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County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Wednesday, 4 November 2020

Notice of meeting

Strong Communities Select Committee

Thursday, 12th November, 2020 at 10.00 am
Remote Microsoft Teams Meeting

Please note that a pre meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting for members of the committee.

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
PART A: SCRUTINY AND CRIME DISORDER MATTERS		
No matters to discuss.		
PART B STRONG COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE		
1.	Apologies for Absence.	
2.	Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Public Open Forum.	
4.	Scrutiny of the Public Protection Performance Report 2019/20 & Covid-19 response in 2020.	1 - 34
5.	Scrutiny of the Registration Service Performance Report 2019/20 and Covid-19 response in 2020.	35 - 42
6.	To confirm the following minutes:	
6.1.	Strong Communities Select Committee dated 17th September 2020.	43 - 50
6.2.	Special Meeting - Strong Communities Select Committee dated 28th September 2020.	51 - 66
7.	Strong Communities Select Committee Forward Work Programme.	67 - 68
8.	Cabinet & Council Forward Work Programme.	69 - 82

9.

Next Meeting: Thursday 17th December 2020 at 10.00am.

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillors:

L.Dymock
D. Batrouni
P. Clarke
D. Dovey
A. Easson
L. Guppy
V. Smith
J.Treharne
A. Webb

Public Information

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Watch this meeting online

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Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Objectives we are working towards

- Giving people the best possible start in life
- A thriving and connected county
- Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment
- Lifelong well-being
- A future focused council

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable 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 so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Monmouthshire Scrutiny Committee Guide

Role of the Pre-meeting

1. Why is the Committee scrutinising this? (background, key issues)
2. What is the Committee's role?
3. What outcome do Members want to achieve?
4. Is there sufficient information to achieve this? If not, who could provide this?
5. Discuss the committee's approach:
 - Agree the order of questioning and which Members will lead
 - Agree questions for officers and questions for the Cabinet Member

Questions for the Meeting

Scrutinising Performance

1. How does performance compare with previous years? Is it better/worse? Why?
2. How does performance compare with other councils/other service providers? Is it better/worse? Why?
3. How does performance compare with set targets? Is it better/worse? Why?
4. How were performance targets set? Are they challenging enough/realistic?
5. How do service users/the public/partners view the performance of the service?
6. Have there been any recent audit and inspections? What were the findings?
7. How does the service contribute to the achievement of corporate objectives?
8. Is improvement/decline in performance linked to an increase/reduction in resource? What capacity is there to improve?

Scrutinising Policy

1. Who does the policy affect ~ directly and indirectly? Who will benefit most/least?
2. What is the view of service users/stakeholders? Do they believe it will achieve the desired outcome?
3. What is the view of the community as a whole - the 'taxpayer' perspective?
4. What methods were used to consult with stakeholders? Did the process enable all those with a stake to have their say?
5. What practice and options have been considered in developing/reviewing this policy? What evidence is there to inform what works?
6. Have all relevant sustainable development, equalities and safeguarding implications been taken into consideration? For example, what are the procedures that need to be in place to protect children?
7. How much will this cost to implement and what funding source has been identified?
8. How will performance of the policy be measured and the impact evaluated.

Questions for the Committee to conclude...

Do we have the necessary information to form conclusions/make recommendations to the executive, council, other partners? If not, do we need to:

- (i) Investigate the issue in more detail?
- (ii) Obtain further information from other witnesses – Executive Member, independent expert, members of the local community, service users, regulatory bodies...

(iii) Agree further actions to be undertaken within a timescale/future monitoring report...

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SUBJECT: PUBLIC PROTECTION 2019/20 PERFORMANCE REPORT

MEETING: Strong Communities Select Committee

DATE: 12th November 2020

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To undertake scrutiny of service delivery across Public Protection services for the financial year 2019/20, with comparison to previous years. The Public Protection division comprises of Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Animal Health and Licensing.
- 1.2 For Members to understand the active role taken by Officers in the Division in response to the current pandemic, and how this has impacted on day-to-day services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To consider and comment on the contents of the attached reports –
Appendix A - entitled 'Public Protection Performance Report 2019/20'.
Appendix B – entitled 'Public Protection Covid related Response to 30/9/20'
- 2.2 Members confirm future performance updates will consist of:-
 - one annual performance report, to revert to May of each year, starting 2021.
 - any supplementary topic-specific report, to be determined by Members of this Committee.This will help inform service priorities going forward.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 In January 2015 Cabinet requested that Public Protection performance was reviewed regularly by this Committee to assess any negative impacts. Six monthly reports have been provided to Strong Communities Select committee previously, to enable Members to scrutinise service performance. One annual report was agreed by this Committee last year. This report has been postponed in 2020 as a consequence of work pressures on all Public Protection teams, dealing with our response to the current pandemic.
- 3.2 The attached report, Appendix A, summarises performance for the twelve month period of 2019/20, and highlights the following -
 - The four service teams, for the vast majority of the services they deliver, met the Authority's legal obligations in relation to Public Protection services.
 - As detailed in Appendix A, most proactive and reactive work is being carried out professionally, within prescribed response times. There are only a few exceptions - due to

the reactive nature of most of the services – these being some slippage in housing visits, private water inspections and animal health visits.

- Annual reports will continue to be made to this Committee to assess performance over time, and help inform future priorities noting the competing demands.
- Services may struggle to take on any new statutory duties that protect the public and the environment, and therefore funding must be sought to support any new work.
- Future strategies for sustaining Public Protection services will be developed, (to include further income generation and collaboration), locally, regionally and nationally.
- **Covid response** – Appendix B outlines specific work undertaken by the teams. Some of this response has inevitably impacted on the day-to-day services provided, notably proactive visits. Prioritisation of services has been communicated to Governing bodies, so there is recognition the 20/21 year will be very different from typical years in relation to overall performance.

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 The Cabinet decision log from 7th January 2015 stated:- 'Noting the continually changing legislative landscape in the future, it was decided Strong Communities Select Committee would receive six monthly performance reports on Public Protection services'. As per 3.1 above, this has altered to one annual report with the recommendation to compliment with a topic-specific report when Members request it.
- 4.2 It is timely to update Members on the active role of the Division in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, noting how this has impacted on our normal working practices.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None as a consequence of this report.

6. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS, (incorporating Equalities, Sustainability, safeguarding and corporate parenting).

Assessments were previously completed for the Cabinet report 7th January, 2015. This report only serves to update the position in relation to performance four years on, and therefore does not require a further assessment.

7. CONSULTEES:

Public Protection service managers
Chief Officer, Social Care, Safeguarding & Health

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Report to Cabinet, 7th January 2015, entitled 'Review of Service Delivery in Public Protection Department'.

9. AUTHOR:

David H Jones, Head of Public Protection

10. CONTACT DETAILS:

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REPORT TO STRONG COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC PROTECTION 2019/20, PERFORMANCE REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In 2015 Cabinet requested that Strong Communities Select Committee receive six monthly performance reports on Public Protection services. Members wished to review the impact on performance of budget reductions implemented since April 2014. Annual performance is also reported through Licensing & Regulatory committee.

1.2 The Public Protection division comprises four distinct teams -

- (i) Environmental Health, Commercial
- (ii) Environmental Health, Public Health
- (iii) Licensing
- (iv) Trading Standards & Animal Health

2. PURPOSE

2.1 The purpose of Public Protection services can be summarised as follows –

- a. Protect people from harm and promote health improvement.
- b. Promote a fair and just trading environment for the public and businesses.
- c. Improve the local environment to positively influence quality of life and promote sustainability.
- d. Ensure the safety and quality of the food chain to minimise risk to human and animal health.

2.2 These four outcomes contribute to Wales' seven well-being goals. They directly help achieve a more prosperous, resilient, healthier and more equal county. It also resonates with this Council's Corporate Business Plan 2017/22, approved in February 2018, which sets out our priorities under the current administration to 2022.

3. **RESOURCES**

3.1 **Staff resource**

(i) Environmental Health – Commercial:-

- 6 Environmental Health Officers, 5.4 FTE's (Full Time Equivalents)
- 3 Commercial Services Officers, 2.1 FTE's
- 1 Systems Administrator, 1 FTE

(ii) Environmental Health – Public Health:-

- 5 Environmental Health Officers, 5 FTE's
- 2 Enforcement Officers, 1.6 FTE's

(iii) Licensing:-

- 5 Licensing Officers, 4 FTE's

(iv) Trading Standards & Animal Health:-

- 3 Trading Standards Officers, 3 FTE's
- 1 Senior Fair Trading Officer, 1 FTE
- 1 Fair Trading Officer, 1 FTE
- 1 Senior Animal Health Officer, 0.4 FTE (Other 0.6 FTE Regional Co-ordination role funded by WHoTS)
- 2 Animal Health Officers, 2 FTE (1 Temporary to 21st December 2021)

(v) Support team:-

- 5 Support Officers, 4.1 FTE's

Above staff resource adds up to a total of 35 staff, 30.6 Full Time Equivalents. The Public Protection division also comprises the Authority's Registrar and Corporate Health & Safety services, but this report covers 1.2 services only, as directed by Members in January 2015.

3.2. Financial resource

In 2019/20, the budget allocation and actual spend is shown below -

<u>SERVICE</u>	Budget	Net Spend
Environmental Health – Commercial	£460,150	£468,436
Environmental Health – General public health	£409,298	£408,367
Trading Standards & Animal Health	£346,504	£355,491
Licensing	£28,652	£32,507
Management & generic costs (eg software)	£115,092	£122,269
Total	£1,359,696	£1,387,070

The budget position for the 2019/20 year was a slight overspend of £27,374. This represents 2% of the total annual budget.

4. PERFORMANCE

- 4.1 Internal performance monitoring – the four teams within Public Protection each complete an annual Business Service Plan. These outline annual targets, specific projects etc. and progress is reviewed regularly both by the teams themselves and Departmental Management Team.
- 4.2 External reporting – regular returns are made to the Food Standards Agency, Health & Safety Executive, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Drinking Water Inspectorate, Welsh Government and other organisations.

4.3 The Licensing section contributed to the Wales Audit Office's (WAO) review of the Authority's 'safeguarding' arrangements. WAO commented on our Taxi Driver Policy and a 'home to school' recommendation was referred to our Passenger Transport Unit.

4.4 **2019/20 Performance** (and comparison to previous years)

The right hand columns summarises performance during the 2019/20 year. The left hand columns cover the previous 4 years, to enable comparisons to be made.

The following table summarises performance data from the four service teams.

Figure One

<u>Service</u>	<u>2015/16 performance</u>	<u>2016/17 performance</u>	<u>2017/18 performance</u>	<u>2018/19 Performance</u>	<u>2019/20 Performance</u>
Environmental Health (Commercial)					
Food safety full inspections	510 (100%)	502 (100%)	513 (100%)	513 (100%)	561
Other interventions – sampling, verification etc (Not H & S)	379	483	427	285	336
Total	889	985	940	798	897
Inspection within 28 days of scheduled date	95%	88.4%	87%	88.6%	86% (incomplete programme)
Number of new businesses opened	138	130	110	151	134

Broadly compliant food businesses (high risk)	89.0%	90.4%	94.3%	93.2%	93.4%
Broadly compliant food businesses – All	94.0%	95.2%	97.4%	97.2%	96.9%
Service Requests - food safety	569	718 (86% within target time)	736	456 (85% within 3 working days)	720 (85% within 3 working days)
	Total SR's 1169	Total SR's 1340	Total SR's 1350	Total SR's 1463	Total SR's 1444
Food Hygiene training	239	219	257 food handlers trained	208 food handlers trained	123 food handlers training (courses in March cancelled due to Covid)
Communicable Diseases cases dealt with	183	171 (4 outbreaks and one fatality)	183	210 including Typhoid outbreak	191 (includes one case of Covid before end of March 2020)
Health and Safety notifications	NR	63 accidents, 33 major events	54 accidents, of which 9 reportable (serious injuries) 24 visits re asbestos also undertaken in the year.	41 accidents notified. 12 serious incidents investigated. 90 events reviewed	58 accident notifications 11 serious incidents investigated 25 events reviewed
Notices served	3 Notices served	10 Notices served		12 Notices served (gas and cellar safety)	2 Notices served (gas safety)
Environmental Health (General public health)					
Housing service requests (SR'S)	167 Total 135 within 3 working days = 80.8%	138 Total 127 within 3 working days = 92%	153 Total 133 within 3 working days = 86.9%	164 Total 141 within 3 working days = 86%	158 Total 133 within 3 working days = 84.2%

Noise	305 Total 277 within 3 working days = 90.8% 130 closed within 3 months = 42.6%	363 Total 318 within 3 working days = 87.6% 188 closed within 3 months = 51.8%	321 Total. 271 within 3 working days = 84.4% 173 closed within 3 mths = 53.9%	374 Total. 318 within 3 working days = 85% 152 closed within 3 mths = 40.6%	317 Total. 258 within 3 working days = 81.4% 181 closed within 3 mths = 57.1%
Statutory nuisance, excluding noise	148 Total 131 within 3 working days = 88.5% 75 closed within 3 months = 50.7%	179 Total 152 within 3 working days = 84.9% 84 closed within 3 months = 46.9%	142 Total. 122 within working 3 days = 85.9% 83 closed within 3 mths = 58.4%	176 Total. 145 within working 3 days = 82.4% 92 closed within 3 mths = 52.3%	154 Total. 127 within working 3 days = 82.5% 86 closed within 3 mths = 55.8%
Environmental Protection (fouling, littering, fly tipping etc.)	255 Total 233 within 3 working days = 91.4% 174 closed within 3 months = 68.2%	475 Total 448 within 3 working days = 94.3% 341 closed within 3 months = 71.8%	478 Total. 440 within 3 working days = 92.1% 302 closed within 3 months = 63.2%	484 Total. 446 within 3 working days = 92.1% 421 closed within 3 months = 87%	448 Total. 387 within 3 working days = 86.4% 395 closed within 3 months = 88.2%
Pest Control	Total 104 85 within 3 working days = 81.7%	Total 74. 51 within 3 working days = 69%	Total 71. 54 within 3 working days = 76%	Total 78. 61 within 3 working days = 78.2%	Total 85. 66 within 3 working days = 77.6%
Applications dealt with by Licensing	1945 (this increased figure also includes all monetary transactions).	1645 (which includes 423 Temporary Event Notices (TENS) requiring a 24 hour turnaround	1668 which includes 383 TENS requiring a 24 hour turnaround	1813 applications dealt with (up by 145 on the previous year). This includes 425 TENS requiring a 24 hour turnaround (an increase of 42 TENS	1666 applications dealt with (down by 147 on the previous year). This includes 384 TENS requiring a 24 hour turnaround (a decrease of 41

				on the previous year)	TENs on the previous year this is due leading up to Covid lockdown in March and events being cancelled)
Inspections carried out	529 inspections carried out (240 of which were risk rated premises for alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment)	508 inspections carried out (120 of which were risk rated premises for alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment)	329 inspections carried out (261 of which were risk rated premises for alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment)	325 inspections carried out (174 of which were risk rated premises for alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment)	247 inspections carried out (133 of which were risk rated premises for alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment). Inspections were down by 78 due to long term sickness
Service Requests carried out	740 service requests were carried out (679 - 92% - with a 3 day turnaround for first response).	879 service requests were carried out (816 - 92% - with a 3 day turnaround for first response).	868 service requests were carried out (784 - 90% - with a 3 day turnaround for first response – on target).	974 service requests were carried out (895 - 92% - with a 3 day turnaround for first response – on target). An increase of 106 service requests from 17/18	821 service requests were carried out (739 - 90% - with a 3 day turnaround for first response – on target). A decrease of 153 service requests from 18/19
Trading Standards Visits	317	176	110	126	113
Trading Standards Complaints/Advice	540	428	452	443	547

Citizens Advice Consumer Service	410 Referrals 1069 Notifications	285 Referrals 785 Notifications	302 Referrals 808 Notifications	305 Referrals 863 Notifications	322 Referrals 922 Notifications
Animal Health Visits	311	411	258	219	527
Animal Health Complaints/Advice	186	298	264	242	266
Inspections at our: High Risk premises, Upper Medium premises.	95% (57/60) Inspection programme intel led	No formal programme of inspection this year. Intel approach with focus on safeguarding in particular medical devices.	23% (25/107)	No formal programme of inspection due to other pressures including loss of Feed officer now replaced	No formal programme of inspection due to other pressures.
Feed Law Enforcement	103% of new externally funded feed programme. 156 Inspections	118% - 223 Inspections	100% - 235	100% - 212	59% - 144 supplemented by 254 ceased trading visits.
Programmed animal health inspections	100% (14 High) 40% Overall Programme	No formal programme of inspection this year	10% (30/294)	No formal programme of inspection due to long term sickness.	No formal programme of inspection
New Business Visits	76% TS 90% AH	52% TS 58% AH	56% TS 59% AH	29% TS (23/80) 66% AH (18/27)	56% TS (32/57) 73% AH (40/55)
Animal Welfare Complaints	96% within target response time	90.4% within target response time	91.4%	92.6%	63%
Vulnerable Scam Reports	35 visits contact with 119 individuals	9 visits contact with 121 individuals	10 visits contact with 135 individuals	12 visits contact with 149 individuals	10 visits contact with 159 individuals (running total)
Other					
Freedom of Information	85	61	51	66	74

Requests (PP Total)					
Events requiring advice via Safety Advisory Group	94	102	137	156	105

5. ANALYSIS AND ACTIVITY 2019/20

5.1 Environmental Health – Commercial – updated pandemic work activity can be seen in Appendix B

5.1.1 Food safety (food hygiene and food standards)

The Commercial team has a strong commitment to balancing our statutory work with our innovative income generating work. As a result of our interventions, there has been a year on year increase in the number of high scoring premises under the Food Hygiene Rating scheme. We also promote top scoring food businesses on social media. We continue to work with other LA's to preserve the integrity and consistency of the mandatory Welsh Food hygiene rating scheme. 96.9% of businesses were rated 3 or above at the end of the financial year and over 88% were 4 rated and above. This is slightly higher than the national Welsh average.

