

SUBJECT: Coronavirus Response – Strategy Review

MEETING: Strong Communities Select Committee

DATE: 6th October 2021

DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an update of activity and progress made against the commitments in the council's Coronavirus strategic aims

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are invited to scrutinise how well the authority performed in meeting the commitments made in the various iterations of the Coronavirus strategic aims up to September 2021

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Coronavirus pandemic caused an unprecedented amount of disruption in March 2020, when the government announced a full lockdown in the UK. The need to preserve life and stop the spread of the virus, while continuing to support communities, meant we paused or re-purposed a lot of our usual work and reduced focus on some of the priorities in the Corporate Plan, as capacity was directed towards the emergency response effort. To ensure clarity of purpose and to maintain accountability, Cabinet approved a series of short-term Coronavirus strategies, or 'Plans on a Page', that would provide direction over the different stages of the pandemic.
- 3.2 The strategies focus on core aims and appendix 1 contains a summary of the activity undertaken against each, and identifies measures used to monitor progress. Some of the key points include:
- Swift adaptation of our working practices to reinstate the decision making process, making Monmouthshire County Council one of the first in Wales to hold a virtual meeting of Cabinet, just six weeks after lockdown.
 - Adjustments in schools to adapt to the changing nature of the pandemic, including providing childcare hubs for vulnerable children and the children of key workers, implementation of a distance learning offer, and development of a new process for determining students' grades to accommodate the cancelled GCSE, AS and A Level examinations.
 - Rapid deployment of support grants to help safeguard local businesses through lockdown closures, and an extensive communication programme to provide guidance, assistance and support to business owners.
 - Established a Test, Trace and Protect system that successfully followed up on 100% (3,645) of eligible COVID-19 cases and 99.5% (6,661) of eligible close contacts (up to June 2021).
 - Establishing a number of platforms to assist the wonderful volunteers in our county by providing guidance, support and a means of connecting active citizens wishing to contribute to their communities with those needing assistance.
- 3.3 To date, four iterations of the strategy, and associated aims, have been developed in accordance with the changing pandemic situation and emerging priorities. These are included in appendix 2. At the start of the pandemic, the pace of change was unrelenting, with hundreds of staff re-deployed, new services created almost overnight, and tens of millions of pounds re-

directed towards preserving life and helping local businesses remain viable. The impact this had on the workings of the council was considerable, and as such, the initial plan on a page focussed on protecting life and supporting communities to be sustainable and resilient.

- 3.4 As the incidents of infection started to decline during the summer of 2020, Cabinet developed a new purpose. This focused on making everyone feel safe in their communities, to continue to support each other and to reach out to those who need help, and agreed an update of the strategic aims in the Coronavirus 'Transition' strategy.
- 3.5 As winter started, the number of cases in some parts of Wales began to increase. Initially, during this time, the incidents in Monmouthshire remained below the important threshold of 50 cases per 100,000 population and 5% infection rate, and as a result, the county was not subject to the local lockdowns seen in other areas of Wales. However, as the numbers increased across the whole of the country, another national lockdown was announced in December, and our main purpose, and associated aims, identified in the Winter Strategy, returned to protecting health, employment, the community and our public services.
- 3.6 Finally, the latest plan starts to look at re-emergence, and promoting Monmouthshire as an ambitious place, full of hope and enterprise, which is fair and sustainable, where people can feel safe. COVID-19 rates initially fell as the spring months progressed, with Monmouthshire having some of the lowest infection rates in the United Kingdom. The vaccine roll-out continues and we are working with ABUHB to support this. The virus has not gone away and as cases rise once again, the occurrence of COVID-19 mutations, variants of concern, and concerns about the impact these could have on vaccination efficacy and case rates emphasises the ongoing risk to residents and communities, which needs to be managed.
- 3.7 The impact of the pandemic required us to act at pace, setting up new services and making rapid changes to how others were delivered. This has accelerated our learning process and upon reflection, some of the changes implemented are being retained for the longer term as they have had a positive impact on service provision. In some cases, we need to do more work to understand how we can adapt and take forward other changes. For example:
 - The Library 'Request and Collect' system has been positively received and will continue
 - Recycling rates improved during the year so changes to our Household Waste Recycling Centres have been retained, such as the booking system
 - The response by volunteers in our county has been remarkable and initially, we implemented mechanisms to assist in connecting people and supporting their activities. This has since developed and groups have been established throughout the county to continue this work independently, and beyond the needs initially identified to support those shielding. We continue to provide a platform that offers support, but active citizens are contributing to their communities in different ways, and establishing their own networks of support and assistance, where they identify a need.
 - Remote meetings of Cabinet, Council and committees assisted members to balance their attendance, alongside other commitments such as family life and careers. This will not only help councillors going forward, but may also make the role more appealing to more diverse groups in the future.
 - More people were walking and cycling during lockdown, resulting in increased interest levels in active travel. Considerable work is underway in this area, and will continue going forward to build upon the interest shown, and to widen the benefits it brings.
 - More staff were enabled to work remotely when council buildings were closed, reducing our carbon footprint and providing increased flexibility for staff. This has yielded wider benefits to service provision, for example, during the floods of December 2020, we were able to establish a call centre team during the evening within 30 minutes of the need being identified, as staff were able to do this from their own homes.

