the 12th March 2020, and planned to start in April, has been postponed. This was considered appropriate in view of the focus on Covid messaging, the importance of ensuring the public have every opportunity to engage with the consultation when it starts, and Officers to have the time to process the responses. It is hoped that the 3 month consultation can commence early 2021.

Direct Covid related work includes Officers liaising with the owners of the 18 licensed holiday caravan sites in the County regarding their responsibilities, and outlining Covid guidance as it has developed regarding site opening and closing. A number of sites have decided to remain closed until next season but the majority were open for business during the late summer season. The site owners were reminded of their responsibility to meet WG guidance.

LICENSING

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.

Towards the end of March 2020 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

	1st April to 30th September 2019	1st April to 30th September 2020
Service Requests	471	340
Covid Service Requests	0	130
Inspections	84	4
Covid Inspections	0	56

TRADING STANDARDS AND ANIMAL HEALTH

Our Trading Standards and Animal Health 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 April to 30th September have seen an increase of 64% from the same period as last year -

	1/04/2019 – 30/09/2019	1/04/2020 – 30/09/2020	
Complaints/Enquiries	359	588	64% Increase

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

In addition the team have supported Public Protection colleagues by allocating two officers to support the TTP effort and responding to non-food/non-licensed premises for any Covid related enquiries.

Work unable to be delivered to date has included Minimum Unit Price inspections which would have brought in close to £5,000 in total, also the feed delivery work has been delayed. It is hoped that this will still be delivered by the end of March but additional opportunities to generate income though will have been missed due to lack of capacity. This also puts additional pressure on resources required to sustain existing capacity.

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 so the Order Hearing was unavoidably delayed for several months, now concluded. The associated prosecution is now awaiting a date for first hearing.

Our Senior AHO was also recognised through an award to the 'team' effort by the National Animal Health Panel. She provided regular Covid-19 guidance for all animal related businesses and activities, for use by all Local Authorities.

November 2020