The team was heavily involved in all emergency flooding responses from October to February as a result of the consecutive storms in the county.

Access - this innovative scheme is now in its 6th year, whereby a charge is made for supplementary advisory visits. Feedback from business shows that the service is very effective in increasing confidence and having a beneficial effect on the food hygiene rating. The service is particularly effective for new businesses whose owners may not have encountered enforcement Officers before. It establishes a better relationship and, through better compliance, the county gets safer food businesses. We have expanded it to any function of advice that a business may require or request. Our preferred option is to educate and advise business rather than enforcement which enables us to foster a good working relationship and a higher rate of compliance levels than the national average.

Food standards - Officers continue to provide legal advice on allergen declarations in food, protecting affected persons and we have co-ordinated a Gwent wide speciation survey. This focusses on miss-described meat and a local project on allergen awareness and then mystery shopper sampling.

Food sampling- the food team carries out regular sampling surveys of food made and sold in Monmouthshire, in line with national guidance and topical issues. We have been the most successful LA in the SE Food group in using our service allocation from the microbiological laboratory, obtaining 111% of our allocation of samples for the region.

Primary Authority- Officers carry out work as contacts for primary authority companies. The legal requirements relating to allergen declarations etc continues to result in more contact with the Officers, including the investigation of reported incidents. The team have sought to increase partnerships where possible. We have continued to work with our main PA partners of SA Brains, ABHB, Welsh Water and Marriott Hotels.

5.1.2 Communicable disease control

The majority of cases for investigation are Campylobacter and Salmonella and are individual, sporadic cases. Cases of Cryptosporidium and E. Coli have also been notified. The team has investigated a number of viral outbreaks in schools, care homes and a hospital, thus protecting the most vulnerable groups in Monmouthshire. It is necessary to investigate the cause, spread and duration of viral illnesses in order to eliminate other sources of illness such as foodborne illness.

We were involved from an early stage in the listeria in sandwiches outbreak that led to a number of deaths in England.

By mid-March, the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the team were fully mobilised and engaged in work to regulate, advise and investigate all aspects of the effects of the virus in Gwent.

5.1.3 Health and Safety at Work

Beverage Gas Safety was a national priority for intervention in 17/18 (HSE). It continued in 19/20 with enforcement actions being taken in premises where there has been found to be safety breaches. We have continued with the inspections of cellars and, along with gas safety, have served improvement notices to remove the risk of asphyxiation and fire in takeaways and other food premises.

We are assisting the public health team with enforcement of Private Water Supplies and actively capturing information more efficiently.

We have continued preparing businesses for the introduction of new legislation for tattooists and special procedures legislation that was due to come in for 2019.

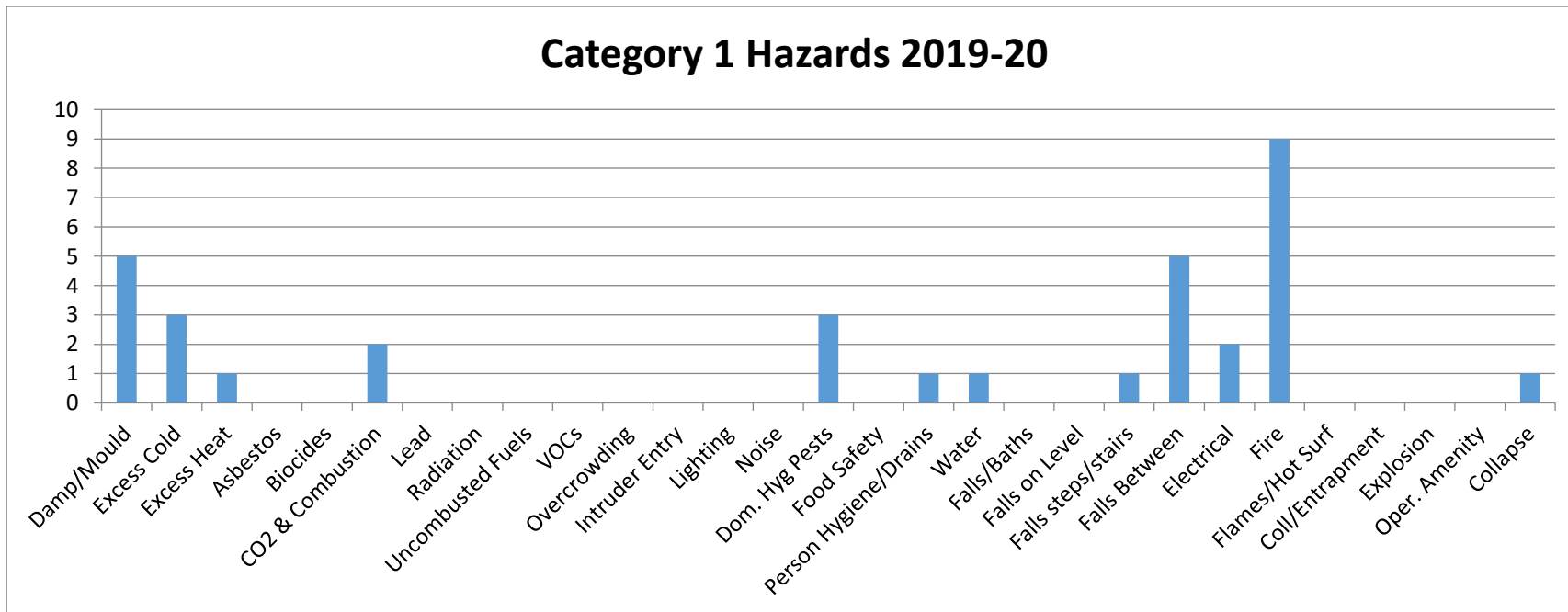
5.1.4 Income generation

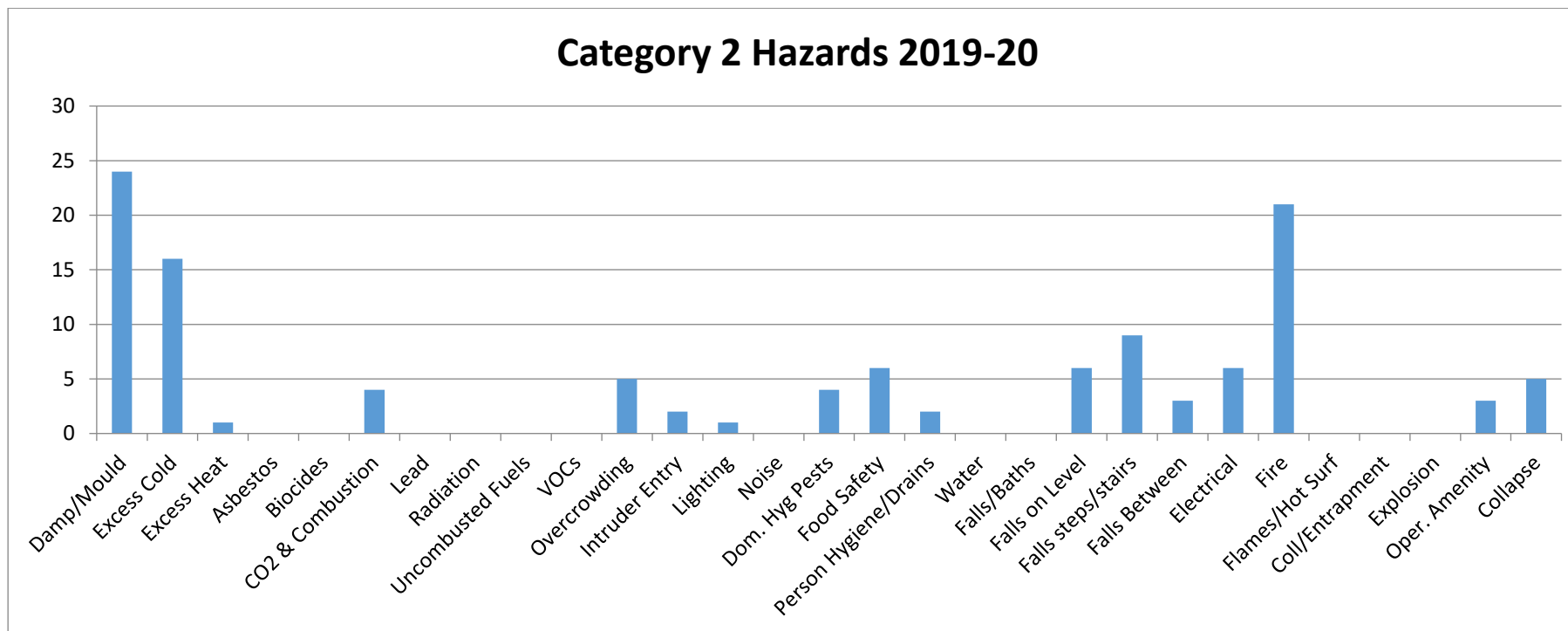
Although a regulatory function, the EH Commercial team are leading the field in Wales for innovative income generation. Further ideas have been developed and implemented, for example our MAPP (Monmouthshire Alternative to Prosecution Policy). We continue to try and think 'outside the box' and seek new income opportunities.

5.2 Environmental Health – Public Health

5.2.1 Housing

In 19/20 the team have continued to provide an effective and early response to complaints and requests for advice in the private rented sector. A total of 158 enquiries have been received with 133 of these responded to within 3 working days (84.2%). This is consistent with recent years. Enquiries can be regarding a range of concerns including threat of landlord harassment / unlawful eviction but generally relate to concerns with the condition of the rented property. Out of these enquiries a total of 56 dwellings were inspected with 31 category 1 hazards (most serious) and 116 category 2 hazards identified. Of the total of 147 hazards a high percentage relate to damp, cold, falls between levels and fire safety issues. The hazard profiles are illustrated as follows:





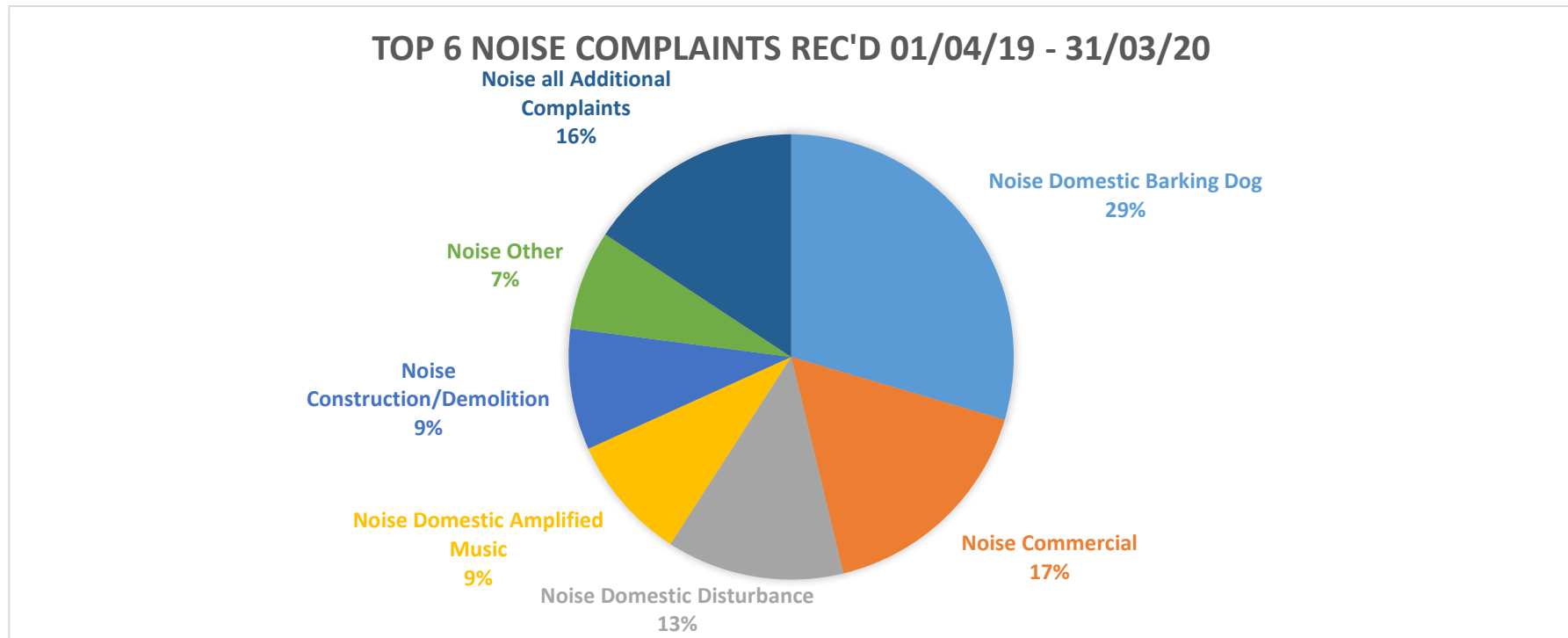
In the 56 dwellings inspected, 85 adults and 85 children were exposed to significant hazards. Officers engage with landlords, make clear their responsibilities under the Housing legislation and seek their cooperation to undertake the required works to remove the hazards identified. A range of enforcement actions are available and used where landlords do not cooperate such as the service of Improvement Notices. By the 31st March, 33 adults and 44 children had been protected by landlords undertaking the required remedial works.

The team is being active in fulfilling the Council's responsibilities in promoting and supporting Rent Smart Wales (RSW) with regard to the registration and licensing of landlords, which has been a requirement in Wales since 23rd November 2016. At the end of 31st March 2020 there were 4823 registered rental properties in the County, (social landlords not included).

5.2.2 Noise

Complaints of noise, while lower than the record high of 18/19, remain consistent with the trend in recent years. Dog barking remains the main issue comprising nearly a third of the 318 total complaints. Issues with commercial type premises and also noise

from construction sites remain sizeable with 53 and 28 service requests respectively. Officers endeavour to respond and deal with complaints quickly, with cases closed within 3 months increasing substantially from 40% in 18/19 to 57% in 19/20.



5.2.3 Environmental Protection

The high number of complaints received in the last couple of years continued to be sustained in 19/20 with 448 complaints relating to matters such as fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, dog fouling and littering. There were 172 service requests relating to abandoned vehicles.

Response times remain very high with 86% of requests receiving an initial response within 3 working days and 88% of cases closed within 3 months.

The 'Give Dog Fouling the Red Card' scheme led by the team together with the Waste and Street Cleaning section, designed to empower local communities to deal with local fouling problems, has progressed into its fifth year with 22 participating Town and Community councils. Members report that dog fouling has generally reduced in their areas as reflected in the downward trend of complaints received.

13/14 – 169 complaints

14/15 – 146 complaints

15/16 – 92 complaints

16/17 – 121 complaints

17/18 – 106 complaints

18/19 – 90 complaints

19/20 – 85 complaints

Stronger Communities Select endorsed recommendations in report March 2020 to commence a 3 month public consultation with regard to dog controls in public areas. This consultation has been postponed due to the Covid 19 pandemic but will commence shortly.

5.2.4 Private Water Supplies

The team has the responsibility for fulfilling the Council's duty of risk assessing all 'large' and 'small' private water supplies (PWS), where water is intended for human consumption. Improvements are undertaken where necessary to ensure a wholesome and sufficient water supply is provided.

We currently have 119 'small' and 64 'large' supplies, the vast majority of which have received an initial risk assessment, although because of a change in Regulations at the end of 2017 approximately 16 'new' supplies require an initial assessment. There is an ongoing statutory requirement to risk assess supplies every 5 years and this been highlighted consistently in the last 5+ years in the service plan as an area of significant resource pressure. Resource has been focused in this area during the last 2 years with consequently good progress made in carrying out assessments and where necessary requiring work to be undertaken. A total of 37 supplies were risk assessed in 19/20 with 19 of these removed from the high risk category.

5.2.5 Pest Control

Complaint levels remain very similar with 85 received compared with 78 in 18/19. The majority of these relate to rats.

5.2.6 Construction

Engagement with the developers of the A465 dual carriageway and electrification of the South Wales main rail line has continued. Our interest is to ensure that the contractors do all that can be reasonably expected to control noise, dust and air pollution levels. A

substantial work commitment is needed in these areas which is generally not reflected in the Service Request statistics, with successful engagement hopefully resulting in low complaint numbers.