3.8 Challenges from the pandemic continue to arise, and we are facing difficulties on a national scale. Work is underway to monitor these challenges, and their impact. These include:

- A shortage of HGV drivers, which is impacting on waste collection services as a number of driving posts remain unfilled
- Despite the initial boost in our ability to recruit carers into Social Care, staff shortages are causing considerable pressures on service delivery. This is exacerbating the problem of bed availability in hospitals as patients are unable to be discharged without a suitable care plan in place
- Building supplies have seen a considerable hike in cost, which could impact on the affordability of future capital projects, and materials needed to build IT equipment is in short supply, resulting in price increases and delays in our ability to procure digital hardware
- Energy prices are increasing, which could result in a considerable increase in the costs to run our council buildings

4. REASONS

4.1 To ensure that members have an understanding of council performance against the strategic aims during 2020/21 and into 2021/22, and can scrutinise how well the authority has performed.

5. AUTHOR

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Appendix 1: Summary of activity against the core aims

Core aim	Update
Decision making and civic leadership	<p>As council buildings were closed in the first lockdown, decision-making was impacted as members were unable to meet in person. When legislation changes were implemented to allow remote meetings to take place, we swiftly adapted our working practices to reinstate the decision making process. Following a vast digital overhaul, the first virtual meeting of Cabinet was held just six weeks after lockdown, making Monmouthshire County Council one of the first in the Wales to do so. Council meetings followed, and by July, all committees were meeting remotely to ensure robust scrutiny and decision-making was taking place. Training and support was provided to members to assist in utilising digital meeting technology. The system is proving successful and all attendance at meetings is now possible via remote means. Work continues to capture the learning from the new arrangements, and some changes will remain or will be built on where they are working well. Work is currently underway to develop the technical ability to deliver hybrid meetings, which will accommodate both remote and physical attendance at meetings, in line with any ongoing restrictions.</p> <p>An Emergency Response Team was established very early in the pandemic to ensure our overall response to the emergency was coordinated and managed. This involved linking into wider formal Gwent response structures, and directly into Welsh and UK Government.</p> <p>We focused on communicating timely and relevant service updates and information to residents across our communication platforms, and quickly became a trusted source of information. Public events were livestreamed to share business advice, financial engagement events were hosted online, and digital videos and illustrations have been used to convey local and national messages. Since the start of lockdown, the ChatBot and Contact Centre staff have dealt with over 143,000 wide-ranging customer service enquiries, the council's Twitter followers increased from 17,000 in March 2020 to 18,400 by September 2021, and Facebook followers have increased by 41% over the same period. Data became a valuable resource as case numbers and the R-rate became a staple part of our dialogue, so we started producing data maps and a weekly Coronavirus data pack to keep officers and members abreast of changes. These were quickly adopted as a source of information sharing for the public, and there has been a positive reception on our social media platforms for the graphics and statistics shared by the Chief Executive and Media team.</p> <p>Lockdown meant that many services were closed so digital technology has been developed to safely open up access. This includes a booking system for appointments at household waste recycling sites when they were permitted to reopen, which worked well</p>