5.2.7 Air Quality

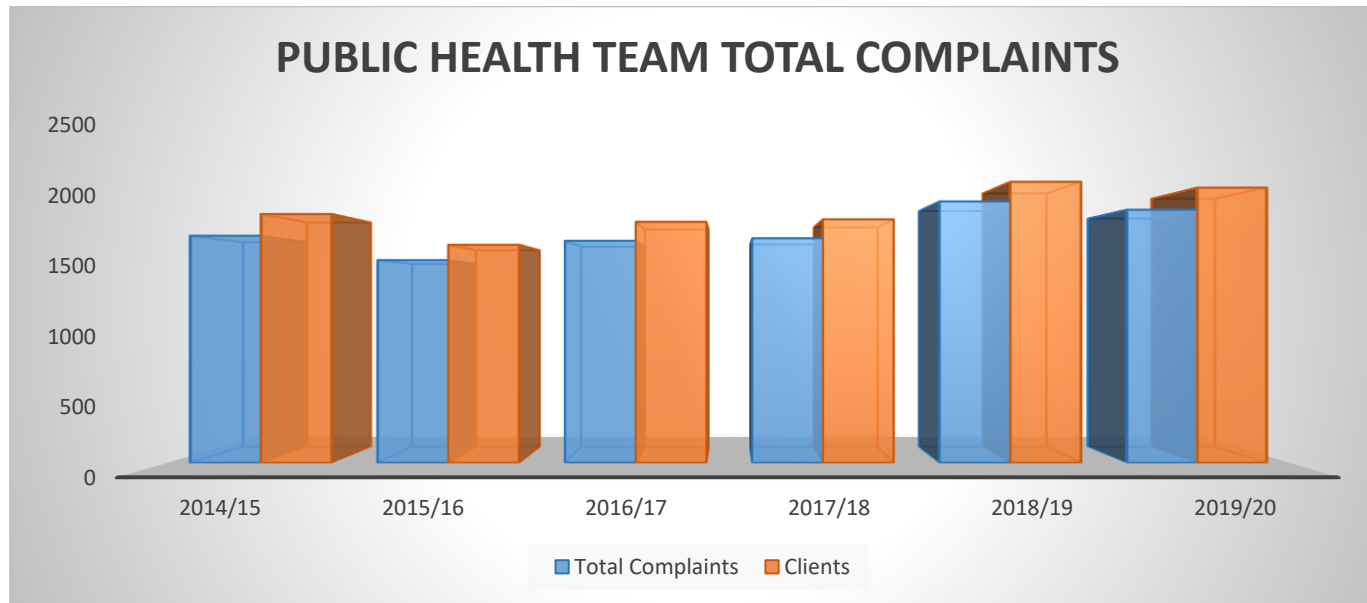
The team met its target to complete the 36 inspections due for 19/20 of the industrial permitted sites and petroleum certified sites which we have responsibility for from a pollution legislation perspective.

We continue to monitor traffic related pollution (nitrogen dioxide) in our 4 major towns and provide advice in regular meetings of the steering groups in the Chepstow and Usk Air Quality Management areas. There remains just 1 location in the County, on Hardwick Hill, Chepstow, where nitrogen dioxide levels continue to exceed the annual objective level of 40ug/m³ set by legislation but the downward trend continues with 42.3ug/m³ recorded for 2019 compared with 57.7ug/m³ for 2014.

We now have continuous air quality sensors installed at 4 schools - Usk and St Mary's primary schools, Chepstow and Monmouth Comprehensive schools. The sensors continuously monitor nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, ozone, air temperature, humidity, and pressure. This data can be viewed live via a website and there is scope for this to be an important education tool and help raise awareness of the need for good air quality.

5.2.8 Total Enquiries

Service request levels remain very high with 1,947 received and dealt with by the team (2,117 enquirers) across the range of functions.



5.3 Licensing

5.3.1 General

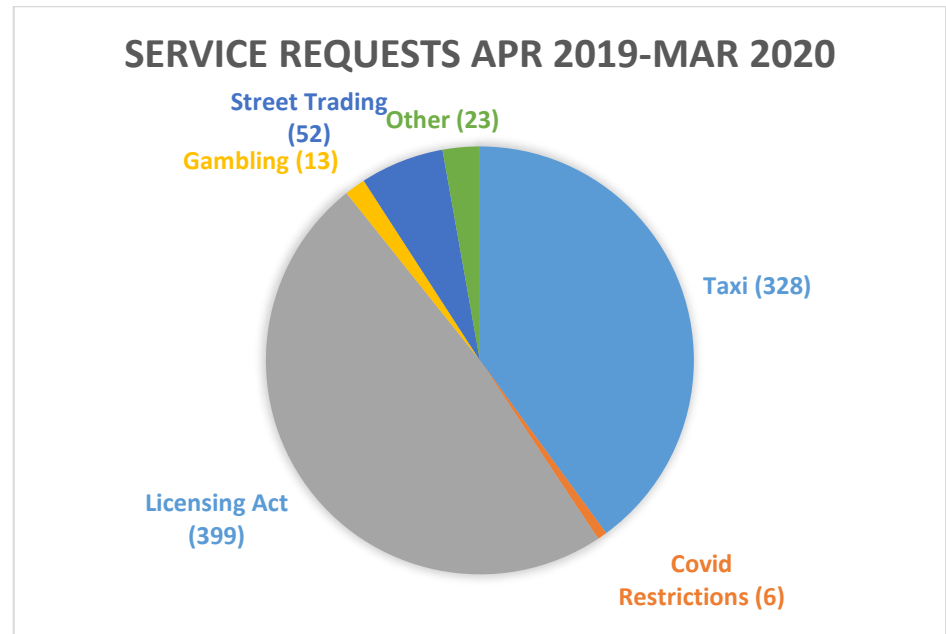
The Licensing team deals with a variety of licences, dealing with pubs, restaurants, off-licences and takeaways, taxis, street trading (e.g. burger vans), street/house to house collections, (e.g. charity collections in the street or bag drops at homes), gambling (e.g. betting shops, racecourse, one armed bandits in pubs/clubs, raffles etc.), scrap metal collectors and sites. The team are also authorised to deal with sex establishments, boats and hypnotism.

821 requests for service were processed by the Licensing between April 2019 – March 2020, down by 165 from the previous year. A breakdown of the 821 requests as shown:-

The majority of the services requests are for Licensing Act (alcohol, entertainment and late night hot food and drink). 405 (includes 6 Covid Restrictions) service requests out of 821 (40 of those were complaints)

Followed closely by the taxi/private hire trade, 328 out of the 821 (60 of those were complaints regarding the trade).

1666 applications were also processed between April 2019-March 2020 (a decrease of 147 for the same period the previous year).



Some of the work carried out by Licensing during this period includes:-

5.3.2 Pubs, Restaurants, Off-licences, Clubs and Takeaways

Night Time Economy and Joint Enforcement

In 2019/20, 157 premises received an inspection during this period. We received concerns relating to 20 premises about incidents ranging from noise, drug related issues, incidents of domestic and other forms of violence, illegal raves, immigration concerns and serious safeguarding incidents.

On 14th May 2019 Monmouthshire's Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) put together a successful workshop for Event Organisers throughout Gwent. This provided a number of speakers to help provide guidance on the role of the organiser and the legalities. Speakers ranged from Gwent Licensing Officers, Environmental Health, Police Events Team and Anti-Terrorism Unit, Ambulance, Fire Service and also a major event organiser that had a number of years managing large events throughout the UK. Stalls were also on hand to provide advice to organisers. Feedback was positive for this first event and event organisers requested it be run each year at different locations in Gwent. They found it helpful and informative.

Licensing successfully prosecuted a takeaway, who was found guilty and convicted on 24th June 2019, for breaching licensing conditions and was fined £688 and ordered to pay £1350 costs.

Also during July in 2019, Licensing attended acid and knife attack training with the Ambulance Service and Police and rolled out acid and knife attack kits through the Pubwatch groups.

January – March 2020, ION track (drug swab testing machine) was used at various pubs restaurants in Abergavenny. This was a joint operation between Licensing and the Police - 7 premises visited, with 5 of those requiring a follow up visit as positive drug swabs were found. Those visited did have concerns and, working with them, Licensing and the Police has issued posters, leaflets, beer mats and also bottle top spikers, following an alleged spate of drinks being spiked in the area.

Immigration

In 2019/20, On 11th April Licensing and Immigration revisited a takeaway who had previously employed a person with no right to work, the premises will continue to be monitored. Ongoing sharing of information and investigation is still at the forefront to protect people from being exploited. Licensing and Immigration are currently investigating possible illegal workers at a takeaway/restaurant. This was following a tip-off from an Environmental Health Officers on a food visit who had concerns over the mannerisms and attitude of staff working there.

Safeguarding

In September 2018, further to a Social Services report, Licensing and the Police, along with an interpreter, visited a convenience store to request measures be put in place to avoid the person being alone with children, as a precautionary measure until the case was determined. A change of condition included a robust CCTV system and retention of footage was included following this visit.

The licence holder later went on to admit to an assault against a child within the store, so the licence was changed to remove the husband from the licence. An immediate review of the licence was instigated, despite the husband receiving a custodial sentence on 22nd November 2019 of 13 months, with his name on the sex offenders register for 10 years and placed on the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) barring list, and no longer having any involvement in the licence itself. This was essential as the living quarters were immediately by the licensed area of the store. The review hearing took place before the Licensing and Regulatory Sub-Committee on 14th January 2020. The review was upheld by this Committee and a further condition was placed on the licence to not permit the husband to work or enter the licensed area when the premises is open to members of the public.

5.3.3 Taxis

In 2019/20, 15 drivers had spot checks, with 1 being issued penalty points for not wearing a badge. 30 vehicles checked with 2 of the vehicles having minor defects, which was duly rectified. All received a warning. 20 operator bases checked, with advice given on record keeping.

Joint Operations

Joint operations between Licensing and Passenger Transport Unit was conducted at Abergavenny schools on May and prior to the Christmas break in 2019, 2 vehicles had minor defects and driver had not worn his badge. All were issued with a warning and penalty points. Multi Agency operations took place between Licensing, the Police, DVSA and HMRC in the Abergavenny area on 21st January and 3rd February. In the January operation 12 were inspected and complied. However in February, 4 licensed vehicles and many non-licensed vehicles were pulled over to check roadworthiness. 1 owner received an advisory to change the tyre soon. 1 driver/owner of a Hackney received 4 penalty points and received a vehicle suspension notice for a bald tyre, the DVSA prohibited its use on the road. Mobile tyre change completed same day resulting in the vehicle suspension being lifted..

5.3.4 Gambling

In 2019/20, 29 gaming machines were inspected. In March 2020 Rhondda Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) was invited to the Gwent Licensing Forum, with Monmouthshire taking the lead for this group. The group looked at the possibility of the CAB carrying out training during 2020/21 to target areas, such as Community Workers, housing officers, family information services, safeguarding, adult and children services. This training would provide assistance on how to look out for signs of families being affected by gambling and the services and signpost people to help.

5.4 Trading Standards & Animal Health

5.4.1 Feed

Following the four successful years of the regional approach to Feed Law enforcement, 2019/20 achieved completion once again albeit with lower inspection targets. Over two thirds of the region's total inspections fall in Monmouthshire, (just over 80% of activity this particular year). Upskilling of other Officers has proven vital to enable this work to be continued. New animal health officers will be trained to deliver some of this work going forward.

5.4.2 Animal Health

The animal health function continues to be over 90% reactive. The Trading Standards team leader is strategic lead nationally for animal health matters and continues to be heavily involved in working with Welsh Government, to develop and deliver the Partnership Delivery Plan with associated additional funding. This is based on a regional approach and mirrors the footprint of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. Monmouthshire has approximately 50% of the critical control points and animal related premises within this region, but current capacity, at 2.4 FTE's, limits this opportunity. Regional Coordination for Animal Health across Wales, and the additional feed income, has enabled additional animal health capacity. Two new animal health officers are in the process of being trained in all aspects of the role.

5.4.3 Fair Trading

We were successful in being selected to work on a funded project by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – second year pilot testing a enforcement strategy and toolkit for the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015. Now commencing July 2020.

A trader was successfully prosecuted and convicted, Yadgar Abdini pleaded guilty to 9 counts of the possession for supply of counterfeit products at the European Mini Market, Chepstow. Abdini was ordered to pay a total £1,913 in a combination of fine and costs. We also obtained a destruction order for 3480 cigarettes and a quantity of rolling tobacco that was seized from the premises during the course of investigation. Continued enforcement action at the European Mini Market, in co-ordination with HMRC, included the seizure of 3,977 cigarettes and 2kg of Hand Rolling tobacco, which was a combination of Counterfeit and Illicit Whites.

5.4.4 Consumer Protection

A priority for the service has been dealing with a variety of scams and bringing them to the attention of both the public and businesses whenever possible. We are all potential victims and, by reaching out and working alongside adult safeguarding, vulnerable victims can be kept out of overburdened local care systems.

The key focus has continued to be working with vulnerable victims through priority referrals and ensuring they are given the advice and assistance required and/or referred as appropriate. Call Blockers have been distributed to the vulnerable who have been targeted by scam calls, and support given to WASP (Wales Against Scams Partnership) on behalf of the Authority, including initiatives such as Friends Against Scams and Mail Marshalls.

There have been a few multi-agency approaches undertaken targeting rogue traders, doorstep callers, poachers and itinerant businesses.

5.4.5 Weights & Measures

We participated in the Trading Standards Wales, Metrology group's 19/20 project on Non Automatic Weighing Instruments within independent retailers. This was a continuation of a national project from 18/19 which identified a number of non-compliances with scales in supermarkets. 16 scales were tested for accuracy and conformity in a variety of small retail premises across the County. It was noted that there was a high rate of compliance (94%) within smaller retailers within Monmouthshire, which has been fed back into the Metrology Group.

5.4.6 Product Safety

We instigated and managed a voluntary recall with local importer on two products that were found to be unsafe under the Electrical Equipment Safety Regulations, involving two products and approx. 500 units affected by the recall.

A formal caution was issued to another local trader which was importing and supplying non-compliant electrical equipment.

We worked with eBay Home Authority on the removal from sale of an unsafe electrical product sold across 195 separate listings.

Work commenced with Global Furniture Alliance on the implementation of PAS 7100 - Supporting Better Product Recalls within their company.

5.4.7 Air Quality – Lorry Watch

Vehicle spotter reports continue to be followed up with checks that the vehicles are legitimately travelling through the two restricted areas in Usk. These vehicles contribute significantly to the levels of air pollution but the majority are legitimately using the routes.

5.4.8 Income Generation

In 2019/20 Feed funding generated approximately £20,000 allowing us to retain additional capacity. Animal Health PDP regional co-ordination and additional project work, Primary Authority and other regional initiatives brought in around £8,000.

5.5 Event Safety Advisory Group

A number of Public Protection staff are involved in Monmouthshire's Event Safety Advisory Group, (ESAG). This is a partnership designed to help organisers run safe and successful events. It is recognised a proactive advisory stance is preferable to reacting to problems after events have occurred. Events held in 19/20 included food festivals, music concerts, agricultural shows, cycling events etc. and safety/noise/licensing/other advice was provided. As per Figure One, 105 were reviewed during 19/20.

6 PERFORMANCE SUMMARY 2019/20 year

- 6.1 Public Protection teams, with only a small number of exceptions, continue to meet the Authority's legal obligations. However, Officers are typically operating at maximum level and are put under increased pressure when colleagues have any long term absence. Where pressures are found, for example regarding our private water supply (PWS) duties, managers have collaborated to find workable solutions.
- 6.2 Service request levels across all teams remain high, so there has been a need to prioritise our reactive work over our proactive activities.
- 6.3 The performance data in Figure One illustrates teams maintaining proactive and reactive services well. As outlined in the analyses in Section 5, teams have some pressures, due to work volumes and limited Officer capacity.

- 6.4 Last year more work was undertaken to supplement our safeguarding role. Services typically protect some of our most vulnerable members of society, and this report has highlighted specific pieces of work. These include Licensing working to protect children (5.3.2), and Trading Standards intervening with rogue traders (5.4.3) and scams (5.4.4).
- 6.5 Members can gain some assurance that performance is in line with other Authorities via regular monitoring by the external governing bodies referred to in section 4.2, for example, the Food Standards Agency.

7 2020/21 AND BEYOND

- 7.1 Public Protection services will continue to seek more capacity to deal with more air quality activity, private housing interventions and consumer protection issues. Our 2020/23 Business Plans are seeking to better reflect our longer term vision and future planning. This tallies with the Well Being of Future Generations expectations, with Public Protection services contributing directly to a more prosperous, resilient, healthier and more equal county. Digital solutions will be pursued to help capacity issues.
- 7.2 When new legislative requirements are introduced, via Welsh Government or Westminster, our professional bodies will seek proper funding to implement. Provisions of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 are now being implemented, to include licensing of intimate piercing and new age restrictions. The Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report for 16/17 was released in February 2018, with a big focus on 'gambling and health'. Public Protection services will link with other partners, eg. Gambling Commission, to seek to protect 'problem gamblers' noting the public health impacts on individuals, families and communities. New Minimum Unit Pricing legislation has been implemented with funding to ensure Trading Standards can work with business to ensure compliance with the new requirements.
- 7.3 Collaborative opportunities are being considered at regional and national level, and this Authority will play a part in developing future service models. Further income generation opportunities will continue to be pursued. Following an approach from the Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales a proposal was submitted on behalf of Trading Standards Wales, which has resulted in a significant 3 year Dog Breeding Project being led by the TS Manager and Animal Health Regional coordinator. As well as bringing about much needed change, this should also support resource constraints placed on the team.
- 7.4 Our services, together with delivering statutory responsibilities, acts on local intelligence and welcomes input from local Councillors, other stakeholders, etc. to improve outcomes for our citizens. The services enjoy an excellent reputation, due to the commitment of the Officers, and will continue to contribute to the wider agendas and our core purposes, as provided in 2.1. To protect existing budgets, other routes will be sought to improve the profile of these services, both locally and nationally.


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)	Setting up a tracing service from scratch, working with Health partners & 4 LA's in Gwent Setting up working procedures for all tracers and advisors in TTP service Initially entirely Commercial EHP's, but now includes a few from the other 3 PP teams	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. Various update training, scripts for telephone service, data management, reports to WG, etc. Challenge in providing a 77 hour a week service, 9am to 8pm 7 days a week
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	<p>that we adhere to current Government requirements in response to Coronavirus.#keepsafe</p>
<p>See carrier bags above</p>	<p>Contacting all open premises that we can think off</p>	
<p>Local Gin distillery</p>	<p>Found out via 'Mind Mon' making sanitiser and delivering to care homes. They have made 400 litres so far, and distributed.</p>	<p>Owner very appreciative of call and we will be helping with distribution and guidance on financial assistance</p>
	<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.

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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 –

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	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

**SUBJECT: Monmouthshire Registration Service Performance Report
2019/2020**

MEETING: STRONG COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

DATE: 12th November 2020

DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 Scrutiny of the Registration Service and its' performance during the 2019/20 year, together with consideration of the response to the Covid – 19 pandemic so far this year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To consider and comment on the content of this report. The report serves to outline the services provided by the Registration Service at Appendix 1, describes current performance and highlights future challenges.
- 2.2 The work in response to the current pandemic is recognised, as highlighted in Appendix 2.
- 2.3 An annual performance report, to be scheduled for late April or May each year, be presented to this Committee in future years. In this way, Members can assess performance over time for this crucial element of the Authority's work.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 To maintain a high level of customer satisfaction for our residents whilst managing and responding to public demand and providing an excellent, value-for-money service.

4. PERFORMANCE DURING 2019/2020

- 4.1 The General Register Office sets targets and key performance indicators on statutory time frames and customer service priorities. Each month GRO publishes the performance data for each District on our system so we can monitor our own performance and compare it to similar districts and nationally. Any District that is perceived to be failing to meet the standards will have meetings with their Compliance Officer to look at ways to improve performance. We had our bi-annual audit from our Compliance Officer last year which was very positive and did not raise any concerns.

Type of appointment	Total for year 2019-2020	% within statutory time-frame
Births	1817	99% (above target)
Deaths	1344	87% (3% below target)
Still-births	6	100% (on target)
Marriages	407	N/A
Civil Partnerships*	15	N/A
Notices of marriage/CP	669	N/A
New British citizens	26	N/A
Customers seen within 10 mins of appointment/arrival time	All customers	100%
Appts offered within time-frame guidelines	All types	100%

Marriages: 407 registered between 36 approved premises and the register office.

* Civil Partnerships – from the 31st December 2019 opposite sex couples had the opportunity to enter into civil partnerships which is why the number of CPs has jumped from 1 last year. Over the past year we have taken 52 CP notices which were all for opposite sex couples.

Births have decreased slightly over the past 2 years although we were still on target. Still-births have remained the same as last year. Deaths have also continued to decrease by a small percentage over the past few years.

- 4.2 Customer feedback is sought regularly by way of surveys for all types of appointments (as well as spontaneous feedback and a comment book). Over 2019/20 we received 171 completed surveys, 165 of them were positive (96%). This is used to help maintain and improve the service we offer. For example, we made arrangements to change rooms at the Hub in Chepstow and made improvements to signage on County Hall site as a result of comments. Some comments are reproduced below:

“The Registrar was a very lovely lady who dealt with all our issues comprehensively and compassionately”

“Excellent, compassionate staff”

“Have dedicated parking spaces for Registration Services”

“Very happy with Registrar-Polite and helpful and patient too as brought the baby as well”

“You cannot improve on perfection”

“Thank you for making a difficult time less stressful”

“The Registrar was very efficient, clear and concise but a warm friendly manner. Facility to have a tea/coffee would be nice for those travelling from afar”

“At a difficult time the staff member was efficient, professional, kind and empathetic. I am grateful for the time taken out to explain things properly”

“They were wonderful-couldn’t have asked for better”

“ I want to thank you all for the thoughtful, memorable and happy occasion which you managed so professionally. We were such a diverse group, all cultures, religions, shapes sizes, age groups and you conducted it beautifully.”

“Signage not good-having not been there before” (Register Office Usk)

“Usually with public services I feel staff are quite cold (just doing a job) but my experience here was the opposite. Everyone was lovely!”

5. CHALLENGES/FUTURE PROOFING

- 5.1 The new NHS hospital in Torfaen, the Grange University Hospital is due to open in the autumn of 2020, earlier than planned. Facilities include a brand new birth and acute care centre so will have an impact on the number of births and deaths taking place in Nevill Hall, and consequently on the number of registrations in Monmouthshire. To try to off-set such a big change we have started collaborative working with the other ‘Gwent’ districts. It is a ground-breaking agreement within registration, as there is no other partnership of this size within England and Wales. We had hoped to begin in May 2020 however birth registrations were suspended along with all other face to face appointments in March so in fact we started the partnership when we re-started births at the end of June 2020. It means that a customer whose child was born within the ‘Gwent’ area now has the option of registering their child’s birth in any of the ‘Gwent’ Districts. The hope is that we will include death registrations in due course once we are satisfied with the procedure.
- 5.2 The role of Medical Examiner and Medical Examiner Officers is starting nationally. Along with everything else this has been delayed but recruitments have now been made and the staff are beginning to be trained up into their roles. The role will initially scrutinise all hospital deaths, which should result in

fewer referrals to Coroner which will enable us to use our time more efficiently once we all become familiar with procedures.

- 5.3 In respect of ceremonies at the Register Office and Licensed Premises we have to be competitive, to look at the market and try to offer choices that customers want, to help ourselves and our venues, many of whom are small businesses so we have to work together for success. One new option we started this year is to combine an outdoor element to ceremonies. We are bound by legislation in what we can do but there are often ways to make things work for our couples. For example having an outdoor ceremony where one part of the ceremony then moves to a licensed room to repeat the vows and complete the legalities. Lots of our venues are very keen to try this option although it is entirely weather dependent, we managed 2 outdoor ceremonies in the summer of 2019 but had lots more booked in for summer 2020 so hopefully next year this may again be a popular option.
- 5.4 The Law Commission consultation is now open, looking at proposals for changing and simplifying marriage law and procedure. The proposals are very wide-ranging and may dramatically change marriage ceremonies in England and Wales within the next few years.
- 5.5 We have to be very flexible, to meet the demand for registration appointments, which can change on an almost daily basis. The biggest challenge within Registration is to keep on top of the constant developments in legislation and changes in the local environment.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The significant drop in income in 2020/21 year is being met in part by Welsh Government, being a national issue. No financial consequence as a result of this report.

7. AUTHOR

Jennifer Walton, Superintendent Registrar

8. CONTACT DETAILS

jenniferwalton@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Appendix 1:

1. Register office remit and purpose

- 1.1 Civil registration has been mandatory in the UK since 1837. Initially Registration Officers were employed by our Head Office, the General Register Office but that changed in 2007 and we are now employed by the Local Authority. Monmouthshire became the District that it is now for the purposes of registration in 1996 as part of the Local Government restructure, prior to that it was Abergavenny, Monmouth and Chepstow and was occasionally partly in England. Boundaries historically have changed regularly which has often resulted in registers moving around between Offices, and Churches and Hospitals suddenly reporting to a different area. We are the custodians of the records of all Births, Deaths and Marriages which have taken place in Monmouthshire since 1837. They are all stored and safeguarded within our strong room.
- 1.2 The Registration Service currently sits within Public Protection, under Social Care and Health and this fits well with our remit, which has expanded over the years to become more customer focussed, and to take on additional duties on behalf of the Home Office, for example reporting possible sham marriages, vulnerable persons within the community, fraudulent applications for the issue of certificates, and sending statistical information to the Office for National Statistics about births and mortality. All of this information allows the Council to make informed decisions about priorities for the future, be it school provision, or targeting specific health issues in specific areas, which in turn allows the council to contribute directly to the well-being goals in Wales
- 1.3 Each year we prepare an annual report to GRO and a Seasonal Variance Plan as well as our Monmouthshire Service Improvement Plan and Business Continuity Report.

2. The purpose of the Registration Service is as follows:

- The registration of all births, deaths and stillbirths occurring within the County
- Taking notices of intended marriages and civil partnerships from persons resident within the County
- Conducting and registering all civil marriages and civil partnerships (including conversions from civil partnership to marriage) taking place in any venue registered or licensed for the purpose, including prisons and hospitals or private residences in certain circumstances
- Registering religious marriages where required
- Conducting citizenship ceremonies for Monmouthshire residents who make successful applications for British nationality

- Safe custody of all historic records of births, deaths, civil partnerships and marriages dating back to 1837 and issue of certified copies of these records on demand
- Inspection and registration of new venues for marriage and civil partnership
- Giving assistance and advice to all customers on all aspects of registration, citizenship and nationality
- Providing data for vital work on population statistics and medical research
- Management of data; including protection of both physical and electronic data and assisting with public protection and counter fraud by reporting suspicious applications and sham marriages as well as suspicions about immigration abuse and other crimes
- Safeguarding secure stock and accounting for fees
- Promote and contribute to the Home Office priorities

3. Premises:

- 3.1 We are based next door in the Old Parlour, we employ 17 staff, 9 on a casual basis for ceremonies only. The staff are made up of me, the Superintendent Registrar, one Registrar, Jenny Luciani, and 6 Deputies who can all register births, deaths and marriages and also take notices of marriage. Most also conduct ceremonies. The staff are all deliberately trained to the highest level to provide the maximum flexibility and resilience to the service.
- 3.2 We have just benefitted from an improvement to the outside area with the re-surfacing of the Register Office car park and improved signage from the main car park so that the public can find us more easily and know that they can park nearby.
- 3.3 As well as the Old Parlour we have 3 out-stations, at Nevill Hall and at the Hubs in Chepstow and Monmouth, to help us provide the best possible service to residents. Nevill Hall is staffed every day, Chepstow and Monmouth are on a rota but we can arrange appointments more frequently there depending on need.
- 3.4 Our Approved Premises, by which I mean venues which have chosen to licence rooms for marriages and civil partnerships, cover the length and breadth of Monmouthshire, there are 32 in total at the present time, and we are very fortunate to enjoy a very good relationship with them all. Covering such a large area and striving to provide the chosen days and times for each couple can be a challenge but it is vital that we all work together to give each couple the best service possible and promote Monmouthshire at every opportunity.

Appendix 2: Pandemic impact and recovery 2020

February 2020

- Reminders to all staff to use good hygiene practices and to try to limit direct contact with the public.

March 2020

- Registration appointments were still taking place face to face and ceremonies continued up to Saturday 21st March, some ceremonies brought forward at very short notice as concerns rose that lock down was coming.
- 23rd March Westminster announced a moratorium on ceremonies however face to face appointments continued at that time.
- Reviewed and changed the layout of the register office, stopped attending out-stations to better keep control of our environment, working stations and practices.
- Confirmation received from GRO that the emergency legislation being drafted would include provision for death registrations by telephone and electronic transmission of documents as well as certain other easements.
- Jenny Luciani, the Registrar, began contacting Doctor's surgeries and funeral directors, explaining to them the legislation which we were expecting. Jenny created a spreadsheet of contact names, numbers and email addresses for the whole of Monmouthshire and other local areas. This was a huge piece of work which took many hours as most of the surgeries and funeral directors were unaware of the impact of the new legislation.
- A direct result of this work meant that when permission was given to move to telephone registrations on Friday 27th March we were able to transition almost seamlessly to the new system, beginning Monday 30th March.
- GRO advice to suspend all face-to-face appointments unless exceptional circumstances.

April 2020: We registered 40% more deaths in April this year than last year

May 2020: Death registrations began to drop and were less than last year

June 2020

- On the 19th June Welsh Government announced the re-start of ceremonies in Register Offices and approved rooms in Register Offices. There was a great deal of confusion as we had received no guidance about this or clarification from GRO so initially we did not start ceremonies and waited for guidance to be sent through either from Welsh Government or GRO.
- On the 29th June face-to-face appointments re-commenced, with collaborative working for birth appointments across 'Gwent'.
- At this time we had nearly 500 birth registrations outstanding for Monmouthshire.

July 2020

- As guidance regarding ceremonies had not been received but Welsh Government and GRO were both advising that ceremonies could re-start we made the decision to start ceremonies, following all Public Health recommendations to protect ourselves and the public. Initially this was in the Register Office and approved room only, but as restrictions lifted Approved Premises also began to open for ceremonies.

August 2020

- Death registrations continued by telephone.
- Ceremonies, births and notice appointments continued face to face.

September 2020: To the end of September 919 birth registrations have taken place. That is in a time-frame of 3 months thanks to collaborative working and the dedication of Monmouthshire's registration officers, alongside notice, re-registration and correction appointments and attending ceremonies. There are now less than 16 births outstanding to the end of June and we are actively contacting them to arrange appointments.

October and onwards

- We are still registering deaths by telephone, with electronic transmission of documents and we hope that this will continue into the long term.
- We are trying to balance the demands for face to face appointments and ceremonies (and supporting our approved premises) which places registration officers under greater risk of exposure, whilst protecting the service to ensure that we are able to meet our statutory duties to register deaths throughout the winter period.
- There are a large number of ceremonies which have re-booked for next year which will put pressure on the service, particularly if we are still operating under any restrictions, and we may need to look at recruiting additional ceremony staff in 2021.

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at Remote Microsoft Teams Meeting on Thursday, 17th September, 2020 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor L.Dymock (Chairman)
County Councillor A. Webb (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Batrouni, A. Easson,
R. Harris, V. Smith, J.Treharne and S. Jones

:

Officers in Attendance

Cath Fallon, Head of Economy and Enterprise
Alan Burkitt, Policy Officer Equalities and Welsh Language
Judith Langdon, Communities and Partnership Development Lead
Owen Wilce, Community and Partnership Development Lead
Ryan Coleman, Community Focused Schools Business Manager
Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer

APOLOGIES: None

1. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Open Public Forum.

No members of the public were present.

3. Presentation regarding the Social Justice Strategy Review - Consultation exercise.

Officer Cath Fallon gave a presentation on the Social Justice Strategy, following a brief introduction from Councillor Sara Jones. The strategy was published two years ago as a live document which can be adapted, taking account of external factors, and ensuring it is always relevant and applicable to the most vulnerable in our society. The strategy was refreshed last summer following consultation with members, and we were due to do the same this year but the process has been extended due to the pandemic. The challenges we will undoubtedly face as a result will need to be reflected in the latest iteration.

The Social Justice Strategy is about people, place and prosperity, the aim being to put social justice at the heart of what we do, with the strategy being a broad programme of work to turn the vision into reality. We want to make a difference in the lives of local people, while working in partnership with them. We have committed to enabling connected and caring communities to support people to live independently, but also delivering on social justice, better prosperity, and reducing inequality. We want to enable better local services through supporting volunteers and social action.

This aligns with the PSB priorities to reduce inequalities between, and within, communities, as well as supporting and protecting vulnerable people, and considering our impact on the environment. Further, it aligns with the PSB objectives to provide children and young people with the best possible start in life, and responding to demographic challenges and changes. It

also allows us to develop opportunities for communities and businesses to be part of an economically thriving and well-connected county.

The Community And Partnership Development team drives the Social Justice Strategy, working as a bridge between community needs and aspirations. We have concluded that area working and community development works well. Some of our area clusters have more engagement and are better attended than others, but we are working in an environment in which there are other opportunities to engage.

There have been some positive developments because of the team's partnership work, in our youth support services network and community cohesion approaches, which have been essential, especially during the pandemic, in terms of how we engage with our BAME residents. The Community Focussed Schools Programme, working directly with schools, volunteers and parents to capture and mobilise our social capital, has also been positive.

Prior to Covid-19, we felt that we needed to promote the plan more widely, both internally and externally, but with a stronger focus on community development. 'Be Community' ensures we are providing the best possible support and advice to our volunteers. We are also maximising Flexible Funding to ensure that we can help when we see a real need in the community. We have found that as we have committed as an authority, town and community councils will follow. We felt it was important to look at our Partnerships and PSB, asking if our Partnership structure is too complicated, with areas of overlap or duplication, and ensuring that the community is an equal partner.

Once the pandemic hit, our work changed dramatically, with the focus shifting to volunteers and community groups shopping for residents, picking up prescriptions, etc. This was coordinated through the Volunteer Action Group Virtual Network. A Volunteer Safe Recruitment Team was set up to ensure we were undertaking the right checks on volunteers. The Need Team ensured that the right support was put in the right place – we realised quickly that we needed to work very closely with Social Services to triage every enquiry we had. Through the Monmouthshire Digital Community Exchange we connected digitally to maximise those opportunities, while also bringing our Third Sector partners into the relationship, ensuring we had the most volunteer and specialist support possible. This has involved 76 colleagues from 15 different teams and 3 external organisations. 765 contacts were made, with 227 volunteers addressing 537 requests for help.