	so has been implemented as a permanent change. Hubs and libraries were required to close so a Request and Collect service was introduced to allow members of the public to loan books.
Measures	
Number of customer service enquiries received (Contact Centre phone calls & ChatBot)	143,712 (March 2020 – September 2021)
Number of appointments booked for the Request and Collect library service	2,411 (September 2021)
Twitter followers Facebook followers Instagram followers	18,400 (September 2021) = 8% increase* 15,055 (September 2021) = 41% increase* 1,347 (September 2021) = 27% increase (since February 2021) <i>*% increase based on figures at start of pandemic</i>

Core aim	Update
Childcare and education	<p>During the first lockdown, childcare was provided for vulnerable learners and the children of key workers via childcare hubs. At their peak, the hubs provided childcare for over 400 pupils in a day. Special Needs Resources Bases remained open, and a weekly multi-agency Stable Lives and Brighter Futures meeting was established to discuss and review support and provision for vulnerable pupils. This helped to ensure that identified pupils were regularly monitored, and provision was flexible to meet their needs. MonLife provided ‘Summer Hub’ provision for children, with a total of 4,170 attendances, an average of 166 children per day.</p> <p>During the winter closures, schools adopted a remote learning approach for the majority of pupils, which was developed into a blended learning approach when restrictions allowed. The Education team worked closely with schools and the Digital Programme Office to understand the requirement for IT equipment amongst learners. We provided laptops and MiFi units to pupils without access to equipment or internet access so they could continue to learn.</p> <p>Schools prioritised the wellbeing of all their pupils as a pre-requisite for effective learning; this included the adoption of a flexible approach to curriculum delivery, and the availability of additional support to raise standards for priority groups. The Educational Psychology Service and Healthy Schools Team provided advice and support to schools to support the well-being of children and young people impacted by COVID-19.</p>

	Following the announcement that there would be no GCSE, AS and A Level examinations in summer 2021, schools were provided with a range of support to prepare them for the new process for determining students' grade.
Measures	
Number of key workers' children and vulnerable children attending hub schools	400+ per day at their peak
Number of attendances at MonLife summer 'Hub' provision	4170
Number of vulnerable pupils and pupils eligible for free school meals attended summer 'Hub' provision	200
Number of families supported through free school meal payments	1655

Core aim	Update
Support for businesses and town centre re-opening	<p>Support has been provided to businesses throughout the year to help them through the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic, and we have issued almost 6,500 payments of grants amounting to almost £40 million. There has been an ongoing communications campaign, aligned to the changing legislation and requirements for businesses through the year, and regular meetings of the Monmouthshire Business Resilience Forum have been held. Livestream events were used to share support and guidance to local businesses, and following the announcement of a national lockdown in December, 176 small businesses signed up to ask questions about grant availability and eligibility criteria. For those businesses not able to access funding, we have liaised with Welsh Government to ensure that they were supported as much as possible.</p> <p>We ran various tourism campaigns throughout the year, initially promoting the message to 'stay at home' and 'Visit Monmouthshire – later'. This developed into 'Visit Monmouthshire. Safely.' to make it as easy and safe as possible for visitors to the county. As restrictions began easing in March, and Wales moved from alert level 4 to alert level 2, we promoted our Visit Monmouthshire campaign to highlight the services and attractions available for visitors. We promoted businesses as they prepared to reopen via a new spring 'Shop Local' campaign to encourage visitors back to our town centres. More recently, following the move to alert level 0, local events have been held, such as the Usk Show and the Abergavenny Food Festival, further encouraging visitors to safely visit our towns.</p> <p>The 're-opening towns' projects sought to make our high streets safer during the pandemic, via mechanisms such as one way streets, widened pedestrianised areas and changing traffic flows. Considerable consultation took place to seek the opinions of</p>