The PSB is now looking towards adopting a place-based approach to partnership working, with a focus on prevention and early intervention. The PSB provides governance and direction to the teams, ensuring the report is multi-agency, not duplicating efforts and is as coordinated as possible. Emphasis on working successfully via the Virtual Network is important in advance of a potential second lockdown. Next steps: we feel it is a neighbourhood networks approach and maintaining cross-directorate working and the momentum we currently have. Targeted, evidence based and data driven delivery is very important – we are at the point now where we can identify specific households in specific areas, then provide the right kind of support. We also need to make sure that teams have a permission structure and the support that they need, too. In terms of policy coherence, we need to consider how our revised social justice strategy looks in light of the changes. Clearly, we need to keep social justice at the heart of everything we do. We are looking now at reducing disadvantages, and intergenerational justice. Within the overarching strategy, we have targeted action plans for tackling poverty and inequality, which have been in development for a while – we are working on a document that should be ready for consultation soon. We also have a Food Development Action Plan, as food insecurity is a big issue. We are looking at how this links with our local supply chains, and from an economic wellbeing perspective. Mental health/wellbeing and social isolation also play into this. We are working with our Housing colleagues to address homelessness. The policies will be integrated with the Equalities Plan and Colleague Community Volunteering Framework.

There was a motion earlier in the year from Councillor Batrouni regarding the need for a specific theme in the Tackling Poverty & Inequality Action Plan. We have refocussed the role of Judith Langdon and Ryan Coleman, who are looking now at the theme of achieving equitable prosperity and preventing our citizens from experiencing poverty. However, we recognise that

despite our efforts there will be points in people's lives in which they experience financial hardship. When this does occur we will come together to provide support to make the experience as brief, infrequent and manageable as possible. We will help people to emerge from that experience with greater levels of resilience.

There is a huge amount of data behind this, which Officers Langdon and Coleman have been working on. The priorities are Employability skills and employment support, In-work poverty, Mental Health and emotional support, equitable support for isolated poverty, and crisis prevention. Our activities are focussed on support for individuals, families and households to build self-resilience; creating prosperous and supportive neighbourhoods to enable communities to build local resilience; working towards a connected county where people and communities can thrive and inequality is reduced; inequality; and using our leverage to influence the structural causes of poverty and disadvantage, working collectively to improve opportunities for prosperity for all.

We are in consultation now with our PSB partners to implement place based working structures, and revising our Social Justice Strategy to include preparation of individual Action Plans. We will present that revised strategy to the next Social Justice Advisory Group and to Cabinet for approval.

Challenge:

Officer Judith Langdon answered the members' questions.

The strategy talks about tackling inequality – what type of 'inequality' does this refer to?

'Inequality' has the potential to cover a wide number of areas. At the moment it is shorthand for 'Income Inequality'. We are fortunate to have an increased amount of data on that, which makes it easier to show the extent of the inequality in a visual way. That is therefore our primary focus, though perhaps more important is the lived experience as a consequence of that inequality. We will therefore look at aspects such as how income inequality is manifested in educational disadvantage, food insecurity, etc.

In 'tackling poverty', whom are we defining as poor?

This is a complex issue. There are standard measures used in terms of low income, either below 50% or 60% of median income, but this doesn't necessarily equate to the same thing as 'poverty'. The reason why there isn't a single nationally agreed definition is that it is possible (as shown, for example, by the work of the Joseph Rowntree Organisation) to be below 60% but as a single household with relatively low outgoings, which then doesn't necessarily equate to poverty. Equally, there can be people who are closer towards the threshold but whose lived experiences will be closer to what we recognise as poverty. We have discussed this as a partnership group; hopefully, when the action plan comes forward supporting the strategy, we will expand on a shared understanding of what we mean by 'poverty'.

Is there a specific budget for the two new officers, and how does it work?

There isn't a specific, dedicated budget for this area of work but there is a considerable amount of resource that sits behind work that addresses poverty and inequality. In particular, as Cath Fallon mentioned, we are going to look at the recommissioning of the Housing & Communities Grant over the next 6 months or so, which has a significant resource behind it. It is largely a matter of how we intelligently use and apply our resources as an authority to make the best possible impact.

When will the committee see the KPIs, so that we can hold the Cabinet member and officers to account?

This is a high level presentation. There is an enormous amount of data sitting behind it. When the full action plan comes forward as part of the strategy, it will be clearly seen that there is a lot of KPI data in it.

The new trend, as shown in two recent reports by IFS and the Social Justice Commission, is that income inequality is reducing but wealth inequality is increasing hugely. Will you consider this problem?

Yes, this is a very important point which we recognise and will certainly consider in our work.

Housing is key: child poverty doubles when housing costs are considered, for example. Is this area being given the necessary attention?

Housing is essential for a good quality of life. The priority is high level set of immediate areas for action. There is a huge amount of existing work that continues. The Housing & Communities Grant highlights that housing underpins a huge amount of this work; therefore, the absence of the word 'housing' in the list of priorities should not be interpreted as indicating a lack of attention to housing. This should be evident in the full action plan.

Why is there no mention of social mobility? Concerning education, are we considering implementing individual action plans much earlier than GCSE age, with the hope of an improvement in our figures later on, as those children grow up?

One of the two officers that have been brought in to work on poverty and inequality has worked until this point on the community-focussed schools programme, an area in which we have been ahead of the game. We have looked at how we can harness all of the assets of a local community to help support the education and life chances of the least advantaged in our schools. The programme has been running for around 18 months, and because of its importance, the officer has been brought into this poverty work. He is integrating the programme's work into this wider work on poverty and inequality. There are a developed set of KPIs around education, FSM attainment gaps, etc. that feature explicitly in the overarching strategy.

Chair's Summary:

The work by officers during the pandemic has been excellent in supporting the communities across Monmouthshire. Councillor Batrouni raised a number of points: he wishes to know the details of the partners with which we are working, and asked for the definition of inequality on which we are operating. We discussed the complex matter of how we define being 'poor', social mobility, and the budget for the two officers. We would like to see KPIs in place so that officers and Cabinet members can be held to account. Cath Fallon confirmed that officers will take these points forward when the individual action plans that sit behind the overarching social justice strategy come through.

4. Welsh Language Monitoring Report 2019/20 - Scrutiny of Performance.

Officer Alan Burkitt presented a verbal report on the Welsh Language in Monmouthshire. This is a legal requirement by the Welsh language Wales measure 2011, consisting of giving an overview of performance to the Welsh language Commissioner; we then receive a reply with the commissioner's own assessment. The translation service is very busy; for that, many of the 176 Welsh language standards with which we have to comply consists of providing information, documentation, etc. Our service is excellent, run by Becky Davies, who allocates and records. Around 18 months ago, we calculated that we translate 1.6 million words per annum, which is considerably more than before the Welsh language standards were introduced. The take-up from staff is excellent – I very rarely see a document that has gone out without a Welsh translation. The website is fully bilingual.

Workforce planning is a requirement looking at what resources are available within departments, essentially an audit of who in those departments has Welsh language skills, from fluent down to learners. Something that Monmouthshire has done lately is that all vacancies are now 'Welsh Language – Desirable' – considering that we have 10,000 Welsh-speaking residents in Monmouthshire, there isn't a job in which Welsh language skills are not desirable. The key issue is that frontline staff numbers, i.e. jobs advertised as 'Welsh Language – Essential', are low. This brings challenges. It is already hard to appoint to certain roles in Monmouthshire, particularly in Social Care, and we do not have a large turnover of staff. It is therefore difficult to build that critical resource. We have 34 fluent non-school based Welsh speaking staff out of approximately 2,000. There was a Quality Assurance Report meeting this week in which the commissioner identified that the number of frontline staff in some local authorities is poor. There are 34 fluent speakers in the council now, compared to 28 when I started. In 36 vacancies last year, only 1 was designated as 'Welsh Language – Essential'.

We have received no official complaints, which is obviously positive. We have only ever had 1 complaint, against which we successfully challenged. There are some complaints, however – I often receive emails pointing me towards various issues, which we address immediately. As well as recruitment, a big issue is that we aren't proactive with the services we offer. If someone requests something, we then try to provide it, rather than offering things through the medium of Welsh in the first instance. The commissioner, as part of his report, conducts a 'mystery shopper' activity in which receptionists etc. are addressed in Welsh and if there isn't an effective response, it is concluded that the organisation is lacking in its skills. This is something we need to look at seriously for a future review. The good news is that I think everything else in place here, including the enthusiasm and support of officers. Fortunately, the attitude in Monmouthshire is that if something needs to be done, it will be done properly; this is excellent, but we need to be more proactive.

Challenge:

Regarding recruitment, why is 'Do not require Welsh' written on some job adverts?

This option has always been on there. I reviewed these matters with HR, as there are a lot which say Welsh skills aren't required. We agree that, in Wales, everyone has an ability in the language, no matter how small, and we have therefore moved away from writing this. There is now more focus on 'Desirable'. Those with Welsh skills tend to be appointed not for that reason, with their proficiency in the language being discovered later.

How do we compare to other local authorities on the England/Wales border?

Powys has a substantial Welsh-speaking area, from Ystradgynlais to Machynlleth, but with fewer speakers the closer it gets to the border. There is still Welsh-medium education there, though. There are far more speakers in Caerphilly, while there are not many in Newport, and we probably have more speakers than Blaenau Gwent. We are probably on a par with Torfaen, and therefore low overall. We are missing something when it comes to getting the children coming out of Welsh-medium education: we should be telling them that if they have Welsh language skills, we want them here in Monmouthshire. It is an essential skill in cases such as, for instance, dementia patients who are struggling to communicate in English because they have reverted to Welsh. It is something of a chicken-and-egg scenario in terms of us offering Welsh and people asking for it.

The report mentions 10,000 Welsh speakers in Monmouthshire, approximately 10% of the population, while Welsh Government has the aspiration for 30% Welsh speakers by 2050. Is this goal achievable for Monmouthshire?

Welsh Government wants 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050, which is approximately one-third of the population. The census is the most accurate figure for speakers, but we haven't had a

census since 2011, based on 2010 statistics. At that time, it was 8500 speakers, 9.9% of Monmouthshire. That was one of only two places that had seen an increase since the previous census of 2001. It is a massive challenge for the county. The upcoming primary school will certainly help. The number of people learning through Adult Education Centres and Coleg Gwent is excellent. We offer our staff a comprehensive training package as well, with a take-up last year of around 70. This year it has been less because of Covid-19. We need to continue as we are, with an emphasis on promoting the language, and trying to get more Welsh speaking staff into our authority. Then, more people will use it and value it. Holding the Eisteddfod again will hopefully have helped. The demographic is not just about learners, as a lot of people move into this area from elsewhere in Wales, bringing their Welsh language skills with them, accounting for a lot of our numbers. Also, there are English people who have learned Welsh.

When the commissioner looks at Monmouthshire, do they take into account that we have a lot of Bristolians living here, which will affect the number of Welsh speakers in the county considerably?

This is a very good point. We have met with Aled Edwards, the new commissioner, who is from a border county himself, and therefore familiar with the challenges. Standards want everyone to reach the same level at the same time, which I have always felt isn't plausible. Due to the point from which we are starting, we might never reach the level of other counties such as Ceredigion. I think the new commissioner appreciates that Monmouthshire, and the other SE Wales authorities, do a really good job with limited resources. I think he would need to factor Bristol in, but if those children are given a good Welsh language education then they have the same chance as anybody of speaking the language. I think the commissioner has a good grip on the demographic issues in Wales, and knows that we in Monmouthshire are doing our best. Where he might, and should, push us is on the Welsh language 'essential' i.e. increasing the number of speakers in our workforce: whether we give the thousands of children who have gone through Welsh language education the chance to come and work for our authority. This would be a valid criticism, along with how proactive we are in the services we offer.

Llanover used to be home to a number of Welsh speakers, do we know if it still is, and to what extent?

No, I know that Lady Llanover was a patron of the Welsh language but I don't think there are many speakers there now. There used to be a Welsh school there. Our biggest numbers are around the Welsh schools: Abergavenny and the Caldicot area.

Chair's Summary:

Councillor Eason raised the important matter of the Eisteddfod in promoting the Welsh language. Councillor Batrouni raised a valid point about the commissioner accounting for Monmouthshire's location, and our influx of people from Bristol. He also noted Officer Burkitt's fantastic work in promoting the Welsh language in Monmouthshire.

5. Burials - Member investigation - verbal feedback.

Councillor Val Smith presented a verbal report (full written form to be emailed to members later). The report highlighted numerous points, in order to raise the question of whether Monmouthshire County Council could provide a total bereavement service for residents. Councils are well placed to make a strong business case; Kettering Borough Council and Wigan Council serve as successful examples. Funerals are often a 'crisis' purchase for families, and funeral 'poverty' is increasing: people are unable to meet the costs involved, borrowing (including payday loans) and taking on debt to do so. The Cardiff Bereavement Service is another example of a successful programme helping communities to deal with this difficult time.

The report also considered the lack of standards for conduct or training in becoming a funeral director, and the increasing problem of space for burials, along with innovative companies such as 'Recompose' in the USA, which are changing the process of dealing with bodies. The report also drew attention to the disparity between councils of the cost of funerals and burials, and the sharp increase of prices overall in the last decade. An additional problem is that of death notifications, with families needing to notify numerous agencies on the death of a loved one; the government's 'Tell Us Once' initiative is making excellent progress on this front. As a council, we need to look at whether we can do a better job in making funeral organisation as easy and stress-free as possible, and see this as a useful initiative.

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to Councillor Smith for this report. This subject is of course important to everyone, as we will all face these concerns in our lives, perhaps on many occasions. The variety of available options is surprising – composting, etc. Donation to science is another important option. The variation in costs is also surprising. Councillor Eason wished to make the following point about Dewstow Cemetery in Caldicot, which has been very successful: it was a Finalist for Best Kept Cemetery 2016 at the Good Funeral Awards, and has a Green Flag. The cost of opening a plot is half the price of anywhere else in Monmouthshire. The local authority in Caldicot has managed the cemetery since 1962 and is nearly full. Negotiations have taken place to buy a plot of land above the cemetery for extra burials in the coming years. It is therefore a strong example of good practice.

6. To confirm the following minutes:

7. Strong Communities Select Committee dated 12th March 2020.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 12th March 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

8. Joint Meeting - Economy and Development Select and Strong Communities Select Committees dated 21st July 2020 (to follow).

The minutes of the meeting held on the 21st July 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

9. Strong Communities Select Committee Forward Work Programme.

The Work Programme has been updated since the agenda was dispatched. One addition is the Members' Seminar next week on Waste & Recycling, followed on 28th September by a Special Scrutiny Committee on changes to Waste & Recycling prior to a Cabinet decision on 7th October. The way in which we can receive public submissions, given that we are not meeting in the chamber, is currently being discussed. There is also a special Joint meeting on 19th October regarding Budget Recovery plans. All Scrutiny members will be invited. There will be the need to organise a special joint meeting with Economy & Development Select in late October to look at the car parking review.

The meeting on 12th November will consider public protection and the Covid response, and the registration and Covid response. The final meeting of the year on 17th December will look at Strategic Equality plans and public toilets, scrutinising the process on implementing a strategy, before updating Welsh Government.

10. Cabinet & Council Forward Work Programme.

11. **Next Meeting: Thursday 12th November 2020.**

The meeting ended at **11.26 am**

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at Remote Meeting on Monday, 28th September, 2020 at 2.00 pm

Councillors Present

County Councillor L.Dymock (Chairman)
County Councillor A. Webb (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: P. Clarke, D. Dovey,
A. Easson, D. Batrouni, V. Smith, J.Treharne

Also in attendance County Councillors: J. Pratt
(Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and
Neighbourhood Services), T.Thomas, S.
Woodhouse, L.Brown, R. Edwards, L. Jones and
M.Powell.

Also in attendance: Alison Ivin, Usk Town Council

APOLOGIES: None

Officers in Attendance

Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Carl Touhig, Head of Neighbourhood Services
Laura Carter, Senior Officer, Waste and Street
Services
Dewi Lane, Systems and Special Projects Officer
Matthew Gatehouse, Head of Policy and
Governance

1. Declarations of Interest.

2. Public Open Forum.

Following the video presentation of responses from Usk residents, Usk Town Council member Alison Ivin delivered a response to the report's recommendation to close Usk's HWRC as follows:

"There is a lot to absorb in the report. Due to the time limit, I will focus on a few key points. First, the cost saving in closing Usk is £40k – we don't accept that as a reason for closure. Usk and its surroundings have close to 19,000 dwellings; at an average council tax of £2000 for a three bedroom property, then that figure is paid for by council tax payments on just 20 dwellings. The cost of essential works is £30k; again, that can be carried by 15 dwellings.

One point that has been made is that the performance of Usk and Mitchel Troy is dragging down the recycling proportions, and therefore affecting performance against Welsh Assembly targets. That's not the case this year, as the pandemic has actually improved recycling rates. 2021 is quoted as achieving the highest recycling rate in Monmouthshire, of 74% – therefore, if Usk were left open and given the opportunity to be supported as other centres have (with education, booking systems, etc.), we do have the time to make an improvement. The procurement process is due to end in September 2021; it doesn't need to be delayed as procurement can be requested with two alternate scenarios. We don't need to make the decision to close Usk now.

There are some cost figures in the report, in terms of comparison with Mitchel Troy and Usk, that I cannot follow but, in any event, these are historic figures. We are now in a new time that we never expected to be in, with the pandemic, that has brought about changes that not only affect recycling figures for the county but also for Usk. We want the opportunity in Usk to show the benefit to recycling figures made from those behavioural changes that have been imposed and consolidated within pandemic time.