	our residents and to gather ideas about how Monmouthshire's town and village centres could look in the future to inform this. Work continues in this area, in close consultation with residents and businesses.
Measures	
Total number of support payments made to businesses, incl. support during Covid-19.	6,478
Total number of businesses supported via grant payments	2,530
Total amount of grant payments made	£39.18 million

Core aim	Update
Support for vulnerable people	<p>Very early in the pandemic, we set a goal of ensuring that every person or family in crisis that we were aware of received support. To achieve this, Social Care moved to a seven day working week initially to support our frontline delivery in Adults Services, and adapted our delivery of Children's Services. We also developed a redeployment strategy to ensure staff were available to provide support, where needed.</p> <p>Front-door services are a priority and remained fully operational. The process for receiving and responding to referrals did not change; arrangements have been adjusted, and where required, different solutions have been identified to deal with situations. We have received an average of 117 contacts per week relating to supporting children and young people in Children's social services (May 2020 – September 2021), an average of 27 requests per week in Adults social services (May 2020 – August 2021), and 556 families accessed the therapeutic services advice line for support, advice and guidance (April 2020 - June 2021). As pressure on care at home services and reablement services has increased, all referrals have been triaged at point of referral to ensure that those in most need are prioritised for assessment and intervention. Staff shortages are causing significant pressures on service provision, and hospital discharge times are being affected due to the lack of home care packages available for those who need them. This is a problem that is being reflected nationally, and local authorities in Gwent have established a strategic coordination group to formulate a strategy to address this going forward.</p> <p>The volume, type and source of referrals to Children's Services has been monitored continually to identify any changes as Coronavirus restrictions have changed. Risk assessments were undertaken where any direct working/home visiting was required to follow up on protection concerns, or to provide interim safeguards as part of a care and support plan.</p>

To safeguard residents in care homes, a testing programme has been established for all staff members, administered by the council. Staff have worked with Public Health Wales and ABUHB, to establish clear parameters for residents in care homes being discharged from hospital to minimise the risk of further cases. Residents and staff in care homes for older adults, along with front line health and social care workers, were in the top priority groups for the COVID-19 vaccine roll out and, as such, were all offered vaccinations early in the rollout process.

We have experienced unprecedented housing demand from some of the most vulnerable citizens in our county, at a time when identifying suitable and safe premises has been challenging. In May 2020, Cabinet agreed to the temporary use of Gilwern Outdoor Education Centre as a venue for COVID-related emergency homeless accommodation until August 2020. We are currently supporting 161 households in temporary accommodation. New Welsh Government guidance issued in 2020 expands our duties with regards to our homelessness offer, and the need to provide suitable long term housing for all those accommodated in temporary housing. This, alongside the increasing demand, has placed considerable pressure on our services and work is ongoing to meet this requirement.

To help those facing financial uncertainty, an online resource has been compiled in conjunction with partners, which gathers information on the support available into a single place. Information covers areas such as financial support available, and advice on council tax and the option to spread payments over longer periods. This has been successfully promoted on social media and has been shared with partners and all schools. We continued to provide direct free school meal payments until schools reopened following the Easter break, which had increased to 1655 pupils being supported.

Measures	
Average number of requests for Adult's Services per week: May 2020 – August 2021	27
Residential	3
Care at home	11
Reablement	13
Average number of Children's Services contacts per week: May 2020 – September 2021	117
Number of families accessing the Therapeutic Services advice line: April 2020 – June 2021	556
Number of households in temporary accommodation	161

Core aim	Update
<p>Safe and clean neighbourhoods</p>	<p>We reconfigured our services early on in the pandemic to ensure domestic waste and recycling collections could continue by increasing vehicles and facilitating social distancing for staff. To assist our communities, recycling bags were distributed to supermarkets and to residents shielding, where possible. Garden waste collections were stopped for a period, but work was quickly undertaken to re-start collections.</p> <p>Following the closure of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC), provisions were introduced that initially allowed for the reopening of two sites; Llanfoist and Five Lanes, which was then extended to Mitchel Troy. A booking system for slots meant that numbers attending the sites could be maintained at a safe and manageable level to maintain social distancing, and this continues to operate effectively today. The recycling rate for 2020/21 was 68.88%, an increase from 65.57% in 2019/20. Data is being reviewed to determine any learning that can be taken from this period to further improve recycling figures going forward.</p> <p>We were forced to reduce many of our grounds maintenance services in order to redeploy staff into waste and recycling roles. Despite this, we kept our roads and cemeteries safe by retaining an essential grounds maintenance team operation. We prioritised the maintenance based on public safety and road visibility requirements, ensuring areas such as grass verges, road junctions and roundabouts were kept clear and safe for road users and pedestrians. When grass mowing resumed, almost a third of areas within our parks and open spaces were left uncut, which saw a positive impact on the flora and fauna of our county, with many areas seeing an abundance of wildflowers and wildlife. This has caused some concern with residents, who have been unhappy with the lack of maintenance in some green spaces within the county. We are considering the learning from the changes to our grounds maintenance services to inform how we can enhance the biodiversity and ecology of our open spaces going forward, whilst maintaining the standards of green spaces expected by our residents.</p>
Measures	
Percentage of waste recycled	68.88
Number of Fly tipping reports collected	737
Tonnes of waste and recycling collected	40,098
Number of household waste and recycling sites slots booked	159,362

Core aim	Update
<p>Trusted partners and collaborative working</p>	<p>As the first lockdown was implemented, we worked with our public sector partners via the Gwent Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) to provide a joined up response across our area. We also developed closer working relationships with other agencies who supported the social care system to ensure a joined up and efficient approach to care provision for some of our most vulnerable residents.</p> <p>Alongside our Gwent partners, we contributed to the COVID-19 Test, Trace and Protect scheme, which aims to trace and contact residents who have been in contact with the virus to provide advice, and request they self-isolate to try and minimise the spread of the virus and minimise the reproduction rate (R-rate). In October 2020, 13 staff were redeployed to the TTP service, which increased in mid-January 2021 to the peak of 27 redeployees. Following this, the redeployed gradually returned to their services due to a fall in cases, but this is under constant review in line with case numbers and demand.</p> <p>The vaccination strategy, being delivered by Aneurin Bevan UHB, has successfully administered almost 870,000 vaccinations in our health board area, and we continue to support and add value where required. By 12 September 2021, 92.0% (72,830) of Monmouthshire residents aged 18 years and older had received one dose and 89.5% (70,875) two doses.</p> <p>Volunteers have been at the forefront of the effort to keep our communities safe. We established the Community Action Volunteer Team (CAVT) to assist requests for help being coordinated with the offers of support. Part of this process was establishing lists of businesses delivering food supplies locally and supporting those providing cooked food/meals. We also provided access to emergency food parcels for shielded people who could not leave home, and created a contact centre who proactively called 2,300 shielded vulnerable people in our communities to check on their well-being and to offer the delivery of food parcels, where these were needed. The active citizens involved in these activities have now broadened their networks and are working in partnership with other like-minded individuals to contribute to their communities in different ways. We have established a Community Support Network to support them in their actions by providing guidance and a mechanism for interacting with others for mutual benefit and maximum impact.</p> <p>The Connect Monmouthshire community networking platform has since been implemented to provide the digital tools for active citizens to support each other in their communities. We are providing direct specialist support to volunteer groups, advising on the support available to the volunteers and community members, and to date, 738 requests for support have been made. Meetings are now taking place across the county, aimed at linking community members, groups and organisations to maximise collaboration and to pool resources.</p>
<p>Measures</p>	