Work will be needed, it is said, to improve Usk, at a cost of around £30k, but large amounts have already been spent on works over the last few years to safeguard the future of the facility – we don't want that money thrown away. It was an investment; there are always investments to be made to maintain a service. To contrast with this, we are quoted over £1.5m to upgrade Mitchel Troy. One comment has been made that Usk can't reopen because of social distancing; there are two operatives on site. We've been told it isn't suitable for disabled people, but those operatives could help people. All of that can be managed with social distancing in the same way that we're managing walking down streets. There is a theme that we object to, that Usk is the poorest performing HWRC in the county, and that Usk will not improve. We challenge this.

One of the figures on Table 1, page 4, shows Usk performing at a Recycling vs. Residual waste rate of 47.92%, the closest otherwise being Mitchel Troy. These are the figures for 2018/19. It notes the obvious challenge that smaller centres do not recycle the complete range offered in the larger facilities. We have been given a list of the items recycled elsewhere: there are bulk items, white goods, rubble. Statistics only have value if one is comparing like for like – Usk figures should only be compared with other sites with those additional recycling items removed from the calculation. Otherwise, the zero measurement given for Usk is interpreted as Usk's failure to recycle it, rather than it having no opportunity to do so. In other words, rubble and plasterboard etc. being recyclable at other sites is tipping the scales against Usk. It should not be the case that the lack of a facility is used to demonstrate poor performance. The Eunomia report does give measurements to each head, and excluding just rubble and plasterboard brings Mitchel Troy to a 48.52% recycling residual, which is the same as Usk, and reduces recycle percentages at the two larger tips between 8 and 10% – so a closer comparison with Usk.

Food waste is seen as high here at Usk but it has been accepted that that was based on infrequent sampling, and might not be representative. The sample was too small and could have been provided by commercial use, rather than residents. Usk has great recycling overall, with facilities at the Hub and Fire Station that are in use but not included in the count. We have a new high street shop for zero waste and refillables. Good behaviours throughout the town impact negatively on recycling tonnages but they are the right thing to do. That should not put us at a disadvantage of comparison proportions on residual waste.

It is said that figures have improved startlingly across the county because of the Covid lockdown, necessitating improved kerbside figures and the benefit of booking systems. But an assumption has been made that Usk would not similarly benefit if reopened – we do not understand that. Time and time again statements are made that Usk will not improve, that it will be the lowest performing recycling centre in Wales – it is stated as a fact, but it is only an opinion. There are successes specified in the rest of the report attributable to re-educating or changed behaviours during Covid, improvements made to kerbside recycling because of the

booking system, and these successes have been denied to Usk, as it has not been allowed to reopen. It is not far different from the other three sites. Looking at the table, based on the consumer survey, the residual items and waste that could have been collected kerbside all account for broadly 65% of the total across all four sites. Usk can improve, as others have.

It is then said that Usk will not improve enough; again, we challenge this. The officer's recent experience is that improvements are made with education and the booking system, and we have a motivated team now with our SURF group to effect change. Indeed, we have an obligation to future generations to effect change. Officers and Members of MCC have confirmed to Usk Town Council that Covid will not be used as a device to close the recycling facility in Usk, yet by not allowing the facility to reopen, that is what is happening. Closure has been held in abeyance for further consultation on the wider HWRC provision, and for additional compositional analysis of waste streams. That has not happened, due to Covid and the lockdown closure of Usk continuing.

The countywide consultation was not what Town Council members expected following meetings with MCC. What was expected was an Usk-based survey. The consultation that did happen had only 959 responses, running mid-March to mid-April, when everywhere was reeling with the effect of lockdown and pandemic. Now that we have mobilised with the Town Council and SURF group, we could get a better, more targeted responses, and use that opportunity to educate people as to what can be recycled, and what improvements the use of kerbside will make. 75% of people that responded did not want closures. Consultation gave a perception only, but that perception was similar across all four recycling centres: that 65% of waste on all of the sites encompassed material that could be collected at kerbside. Usk was no worse. A far larger number responded to our petition and contact with SURF. Please do not ignore those residents. Close to 2000 people responded to the petition. There are over 540 personal letters supporting retaining the facility. More are arriving. All in a very short timescale. There is a feeling demonstrated in Christine Wilkinson's report that Usk is a repeated target for removal of services. Let us make a case together for retention of that facility. The report was ambiguous on this point but let me be clear that the overwhelming response from the town and surroundings is that this facility should remain. The SURF action group is absolutely committed to saving the facility. MCC has the time because of the Covid increase in recycling, and because of the delay in procurement, to allow the time for SURF and the Town Council to carry out targeted consultation, and make improvements. We ask that MCC gives Usk the deferral as previously agreed to allow time outside lockdown for a proper base consultation, and with the facility open – otherwise, Covid has deprived us of the chance to show change. MCC has the ability to retain a much-valued facility in the heartland of Monmouthshire, which promotes recycling at a level where everybody can appreciate and understand where daily actions matter and make a difference. Yet, MCC is minded to close it without giving us the same opportunities as elsewhere in the county, and to allow for the complete change in life that Covid has brought on us to work through to advantage. Those positive behavioural changes experienced elsewhere could help here, too.

The report notes that there has been a massive reduction in visitors, with the booking system now in place, compared to 2019, with increased recycling at the kerbside. There is nothing to say that this wouldn't also be the case in Usk. The report has picked on a negative but I would like to spin it to positive: we dispute that people will get frustrated from not being able to

recycle everything in Usk; it is just a case of knowing what is permitted. If the system is clear, requiring bookings, then learned behaviour will take over, so that people will know where to take their waste. That Usk does not recycle rubble and white goods is not a reason for all of the other recycling facilities to be taken away. A clear message that Usk does not recycle these items, and booking will be required in another centre, is all that's required to minimise disruption.

Mention is made of 18 parking spaces removed from the car park because of the new access arrangements – that figure is disputed by the Town Council, as alternative spaces were then made available. Nothing is said of the impact on the high street from another facility being removed. Usk has been a hub town for the rural areas around, time and again facilities are being eroded from the town that act as a draw to visits to the town, and ripple out to the benefit of higher footfall on the street. Once these facilities have gone, the report outlines how difficult it will be to recreate them, with planning and licences, etc. MCC deserves to retain this important service, and residents deserve the chance to show that lasting changes can be made here in Usk, for the benefit of us all.

The report sees ease-of-use and frequent visits as bad. But neither are bad, and both are easily controlled, if problematic, through the new booking system. Unchallenged use is seen as a bad thing; broadly, we agree. The officer will have heard that the overwhelming experience in Usk is that permits are never requested, nor the use of the residual skip queried or challenged. The report quotes statistics that cross-border waste was a problem until resident permits were introduced. If there's no inspection of permits then there are no controls on cross-border waste in Usk. Newport County is only fifteen minutes away, which is less than Usk residents would be required to travel if closure occurs. Waste Tourism is just as easy in Usk as it is in Abergavenny.

Examples are drawn that other local authorities have only one or two facilities across the county, but those quoted are built-up areas such as Cardiff. Monmouthshire is a rural county. Different considerations apply to rural counties if we are to minimise the impact of unnecessary journeys on our carbon footprint. Let us consider smaller, more local, recycling centres being a success, rather than conforming to the minimum statutory requirement, or what is provided in a city or smaller geographical area. There is a place for local recycling, and please do not forget that Usk is a town with an older population – not everyone has a car. Flytipping is a concern. It is expensive to clear. None of us knows in the post-Covid period what the loss of a facility will do to flytipping.

What we want to do is emphasise that kerbside collection is the most environmentally friendly way to manage household recycling and waste, and reinforce MCC's comment that not using kerbside collection for black bag and residual waste is not acceptable. We want to emphasise that this is a valid recycling facility, not a dump, and that disposal of black bags with mixed waste undermines the efforts of the vast majority that recycles effectively. We need to make people aware of Welsh Government penalties – nobody wants MCC to pay those. We note that black bag sorting is seen as desirable – we'd like to work together to see how we can achieve this at Usk, to capture additional recycle. What we would like the council to do is check permits – to stop cross-border use – stop commercial waste, support us with education and booking systems, and then the same as everybody else: review cost-saving measures such as shorter hours through Winter and on weekends, allow the savings from the reduced

days we already have to work through to have an impact on cost. Finally, to not let Covid be the reason we are closed, because doing nothing was the option. Work with us to reopen, and give us time to make a change.

Closure now, after a period of lockdown, doesn't give us the period of deferral that was promised, and it is entirely possible – indeed, probable – that the benefits and positive behaviour change seen in the rest of the county will also apply to Usk. Strong turnaround in recycling across the county due to a strong campaign of recycling messages and Covid closures should be allowed to benefit us. Please work with us in the same way that you are working with other facilities to improve the recycling rates. Please recommend that Usk be reopened so that we can work together and have that period of deferral and consultation. And please support this town, which is at the centre of Monmouthshire.”

3. Pre-decision Scrutiny of the Future Provision of Household Waste Recycling centres (including Usk).

Officer Carl Touhig presented the report.

Challenge:

Do the savings on staff, reduced hours and day closures include Usk?

The day closures and savings through reduced hours are separate from Usk – it hasn't been included in those figures. The closure of Usk is a £40k saving in its own right; the £240k saving for the day closures and additional hours is set across the other three sites.

Is the £40k reduction just for this financial year, or every year?

It is an in-year saving for this year. The site is currently open 5 days a week (50 hours per week), with 2 staff on site. This is where the saving comes from – roughly £20k per member of staff. With the current closure due to the pandemic, those staff are working at some of the bigger sites to help manage the Covid response. Viridor has agreed to give us the £40k this year, provided the site is closed, because they would then go in and clear the skips, take away the office facility, etc. The savings from our perspective are just on staff this year; we don't know what the savings would be next year but I would assume that without 2 staff on site for 50 hours, we would definitely save £40k next year. Not moving skips from Usk to Llanfoist will save more money again. I don't know what the total amount saved would be, but I would expect it to be around £60k next year if Usk is closed.

What is the answer to concerns that closing the site would increase the traffic and amount of travelling across Monmouthshire, especially in light of the council's Green Futures aim?

The distance travelled for everyone can be reduced by using the kerbside collections. In response to the argument of air pollution and carbon, the kerbside recycling is the best way forward. This stops pollution, and anyone needing to travel anywhere. Usk already has a problem with air pollution in the town centre – we therefore need to ask if it is right that, pre-Covid, we were bringing 170+ cars and large lorries through Usk each day to service the site, thus adding to the problem.

Has a 'halfway' solution been considered e.g. having a site elsewhere, perhaps in the County Council car park, which could use CCTV and therefore be unmanned?

We did look at moving the Usk facility somewhere else in Usk, but people don't want waste sites next to them. I am not convinced that we would get planning permission for a waste facility on the Rhadyr site or the riverside site, given the flood risk. Additional sites have not been popular in Usk, such as the additional AD plant and Biomass plant, among others, so another waste facility is unlikely to get planning permission, and permitting has to be acquired on top of that. National Resources Wales would certainly look at the flood risk for opening another facility anywhere in Usk. Today, if we tried to open the Usk site where it is now, I don't think we would get planning permission or permitting for a site so close to residential properties in a flood zone.

What is the consideration for the greatest impact of closure being on elderly residents?

There is a growing number of elderly across Monmouthshire, and we understand that we need to work with everyone across the county. It is not our intention to overlook the elderly. The comprehensive kerbside service is the best way for the elderly to deal with their waste. There have been a lot of queries by proxy, asking how the elderly will get their waste to site if they can't drive, but we don't see a large number of elderly people walking into the site. We are always looking to improve the kerbside service, and the amount of materials that we can collect, but people have to use it.

If kerbside collection is the only way forward, how much work has been done to increase what can be recycled at the kerbside? What about better education?

When people started using the kerbside collection more at the start of the pandemic, we saw a big increase in recycling – this is what we need to continue, and we need to continue with the message that proper kerbside recycling is the best way forward. Personally, as a Torfaen resident, if I go to the facility there once a year, it is once too often. I don't see why the majority of people should use the facilities that often, yet 71% of Usk residents at the site are there once a week. If that level of waste is genuinely being created, we need a different education campaign – one which suggests lessening the amount being purchased that then needs to be discarded. The message should be about reduction of waste, rather than focussing on sites.

If the site is this bad, why wasn't something done sooner, before reaching a crisis point?

We haven't let Usk get to a crisis point. We have known about the works needed there for a while, and have already invested in the site to keep it running. It has always been poor performing, with the rest of Monmouthshire being high performing and able to carry Usk. We had the survey work done with Eunomia on site in 2018, which highlighted the issue with the drainage. The report was then put together in 2019 proposing the site's closure. Matters such as these take time to be processed. There wasn't a crisis point, but everyone else is doing more. We were faced with potential fines of upwards of £120k last year, and we needed to make decisions about how we would drive up recycling rates – that is when Usk's closure was considered.

We use Viridor on our sites. When Torfaen cancelled this service, they saved £167,000 a year – was this possibility explored?

Viridor operated the kerbside collection bulking facility in Torfaen, which the council took back in-house. Torfaen's household waste recycling centres are run by FCC, a company similar to Viridor. It therefore wasn't quite as simple as the council taking the service back – it was a very different service that they were operating. We have looked at bringing the service in-house

here as part of the tender process, and we are quite happy to consider that if the tenders come back at a price where we feel we could do the service ourselves at the same cost.

As garden waste affects everyone in the county, but Usk's closure only affects Usk residents, surely the survey response numbers aren't comparable?

I hope to have done justice to the Usk responses – there were a lot of them and I have tried to answer them.

In terms of the elderly population, the point about better kerbside recycling is noted, but some things are still unrecyclable and need to be taken to a centre – an older population will find this difficult, and Usk's proportion of elderly is greater than, say, Chepstow.

There is a more elderly demographic in Usk, but the kerbside facilities should be used to support them. Many of the letters we received were from older people saying that they use the site every day. What we are trying to do is encourage better use of the kerbside facilities, and move the residents away from relying on these sites, especially as the Usk site is so poor performing, with so many black bags going into it. There will be a bigger element of travel for residents of Usk to other sites, but not if they use the kerbside system. There are some materials that can't be recycled at the kerbside, but we offer other solutions: Homemakers will come and collect three bulky items for £15, which is a very good scheme.

Usk Town Council has always made up shortfalls in cost when told by MCC that there is a problem, e.g. the Hub, Post Office, renovations, etc. – could they not be given a chance in this situation, too?

Cost sharing has not been discussed with Usk Town Council, and they have not offered to share costs, to my knowledge. It's not just about the cost of running the facility; it is about achieving our recycling rates. For the waste that goes into Usk, if we miss our targets by the same proportion of waste, we will pay almost £200k in fines. I'm not sure how those costs would be shared with Usk Town Council – it is not just the cost of £40k, which is a relatively small one, compared to the potential fines.

In terms of disproportionate costs, Usk surely can't be compared with urban centres, as it's more rural?

Five Lanes is not an urban site, it is a rural site that services urban areas. Residents of urban areas (Caldicot and Chepstow) travel to Five Lanes, which is relatively rural. In having to do so, they think about the waste they are taking, and recycle more. That is the data that we have. In Usk, the ease of access is driving bad behaviour. The site is also too small, but there is a larger number of black bags being taken to the site than we would see at Five Lanes.

Usk presents 25% Black Bags, which is the same as at the other sites, as is garden waste at 30%, so why are the numbers a particular problem for Usk?

The charts with those figures are the residents' perceptions of what they bring to the sites. The numbers are not reflected in what is actually brought to the sites. There is a much larger amount of black bags brought into Usk than the 25% figure assumed by users. The actual data is that 53% of waste at Usk is black bags. We have agreed, and are about to implement, black bag sorting at all the sites, which will include Usk if it stays open. This would be very difficult at Usk though, because we lack the facilities to take that material and put it somewhere else. This is a big concern when it comes to black bag sorting.

Is it possible to have a receptacle for small electrical items in Usk?

Some of the bigger supermarkets have offered to take small electrical items; we could look at whether that could be done in Usk. The difficulty with unmanned recycling facilities is that they attract a lot of flytipping, which is why they were removed in the beginning. There were also incidences of arson at some Torfaen sites. But we could look at having a small WE (Waste Electrical) bin in Usk.

Emphasising that Usk residents could use the new green waste scheme, what is the response to elderly residents concerned about being able to move a wheelie bin?

There was some confusion evident in the survey responses that we are reducing the garden waste scheme – this is not the case. We are looking at a different option i.e. bins instead of bags.

Does green waste help with recycling targets? If so, if we take Usk away, will that affect these?

Green waste contributes to our targets, whether through the HWRC or the kerbside scheme.

Could black bags simply be refused, as at Crickhowell, for example?

The Bring sites in Powys take a range of domestic recyclate – paper, cans, plastic bottles, etc. – which we collect at the kerbside. Powys now collects more at the kerb too, and has therefore now reduced its number of sites. They took out the unmanned skips that were at the unmanned Bring sites because of the abuse that they got.

I'm sceptical that we would need planning permission for another site?

We can look at Bring sites. I wasn't suggesting earlier that we would need planning permission for these, though we probably would. I was suggesting that a full-blown recycling centre would definitely need planning permission and NRW permitting. That is not to say we couldn't have small bins or skips like the supermarkets used to have – we could probably do something with that idea. However, those would only take material that can currently be put out for kerbside collection. So we would rather push people to use that system more, especially as Bring sites create problems with flytipping.

The £30k expected cost for upgrades is a capital item, and is not therefore costed in one year, but is spread across the number of years it depreciates over – so it could be as little as £5k, if spread over 6 years?

This is correct: it is capital money that could be spread across a number of years. The report intended to highlight that the cost needs to be spent in general, regardless of however that spending actually happens.

£40k is given as the annual cost but we're already halfway through this year, so the saving would actually only be £20k in the current year if the site were closed immediately.

£40k was agreed with Viridor. If the site must close, they would give us a £40k saving this year, regardless of what point we are in the year. As we get closer to the end of the year, obviously that's going to change, and Viridor will not pass those costs back to us. With Usk being so small, we wouldn't suggest that it re-open at the moment with Covid continuing – we can't manage the site *and* manage Covid safety. I understand that people are saying to give Usk a chance to improve, but it certainly wouldn't be a recommendation from officers to re-open the Usk site with the pandemic continuing.

Councillors' general comments:

Councillor Laura Jones: Geographically, Monmouthshire lends itself to having more than one recycling centre; it is credit to the council that we have more than one in the county, but we should remember that that is necessary. The Usk closure would have the greatest impact on

the elderly, while for those able to travel it will increase the traffic and amount of travelling across Monmouthshire. While it has been rightly observed that everyone else does that, it doesn't make it any better that Usk would have to also do so. I therefore have some concerns in that regard. The kerbside behaviour has improved during the pandemic. We must do everything we can to actively encourage that. Much of the evidence that we received showed that greater education is needed – I agree that this is something the committee and council need to look into for the other sites, if not for Usk going forward. I share the concerns that Usk's safety is below standard, and that £30k is required to improve it, car parking spaces could be increased, etc. There are certainly positives to the closure option. But, it has become clear that even though the kerbside collection is increasing, the residents don't feel that their needs are being fulfilled.

Councillor Batrouni: Yes, Five Lanes is a rural site but it services an urban population, and therefore the demographic and usage are presumably different. Of course, Usk needs to improve, but the residents are asking for the time to make that improvement, working in conjunction with the Town Council – it seems that message is being ignored. I would like this committee to see the business plan regarding bringing the costs in-house, when it is ready. Torfaen reputedly halved their costs when they did that – an equivalent saving would be significant for MCC, and would help with any Usk business plan. In terms of the potential fines being discussed, any fine would be applied countywide, and would not be applicable to a Town Council. There should have been a conversation with Usk Town Council about sharing the operating cost of £30k, and additional transport cost of £60k. I propose, in line with the Cabinet's focus on local services, that we give Usk more time, informing the residents of the issues and asking for a practicable, workable plan to deliver what is needed.

Councillor Easson: We don't seem to have sufficient monitoring of black bags at any of our sites. I agree with Councillor Batrouni that we should review this matter over the next period, rather than make a decision today. If we monitor the situation more closely, Usk might end up in a better position than it is now. Car parking is a problem, but we should look at how we can use Usk in a better way. Perhaps we should also look at the number of days that it could be open, and encourage everyone – at all the sites – not to dump black bags. I would like to see further surveys done and initiatives taken. I think that including figures in the report that aren't factual, but represent people's impressions, is confusing. I have no problem with the hours being reduced from 8-4 but I would like this to be re-assessed in April next year. I am also happy with additional day closures at Five Lanes and Llanfoist, and for Item E to go ahead.

Councillor Webb: I thank the officers for putting together the number of detailed reports and reading materials. I suggest that if a WE bin were installed in Usk, residents would monitor use to ensure it wasn't misused.

Councillor Smith: It is a matter of money. If this service is continued at a cost of £40k, members need to consider where the money will come from i.e. from which other service will the money be taken. And the service certainly can't be retained in its current condition. There are many problems. I liked Alison's logic that the Council Tax of 20 properties in Usk would cover the cost of the site, but we deliver many other services from that tax. It is quite intriguing to consider what people are putting in black bags so frequently. The inability to sort at Usk is an important point – the site is very constrained. We should also note that Torfaen has access to grants money that is not available to Monmouthshire. Torfaen shows how recycling should

be done, and I would encourage members to go and see proper segregation and sorting of items. I have a strong concern about the skip's removal from the site in Usk: given the car park location and the small streets, it is a danger and a pollutant. It is regrettable to lose any service but we need to look to the future, including the positive point of having more parking spaces – I have been unsuccessful in finding a space on numerous occasions when going to the doctors.

Councillor Howarth: I am fearful of 'tinkering' with waste, and the ramifications of taking a facility away, particularly in regards to recycling targets, as well as the implications for bonfires and waste burning. There are successful sites at Crickhowell and Llangynidyr that don't take black bags, perhaps Usk could be retained in this fashion. I believe that we need to investigate further, including whether Usk Town Council can provide some of these facilities.

Councillor Powell: I support what Councillor Smith said. My main concern is not to stop anything but having a waste facility at the edge of a car park doesn't feel right or safe. It seems a Bring site somewhere else would be safer. There are as many elderly people in Abergavenny, and as Abergavenny residents, we only go to a recycling site once or twice a year. We find we can recycle everything we need to at the kerbside. Yes, a lot of the elderly can't drive, but surely it's safer for them to use the kerbside facilities.

Councillor Clarke: Alison's presentation was very good, as were the officer's responses. As an authority, we are going to spend £150m this year – despite Covid – so I don't think it should be beyond us to somehow find the amount needed to ensure the site's continuation. I would urge the council to use mathematical and practical sense to resolve this matter. Usk should be given a chance to improve, and if it doesn't, it would then deserve to be closed.

Councillor Groucott: I have been very impressed by the arguments put forward by the residents of Usk, and would therefore support the notion of finding a way forward with them that saves the facility. Travelling to a site elsewhere assumes that time would be given at other facilities to the extra traffic, but the report also says that time at the other sites will be reduced. That doesn't make much sense to me. I think it shows that the intention is to cut the service, rather than improve it.

Councillor Thomas: I support what Councillors Groucott and Batrouni have said. At the Members' Seminar, I was more sceptical about the Usk site, and I can understand the officers' concerns, but Usk has made a very strong case today. There have been many responses, and the Town Council is clearly behind the movement to keep the facility in some form. If the residents and Town Council want to go into a joint venture of sorts to subsidise the facility, then that is their choice. I hope that this is a true consultation today. I agree with Councillor Clarke that the money being discussed is not a huge amount – we should look at it, and not make too hasty a decision, which otherwise appears to be the case. I think there is need for reconsideration.

Councillor Woodhouse: I have been struck by how the residents are clearly missing this facility while it is temporarily shut. I would like to see consideration given to some sort of unmanned facilities while we are in this crisis, and as a possible way forward for the future. I'm sure the people of Usk could monitor such a facility themselves to prevent misuse.

Chair's Summary:

We have considered the low recycling rate at Usk, and that it is the worst performing site in Wales. We understand Usk Town Council's view, but it is not a good site: it is too small and there are health and safety concerns. We have analysed the waste composition, with the

frequent visits to the site being to dispose of black bag waste that could be recycled at the kerb, which includes food waste. The community concerns highlighted include flytipping; we shouldn't excuse this, and the closure of the site shouldn't give the impression that flytipping is acceptable, but flytipping also can't be used as an excuse not to make the proposed changes. Distance to travel was another concern of both members and the community; Chepstow residents travel 7 miles, some residents travel 14 miles – so it is a matter of perception. The distance to Llanfoist and Five Lanes from Usk is 10 miles, and Covid has given us a new lens to analyse waste. It's not an excuse for the decision, but it has allowed us to analyse usage rates, and make the recommendations in this report.

The clear response from the officer today to Usk Town Council's concerns about what residents will use instead is that kerbside recycling will be used, reducing unnecessary journeys and air pollution. It is not viable to reopen the site during Covid. The potential distances to travel are not hugely different from what other residents in Monmouthshire are expected to travel. The themes in the public responses are very similar; we have read them all and discussed our responses to them. We have data that evidences the rationale for the option proposed. The report explores different options, such as whether the site could be run externally, but it's not recommended if the site is managed correctly.

When we did the composition analysis, in the timepoint between the consultation exercise and the point where the decision was put into abeyance, the situation was worse. With even less recycling now being done we need the kerbside recycling rate to improve. We need to reduce the amount of waste created, and journeys made to dispose of the black bag waste. When we asked the residents' views on whether black bag waste facilities were a key resource for them, it wasn't as important to people as we thought.

Regarding Members' comments, they have asked if self-service could be considered, but the officer has highlighted that it would only accept things that can be recycled at kerbside or disposed of in general waste anyway. Councillor Batrouni has asked that we consider how Usk Town Council has previously taken over operation of facilities, and give them more time, and the opportunity, to turn this around. The Councillor also made a point about protecting our rural areas and their services, and for the council to apply its message. Councillor Howarth requested that a residual waste drop-off be allowed for.

Vote on Recommendations

On some of the issues, such as revised opening hours for HWRCs, the committee supported the recommendations. When discussing the future of Usk household waste recycling centre the committee was against the proposals by a margin of 4 votes to 3.

4. Pre-decision Scrutiny of the Garden Waste Service.

Following the video presentation of responses from Monmouthshire residents, Officer Laura Carter delivered the report.

Challenge:

An increase of £18 to £35 is 94%, and therefore very excessive. What sort of drop-off is expected for this service, given such a large increase? Are we trying deliberately to cut off this service?

We have highlighted that there is a funding gap, and have worked out what we would need to charge in order to close it. The recommendation for today is to consider and approve the charge levied. From today, we hope that the idea of a charge will be agreed, to take to Cabinet subsequently. The report does not propose that the full cost be charged – we are asking Select today to make a recommendation on the cost for us.

The report states that many authorities use the recycling service, and keep it free, to keep their recycling targets high. How will such a steep increase help us in this endeavour?

Yes, councils do subsidise garden waste collections. Some are in the situation where they would fail to meet their targets without doing so; Monmouthshire isn't quite in that position, though we were very close to hitting the 65% last year. It is a concern. 8% of our garden waste is collected kerbside; we believe that even if there were a drop-off, most of the garden waste would be presented at our HWRCs – so it would still be in our recycling rates, just through a different means.

Regarding manual labour and crews, have we not consulted the unions?

Our Operations Manager is in close contact with the unions, and has discussed matters with them.

Why are these changes happening now? There have been many phases of changes with bags – why weren't wheelie bins introduced earlier, especially given their prior use in other authorities?

We have talked for some time about moving over to wheelie bins from a manual handling perspective. A recent HR report cited muscular-skeletal injuries as the highest form of sickness for crews. We need to procure vehicles: the 2012 vehicles that we have should have already been replaced, and we are encountering a lot of problems with them. Hiring vehicles is very expensive, so is not an option. Waste is facing massive in-year budget pressures, so we were asked to look at possible ways to alleviate them.

The report mentions an Abergavenny company taking the garden waste – do they pay for that, or do we pass it on for free?

Abergavenny Garden Waste Compost has the contract to compost Monmouthshire's garden waste, for which we pay them, x amount per tonne. There is no income back.

The report mentions possible redundancies/redeployment – where would those workers be redeployed? Have those discussions taken place?

Fortnightly wheelie bin collections would mean that one crew that currently collects garden waste would be redeployed. Next year, we are introducing reusable red and purple bags that need additional crew members. Our loaders are employed as loaders, whether they load garden waste, refuse or recycling – they would simply shift on to a different round.

What is the rationale for two-weekly collections – will this not overload vehicles?

Whatever the council's decision, we need to procure vehicles urgently. If we continue with reusable bags, we will need to procure vehicles that are very similar to those we have now; if the decision is for fortnightly bins then we will need vehicles with specialist lifts to make the collections quicker and more efficient. The weight for fortnightly collections would be comparable with now. The round size would be reduced, as we would take on more capacity per household.

Have 120L wheelie bins been considered, as used in Powys, as they might be easier to move when full?

We spoke with Torfaen this morning about this, as that is what they offer their citizens who can't manage a 240L bin, whereas we have offered a reusable bag. It is something we could look at, but the collection charge would have to remain the same as for a 240L bin, for the proposal to work financially.

In terms of assisted collection, what are the criteria for qualifying on a case-by-case basis?

If someone applies for an assisted collection, one of our Waste Education team will either make a phone call or visit in person, to assess various criteria. Some of these include, 'does the applicant live with someone who is able to put out the bin for them?', 'how far will our crews need to travel to make the assisted collection', etc.

It could be disputed that a wheelie bin would be easier to clean than the current bags.

We could offer the reusable bag to anyone who feels they will be unable to clean their bin sufficiently.

Can we be reassured that those who live in terraced houses, or have steps or other difficulties, would be allowed to keep their brown bags?

Yes, if members of the public live in a terraced property, and there's no storage, we will offer them the alternative equivalent litreage of reusable bags.

Can the new vehicles be used to collect wheelie bins and bags? Could the public be given the choice?

No, the specialist lifts would not be suitable for loading manual bags simultaneously. Officers have discussed the option of providing a choice to residents. When we've looked at this though, we wouldn't be able to procure the specialist lifts, and would need to continue the service with the 'tuck under' bar lifts. This would push our collection costs back up to where we are now, at £660,000. By offering bags to those in terraced houses, or who can't manage a bin, we believe we can offer small amounts of bags to these customers; we will probably put on a separate round on a different day using a different vehicle without a lift. But we don't think that we will be able to provide a choice to people to use either the bin or bag.

What would be the cost for those able to continue using a bag?

In the report, we propose the same cost for a wheelie bin or the equivalent litreage in bags. So it would be £35 for one bin or three bags, fortnightly.

Could residents have the option to purchase bags to supplement their garden work e.g. for those with uneven ground who need to carry their weeds to the bin?

Once we are at the point of residents with uneven land or long drives, it becomes extremely difficult to quantify, to agree/disagree. At that point, the scheme would probably be undeliverable. If we were to give people the choice and we ended up with too many reusable bags, we wouldn't be able to manage them within our existing rounds, and potentially would need additional costs for additional crews and vehicles.

Councillors' further comments:

Councillor Batrouni: I thought that the 94% increase was being recommended because in Appendix 4, it says 'Monmouthshire proposed change and cost.' If that is not the specific intention, it needs to be clarified. If the real reason for the changes is cost pressure, I feel that that needs to be stated outright. If the unions have been consulted, the report should reflect that. I would like to know the potential implications in terms of drop-off, whether it is a 94% increase or less, and would like the committee to see the HR reports pertaining to muscular-skeletal injuries.

Councillor Pratt: What is being proposed will be the best value for money for our customers, and for us to continue with this service. It is highly valued by our residents but we must remember that it is not statutory – as it is not something that we have to do, we need to think about how much we would be willing to subsidise it. Many of our residents don't use this service (they have a small garden, or no garden), so we need to consider whether they would be happy subsidising it for others. Yes, we pay for services that are not for everyone's use, but these tend to be mandatory e.g. schools. We get through 12,000 bags a year; as we have declared a Climate Emergency, we must think of ways in which we can reduce this waste. The bins are made from 95% recycled plastic, and are produced in the UK – unlike the existing bags. Subsidising this service would mean cutting the budget of another. Many customers will still be paying under £1 per week for this service.

Councillor Easson: I don't think the difference between taking purple and blue sacks now, and taking the purple and blue hessian sacks is clear. I am concerned about the criteria for assisted collection qualification, as the decision would be made by the council, though the individual would know their own capabilities and circumstances better.

Councillor Powell: Regarding subsidies, it should be remembered that Monmouthshire is the worst funded County Council – other councils can make the service free because they have the funding, whereas if we were to do so the burden would go back on to the taxpayer.

Councillor Woodhouse: My ward is around 95% terraced properties. It is reassuring to hear that they could have the bags. I would like to see this opportunity given to people without them having to go through a vetting process – give them the choice. Many properties don't have a side access, so they would need to bring the bin through their house. I am concerned about narrow streets in which cars are partly or wholly parked on the pavement. Bins might be left out all day with people working, whereas at least an empty bag can be pushed aside to stop it being an obstacle. Safe routes to schools are a particular concern. I would ask that bags are made readily available for these sorts of streets. I am concerned that people currently with one bag will drop off, as they will have to pay £35 for a bin without needing that capacity.

Councillor Webb: I am also concerned about the residents not being allowed a choice, particularly considering the instance of someone with a small garden only wanting one bag. I think they should be given the choice.

Councillor Brown: In my ward, there are very high slopes on drives: I am not sure how easy it will be to manoeuvre a wheelie bin in those circumstances. It would be good if the flexibility officers have described were included in the recommendations, to reassure residents and members. I therefore suggest having flexibility in the garden waste collection system to allow for garden bag provision for the elderly and infirm, those with uneven sloping and/or topography of land issues, and storage issues. Regarding cost, there is a balance between the charges that are increased, and the customers that are lost. On a bulk basis, I wonder how cost-effective this actually is.

Chair's Summary:

We have debated the ease-of-use of bags or wheelie bins; it seems to be a personal preference. Whichever option we decide would depend on the type of vehicle we procure, which will collect both bags and wheelie bins, or there will be different collections with a separate vehicle. The possibility of smaller 120L bins can be explored, but the collection charge would need to remain the same. When we do assessments for people needing

assisted collections, it will be done either over the phone or in person (though not under the current Covid guidance.) Cleaning bins has been mentioned, which again seems to be a matter of personal opinion. Members have asked for reassurance that residents with difficulty of access can have a bag instead, and have asked for flexibility, especially owing to concerns of age, inclined land, etc. However, this will incur more charges. Officers will ensure that the HR report goes out to all members of the committee, and will supply the figures for the expected drop-off in customers.