Number of calls made to shielding individuals in the county	2,300
Number of requests for direct specialist support by volunteer groups	738
Percentage of eligible cases successfully followed up by Test Trace Protect (TTP)	100% (3,645, June 2021)
Percentage of eligible close contacts of new cases successfully contacted by Test Trace Protect (TTP)	99.5% (6,661, June 2021)
Percentage of residents in Monmouthshire aged 18 years and older who have received two vaccinations	89.5% (September 2021)

Core aim	Update
Safe, healthy and productive workforce	<p>Throughout the entire pandemic response, staff have embraced new ways of working to keep themselves, colleagues and residents safe while delivering the many services our communities rely on. We have ensured staff have a range of support on wellbeing, have access to the right Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and testing, if they display symptoms. We have distributed approximately 6.7 million items of PPE for the provision of social care in the county. The number of days per full-time equivalent employee lost due to sickness during the year averaged 11.0, which is lower than the figure seen in the previous year.</p> <p>The Logistics Group ensured that staff and resources were allocated to priority services, and that staff being re-deployed had the necessary training, equipment and guidance for them to undertake their new roles in a safe manner. The Digital Group aided business continuity through the use of digital tools and remote working facilities, and quickly rolled out further technology to improve how our 1875 office-based staff worked from home. We secured licences for 700 staff who previously did not have access to digital communications so our whole organisation could be kept up to date.</p> <p>Where required, we have maintained cleaning services in buildings that have remained open, ensuring safe distances and cleanliness for the safety of our staff. The directive remains that working from home is the safest mechanism for staff where possible, and working in council buildings should only be undertaken where essential to do so. For those wishing to work from County Hall, a desk booking system is in place to ensure the numbers attending remain safe, and social distancing can be assured at all times.</p> <p>During this difficult time, we have provided a range of support services to all colleagues to support their wellbeing via the Health, Welfare & Information group. Communication and engagement with staff has continued throughout, and the SupportAll portal was developed, which allows staff to access information on a range of subjects, such as testing, protecting homeworkers and</p>

bereavement. The weekly staff Digital 'Cwtch' continues and averages more than a hundred viewers each week, and a weekly Managers Q&A continues to answer any questions or discuss general workplace issues.

Measures	
Number of staff who offered their skills for redeployment	1000+
Number of items of PPE distributed to for the provision of Social Care	6.7 million
The average number of days per full-time equivalent employee lost due to sickness during the year	11.0
Number of FTE days lost due to COVID-19:	
COVID-19 sickness	3,034.5
Short term	1,913.8
Long term	1,120.6
Long COVID sickness	68.0
Short term	6.2
Long term	61.7
Self-isolation TOTAL	6,016.1
Able to work remotely	885.9
Unable to work	917.2
Not specified	3,509.1
COVID positive – well and able to work remotely	426.4
COVID positive – well and unable to work remotely	277.4
Shielding TOTAL	3,627.3
Personally vulnerable and able to work remotely	1,273.2
Personally vulnerable and unable to work	1,813.0
Household member vulnerable and able to work remotely	232.0
Household member vulnerable and unable to work	199.1
Not specified	109.9

Core aim	Update
Council finances	<p>The council was already facing significant financial challenges heading into the 2020/21 financial year, prior to the start of the pandemic. The onset of the pandemic presented its own additional financial challenges and uncertainty, both in terms of additional costs and significant losses of income across services. A detailed financial sustainability assessment was undertaken, and a budget recovery plan was created, which re-evaluated financial commitments and funding forecasts.</p> <p>A balanced net revenue budget position was achieved for 2020/21, after accounting for transfers to earmarked reserves, which was primarily as a result of £5.29m of Welsh Government COVID-19 hardship funding since month 9 to support the increased costs of service delivery and loss of income as a direct result of COVID-19 impact. There were also significant underspends across many service areas as a result of the pandemic, where services were reduced or stopped, travel requirements were reduced, office and buildings remained closed and substantial staff vacancies remained unfilled.</p> <p>The medium term prognosis is still of concern; there are no indicative settlement figures published, which significantly impacts on the forward planning of budgets over the medium term. There is a need to think differently about the challenges of the medium term, and this work and engagement will continue in the coming months, particularly with other local authorities, Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association, where funding distribution and projections are concerned. Internally, closer alignment between service's business planning arrangements and financial planning arrangements continues to be developed to improve the quality of service planning and financial planning, which also aligns to the delivery of the Corporate Plan to ensure its aspirations are sustainable.</p>
Measures	
Amount lost in income due to the pandemic	£8,382,000 (covered by WG funding)
Amount spent on our response to the coronavirus pandemic	£11,254,000 (covered by WG funding)

Core aim	Update
Re-emergence	<p>The Re-Emergence strategy, published in June, focuses on both the ongoing response and the tentative re-emergence of a focus beyond COVID-19. Safeguarding our most vulnerable, and protecting businesses are still some of the key aims, but tourism and promoting our county as a tourist destination has also become a focus, along with decarbonisation and promoting an active and healthy lifestyle for our residents and visitors.</p>

Progress to date includes the launch of a new re-use shop at Five Lanes Recycling Centre, and four Benthylg Libraries of Things in Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth, with associated Repair Cafes. Over 8,000 trees have been planted this year, and schools have been provided with raised beds to plant seeds, which will then be regrown on sites when more mature. We are also liaising with 'Stump Up for Trees', a community organisation with aspirations to plant 1 million trees across the Brecon Beacons, about how we may be able to support this initiative. Other projects include 'Neglected Grasslands' and 'Resilient Grasslands' schemes, aimed at regenerating green areas and promoting biodiversity.

Lockdown saw a considerable reduction in driving and increased walking within areas local to home. Numerous projects have been supported in Monmouth, Caldicot and Abergavenny to improve the active travel offer in the county, and a total investment of £1.4m has been made in the last financial year, the biggest investment into Active Travel in Monmouthshire. Cycling capacity has been increased in town centres, public bike pumps have been installed, and a contraflow cycle lane has been introduced in Abergavenny through COVID-19 response funding. A clear strategic focus is now set, primary routes identified and a clear vision established to develop future routes in order to encourage a change in transport mode for citizens.

20mph schemes have been implemented in Raglan, Caldicot, and Tintern as part of the COVID-19 response to make town centres safer; it is anticipated that these will be maintained on a permanent basis, and further 20mph zones will be implemented during 2021/22.

We held a summer full of outdoor activities for our children and young people, starting with the Monmouthshire Games, which provided outdoor play schemes for children throughout the summer holidays. The School Holiday Enrichment Programme was also delivered during summer holidays, which helps disadvantaged children with specific needs. Other events included activity packs at Caldicot Castle and Old Station Tintern, and outdoor theatre events at Abergavenny Castle grounds for children through August, including the Horrible Histories open air show.

We will continue to deliver against the direction set in the strategic aims, to help our communities and businesses through the summer months, and into autumn. There is still considerable uncertainty around the pandemic and the potential for increasing numbers of cases, but we are in a strong position to face the possible challenges that lie ahead. Cabinet have committed to the development of a more fundamental medium term planning document by late autumn, which will provide the strategic vision to take us beyond the pandemic, as long as it remains under control.

Measures	
Number of trees planted	8146

Appendix 2: The four iterations of the Coronavirus Strategic Aims - 'Plan on a Page'

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

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

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
- 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

OUR WINTER STRATEGY

December 2020 - March 2021

OUR PURPOSE

To protect your health, your employment, your community and your public services.

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.



We will continue our work with the citizens and communities of Monmouthshire to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We will continue to support and protect vulnerable people. We will give attention to rebuilding a local economy that reduces inequalities within and between communities.

OUR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Working with and alongside local communities
- Being innovative and creative
- Learning and adjusting in real time
- Focus on short-term response, medium - term recovery and long term sustainability

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

- Provide clear purposeful civic leadership
- Keep our communities, our people and our partners safe and healthy
- Provide direct support to those suffering from tragedy, loneliness, poverty and loss
- Ensure all vulnerable young people and adults are safeguarded
- Ensure quality teaching and learning is available in school / out of school for all learners
- To be environmentally and ecologically responsible in all of our actions
- Support our local businesses and town centres
- Maintain a competent, motivated organisation with the capability and capacity to deliver

WHAT WE ARE DOING

- Ensuring that the democratic decision making process is fully operational with key decisions being taken in a timely way
- Communicating clearly with citizens, representing their interests to others, including Welsh Government, and delivering on the priorities we have set for the county
- Protecting / promoting our environment and ecology through investment where necessary and carbon reduction activity where possible
- Delivering an excellent Test, Trace & Protect System
- Working with the NHS to roll-out a COVID vaccination programme
- Encouraging citizens to exercise, eat healthily, spend time safely with others and get outdoors
- Responding to winter emergencies, such as snow and flooding
- Supporting those that are lonely, lose their job, their home and / or cannot access food
- Maintaining our social care services including child protection, support at home and residential care
- Providing high quality teaching and learning to all, whether in school or out
- Ensuring learners are well prepared for the assessment processes that replace GCSE, AS level or A level examinations in 2021
- Supporting businesses to trade safely and signposting them to financial support that can assist their survival
- Helping businesses with the BREXIT transition process highlighting regulatory changes that create obstacles / opportunity
- Distributing monies from national business support schemes to qualifying local businesses
- Setting a budget for the financial year 2021/22 capable of delivering these priorities

RE-EMERGENCE SUMMER 2021

It's been a tough 18 months for everyone. We have lived apart for too long. We change that now. This strategy is centred on bringing people safely back together by supporting friendship circles, neighbourhoods and communities to feel safe, confident and happy together.



OUR PURPOSE

We want Monmouthshire to once again be an ambitious place full of hope and enterprise. We want your county to be a fair and sustainable place where people care about each other and you feel safe. We want Monmouthshire to be a place you are proud to call home.

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
- Keeping our communities and people safe
- Being kind

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

- Provide clear and purposeful civic leadership
- Promote Monmouthshire as a beautiful destination for visits and staycations
- Champion the interests of local businesses
- Market our town centres as wonderful places to shop or spend time with friends
- Encourage people to be active and improve their health, fitness and general wellbeing
- Provide direct support to those suffering from loneliness, hardship and loss
- Ensure all vulnerable young people and adults are safeguarded
- Ensure quality teaching and learning is available for all learners
- Decarbonise our own operations and help communities take positive action on climate change
- Maintain a competent, motivated organisation with the capability and capacity to deliver

WHAT WE ARE DOING

- Taking care of our workforce so they can support you
- Ensuring our democratic process is fully operational
- Communicating clearly with you and always representing your interests to others
- Improving infrastructure by fixing roads, investing in active travel, 20mph zones and high-speed broadband
- Having a summer full of outdoor activities for children and young people
- Promoting and protecting our natural environment to encourage walking and outdoor sports
- Improving our leisure centres in Abergavenny, Caldicot and Chepstow
- Helping local businesses trade successfully and safely
- Creating employment/apprenticeships for local people
- Protecting / promoting our environment and ecology through investment and carbon reduction activity
- Introducing Repair Cafes and Library of Things to increase sharing and re-use of everyday items
- Prioritising our excellent Test, Trace & Protect System
- Providing support and creating opportunities for volunteers making a difference in their community
- Maintaining social care services including child protection, support at home and residential care
- Ensuring learners are prepared for the assessment processes that replace GCSE, AS level or A level examinations in 2021
- Preparing schools for the new curriculum that will be launched in 2022