Vote on Recommendations

On the introduction of wheeled bins, the committee was against them.

The meeting ended at **5.55 pm**

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Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2020-21

Strong Communities Select Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
Special Joint Meeting with Strong Communities Select Committee Late October 2020 to be confirmed	Car parking Review	Detail to be confirmed.	Mark Hand	Policy Development
12 th November 2020	Public Protection Performance Report 2019/20 and Covid Response in 2020	Scrutiny of the annual performance report and the department's response to Covid pressures.	David Jones	Performance Monitoring
	Registration Service Performance Report 19/20 & Covid Response in 2020'	Scrutiny of the annual performance report and the department's response to Covid pressures.	David Jones	Performance Monitoring
17 th December 2020	Public Toilets	To scrutinise progress on implementing the Public Toilet Strategy prior to updating Welsh Government.	David Jones	Performance Monitoring
	Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2019-2020	To scrutinise the council's performance in applying the requirements of the legislation through policy and practice.	Alan Burkitt	Performance Monitoring
28 th January 2021	Budget Scrutiny			
11 th March 2021				
29 th April 2021				

Future Agreed Work Programme Items: Dates to be determined

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2020-21

- × **Annual monitoring of Public Protection in May, a half year exception report, highlighting any gaps in service delivery, to be scheduled in November of each year.**
- × **Registrars Service ~ annual monitoring in May**
- × **Air Pollution Monitoring Report ~ Multiple departments – Autumn**
- × **Social Justice Policy update**
- × **Open Space Review ~ review of open spaces and the prioritisation and management of highways ~ strategic review rather than operational.**
- × **Civil Parking Enforcement ~ members seminar in Autumn**
- × **Welsh Language Report ~ return of data**
- × **Cremations and Burials ~ 3 Members to investigate/report back. Social issues and financial.**

Emerging issues/topics to be raised with the committee before inclusion ~ some reports to be received by email for comment rather than in-depth scrutiny

Cabinet, Council and Individual Cabinet Member Decisions (ICMD) Forward Plan

Monmouthshire County Council is required to publish a forward plan of all key decisions to be taken. Council and Cabinet items will only be considered for decision if they have been included on the planner no later than the month preceding the meeting, unless the item is considered urgent.

Committee / Decision Maker	Meeting date / Decision due	Subject	Purpose	Author	Date item added to the planner	Date item originally scheduled for decision
Council	01/10/23	LDP for Adoption		Mark Hand	23/01/20	
Council	01/02/23	LDP submission for examination		Mark Hand	23/01/20	
Council	01/07/22	LDP Deposit Plan endorsement for consultation	Endorsement of Deposit Plan	Mark Hand	23/01/20	
Cabinet	01/09/21	LDP Preferred Strategy endorsement post consultation		Mark Hand	20/05/20	
Cabinet	02/06/21	Budget Monitoring outturn report	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the forecast outturn position of the Authority at end of month reporting for 2020/21 financial year	Peter Davies/Jon Davies	02/04/20	
Council	01/05/21	LDP Preferred Strategy endorsement for consultation		Mark Hand	21/09/20	
Council	17/02/21	Final revenue and capital budget proposals		Peter Davies	21/09/20	
Cabinet	14/04/21	Welsh Church Fund Working Group meeting	The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 9 held on 4th March 2021	Dave Jarrett	02/04/20	

Council	04/03/21	Council Tax Resolution Report		Ruth Donovan	02/04/20	
Cabinet	03/03/21	Play Sufficiency Action Plan		Mike Moran	14/10/20	
Cabinet	03/03/21	•EAS Business Plan		Sharon Randall Smith	21/09/20	
Cabinet	03/02/21	Abergavenny CRC (Racecourse Farm)		Mike Moran	14/10/20	
Cabinet	03/02/21	Welsh Church Fund Working Group meeting	The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 8 held on 14th January 2021	Dave Jarrett	02/04/20	
ICMD	15/01/21	Museum Service Collection Review	To propose the deaccessioning of and disposal actions for the proposed items in line with Section 4 of the Museums Association Disposal Toolkit	Matthew Lewis	22/09/20	
Council	14/01/21	Council Tax Reduction Scheme		Ruth Donovan	07/04/20	
Council	14/01/21	Annual Safeguarding Report		Jane Rodgers	21/09/20	
ICMD	13/01/21	SPG S106 Supplementary Planning Guidance	To clarify how S106 contributions are calculated	Mark Hand	01/05/19	
Cabinet	06/01/21	Review of Monmouthshire's Destination Management Plan 2017-2020	Purpose: to approve the revised Destination Development Plan	Matthew Lewis	22/09/20	

Cabinet	06/01/21	Play Area Assessments and Future Play Area Policy	to advise members of play area assessments carried out last year and suggest a rationalisation of provision	Matthew Lewis	22/09/20	
ICMD	23/12/20	Museum object disposal		Rachael Rogers	30/10/20	
ICMD	23/12/20	Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025	To approve the review of the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025	Matthew Lewis	22/09/20	
Cabinet	16/12/20	•Draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation		Peter Davies	21/09/20	
Cabinet	16/12/20	Welsh Church Fund Working Group meeting	The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 7 held on 3rd December 2020	Dave Jarrett	02/04/20	
ICMD	09/12/20	Council Tax base and associated matters	To agree the Council Tax Base figure for submission to the Welsh Government, together with the collection rate to be applied for 2021/22 and to make other necessary related statutory decisions	Ruth Donovan	02/04/20	
Council	03/12/20	Corporate Joint Committee: Consultation Response'	To discuss and endorse a council response to consultation about draft regulations which will create four regional Corporate Joint Committees. These are a statutory mechanism for regional collaboration by local government.	Matt Gatehouse	16/10/20	
Council	03/12/20	Updated Asset Investment Policy		Peter Davies	21/09/20	
Council	03/12/20	Statutory Director of Social Services annual report		Julie Boothroyd	14/08/20	
Cabinet	02/12/20	Growth Options to Cabinet for endorsement for non-statutory consultation		Mark Hand	21/09/20	

Cabinet	02/12/20	Social Justice Strategy Update		Cath Fallon	17/09/20	
Cabinet	02/12/20	Proposal to pause work on a proposed Development Company		Deb Hill Howells	21/10/20	
Cabinet	02/12/20	Review of school places in Caldicot town		Matthew Jones	21/10/20	
Cabinet	02/12/20	Budget Monitoring Report - month 7 (period 2)	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the forecast outturn position of the Authority at end of month reporting for 2020/21 financial year.	Peter Davies/Jon Davies	02/04/20	
Cabinet	02/12/20	RIPA Policy		Matt Phillips	21/10/20	
Cabinet	02/12/20	Clydach Ironworks Enhancement Scheme Revision/S106 Funding, Cae Meldon		Matthew Lewis	22/09/20	
Cabinet	02/12/20	Land at Bencroft Lane, Knollbury		Mike Moran	26/08/20	
Cabinet	02/12/20	Local Housing Market Assessment Update		Mark Hand	04/11/20	
Cabinet	02/12/20	Longterm Homelessness Solutions	Deferred from 2/9/20	Mark Hand	07:00	
Cabinet	02/12/20	Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2020		Mark Hand	23/06/20	

ICMD	25/11/20	Shire Hall/Monmouth Museum	Paul Jordan	Matthew Lewis	deferred from 11/11	
ICMD	25/11/20	Homeseach Allocations Policy and Amendments	INCLUDED ON 11/11 AGENDA	Louise Corbett	22/10/20	
ICMD	11/11/20	WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER'S MONITORING WORK 2019-20		Matt Gatehouse		
ICMD	11/11/20	LDP Annual Monitoring Report and Annual Performance Report for Planning Service		Rachel Lewis/Phil Thomas	19/10/20	
ICMD	11/11/20	Housing Register Review		Mark Hand	23/06/20	
Cabinet	04/11/20	Outdoor Adventure Service		Marie Bartlett/Ian Saunders	13/10/20	
Cabinet	04/11/20	Public Service Ombudsman's annual letter	To provide Cabinet with a copy of the Public Service Ombudsman's annual letter to inform understanding of the council's performance in handling complaints	Matt Gatehouse	09/09/20	
Cabinet	04/11/20	Welsh Church Fund working group	The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 4 held on 22nd October 2020	Dave Jarrett	02/04/20	
Cabinet	04/11/20	Three Fields Site Magor – Lease Arrangements		Mike Moran	14/10/20	
Cabinet	04/11/20	Coronavirus Strategic Aims: Progress and Next Steps	To provide an overview of progress against the strategic aims set by Cabinet in July, and communicate an updated version of the plan on a page	Matt Gatehouse	26/08/20	

Cabinet	04/11/20	Section 106 Funding – The Hill, Abergavenny		Mike Moran	20/02/19	
Council	22/10/20	Corporate Plan Annual Report 2019/20		Richard Jones	25/08/20	
Council	22/10/20	MCC Audited Accounts (formal approval)	To notify Council of completed Audit process and resultant accounts - To go to Audit Committee	Peter Davies/Jon Davies	02/04/20	
Council	22/10/20	ISA 260 report - MCC Accounts - attachment above	Deferred from september	Peter Davies/Jon Davies	02/04/20	
Council	22/10/20	Future Data Hall and Data Hosting Arrangements		Peter Davies	16/09/20	
Council	22/10/20	LDP revised Delivery Agreement including LDP timetable and community involvement strategy		Craig O'Connor	03/07/20	
Cabinet	21/10/20	Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2020/21 Forecast Outturn Statement – Month 5		Peter Davies	16/09/20	
Cabinet	21/10/20	MTFP and Budget Process 2021/22 to 2024/25		Peter Davies	16/09/20	
Cabinet	21/10/20	Review of Garden Waste Service		Laura Carter	23/07/20	
ICMD	14/10/20	PUBLIC TOILET PROVISION - GRANTS TO LOCAL COUNCILS AND FUTURE PROVISION IN ABERGAVENNY	DEFERRED	Roger Hoggins	25/09/20	

ICMD	14/10/20	Closure of Capita Gwent Consultancy and distribution of Reserves		Roger Hoggins	25/09/20	
ICMD	14/10/20	Extension of PSPO	To seek approval to extend three Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) in respect of Bailey Park,	Andrew Mason	23/09/20	
Cabinet	07/10/20	Future Data Hall and Data Hosting Arrangements		Peter Davies	16/09/20	
Cabinet	07/10/20	Welsh Church Fund Working Group	The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 2 held on 28th July 2020 and meeting 3 held on 10th September 2020.	Dave Jarrett	02/04/20	
Cabinet	07/10/20	Future Provision of HWRCs including the closure of Usk recycling centre		Carl Touhig	14/09/20	
ICMD	23/09/20	SCM Collaboration with TCBC Heritage Services		Amy Longford	24/08/20	
ICMD	23/09/20	SCM Collaboration with TCBC Heritage Services		Amy Longford	24/08/20	
Council	10/09/20	Audit Committee Annual Report		Philip White	11/08/20	
Cabinet	29/07/20	Digital Infrastructure Action Plan		Cath Fallon	08/07/20	
Cabinet	29/07/20	*Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2020/21 Forecast Outturn Statement – Month 2		Jonathan S Davies	12/06/20	

Cabinet	29/07/20	Coronavirus Risk Management Update'		Peter Davies	10/07/20	
Cabinet	29/07/20	Welsh Church Fund Working Group meeting	The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 1 held on 30th June 2020	Dave Jarrett	02/04/20	
Cabinet	29/07/20	Outdoor Education - Service Update		Marie Bartlett	09/07/20	
Cabinet	29/07/20	Public Toilets				
Cabinet	29/07/20	5G Rural test bed		Cath Fallon/Frances O'Brien		
Council	16/07/20	Climate Emergency Update		Hazel Clatworthy	10/06/20	
Council	16/07/20	CEx Report		Matt Phillips	18/06/20	
Council	16/07/20	Cabinet decision re Gilwern		Matt Phillips	27/05/20	
ICMD	08/07/20	Archaeology Planning Advice	Adoption post-guidance	Mark Hand	19/09/19	Deferred
Cabinet	01/07/20	COVID-19 Evaluation of Recovery Phase and Establishing Aims for Response Stage			17/06/20	

Cabinet	01/07/20	Home to School Transport Policy	Deferred		20/05/20	
Cabinet	01/07/20	Household Waste Recycling Centres	Deferred		20/05/20	
Cabinet	17/06/20	Revenue and Capital Monitoring Outturn	To provide Members with information on the outturn position of the Authority for the financial year	Peter Davies/Jon Davies	02/02/20	
Council	04/06/20	Licensing Act Policy		Linda O'Gorman		
Council	04/06/20	Estyn Report		Will Mclean		
Council	04/06/20	Safeguarding Covid19 Position Statement		Julie Boothroyd		
Council	04/06/20	Chief Officer, CYP Annual Report'		Will Mclean	11/03/20	
Council	04/06/20	Refit Programme		Ian Hoccom	28/02/20	
Cabinet	27/05/20	Safeguarding		Julie Boothroyd		
Cabinet	27/05/20	Active Travel and Town Centres		Paul Sullivan		

Council	14/05/20	Constitution Review		Matt Phillips	14/08/19	
Cabinet	06/05/20	Welsh Church Fund Working Group	The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 1 held on 2nd April 2020	Dave Jarrett	02/04/20	
ICMD	08/04/20	GUARANTEED INTERVIEWS FOR CARE LEAVERS		Gareth James	23/03/20	
ICMD	08/04/20	Momouthshire Registration Service Collaborative Working Agreement		Jennifer Walton	23/03/20	
Cabinet	01/04/20	Staffing re-alignment: Community Hubs and Contact Centre		Matt Gatehouse	11/03/20	
Cabinet	01/04/20	EAS Business Plan		Will Mclean	04/03/20	
Cabinet	01/04/20	Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Care Leavers		Gareth James	28/02/20	
ICMD	25/03/20	Non Domestic Rates: High Street and Retail Rate Relief 2020/21	for approval of the adoption of a High Street and Retail Rate Relief Scheme for 2020/21, in accordance with Welsh Government guidance.	Ruth Donovan	12/02/20	
ICMD	25/03/20	Contract Extension		Tracey Harry	14/02/20	
Council	05/03/20	Pay Policy		Sally Thomas	23/01/20	

Council	05/03/20	Annual Safeguarding Report		Julie Boothroyd	06/02/20	
Council	05/03/20	Strategic Equality Plan		Alan Burkitt	26/09/19	
Council	05/03/20	LDP Preferred Strategy	Endorsement to consult on Preferred Strategy	Mark Hand	23/01/20	
Council	05/03/20	Council Tax Resolution	To set budget and Council Tax	Ruth Donovan	18/04/19	
Council	05/03/20	Mid Term Review of the Corporate Plan		Matt Gatehouse		
Cabinet	04/03/20	Investment Committee		Peter Davies	13/02/20	
ICMD	26/02/20	CHARGING APPLICANTS FOR THE MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS		Phil Thomas	06/02/20	
ICMD	26/02/20	Non Domestic Rates - Application for Hardship Relief		Ruth Donovan	14/01/20	
Cabinet	19/02/20	2020/21 Education and Welsh Church Trust Funds Investment and Fund Strategies	The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet for approval the 2020/21 Investment and Fund Strategy for Trust Funds for which the Authority acts as sole or custodian trustee for adoption and to approve the 2019/20 grant allocation to Local Authority beneficiaries of the Welsh Church Fund.	Dave Jarrett	18/04/19	

Cabinet	19/02/20	Mid Term Review of the Corporate Plan		Matt Gatehouse		
Cabinet	19/02/20	Welsh Church Fund Working Group	The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2019/20, meeting 7 held on 5th December 2019	Dave Jarrett	18/04/19	
Cabinet	19/02/20	Consideration of Final Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals		Peter Davies	03/10/19	
Cabinet	19/02/20	Proposal to change the school funding formula.		Nikki Wellington		
Cabinet	19/02/20	Strategic Review of Outdoor Education		Marie Bartlett	18/10/20	
Cabinet	19/02/20	Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) review/ Policy Statement - Results of statutory consultation and proposed Final Plan	To seek approval of the Review of the ROWIP and associated policies	Matthew Lewis	18/07/19	
Cabinet	17/02/20	•Final revenue and capital budget proposals		Peter Davies	21/09/20	
ICMD	29/01/20	Various roads, county wide Amendment No. 1 of consolidation order 2019 (part 2)		Paul Keeble	13/01/20	
Council	16/01/20	Council Tax Reduction Scheme		Ruth Donovan	18/04/19	

Council	16/01/20	Mid Term Review of the Corporate Plan		Peter Davies	26/09/19	
Council	16/01/20	Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy		Mark Hand	06/09/19	
Council	16/01/20	Constitution Review		Matt Phillips	14/08/19	
Council	16/01/20	Safeguarding - Annual Report to Council		Jane Rodgers	20/06/19	
Council	16/01/20	Proposed Development Company		Deb Hill-Howells	16/09/19	Deferred
Cabinet	08/01/20	Ethical Employment code of practice - Approval Paper Draft		Scott James	08/11/19	
Cabinet	08/01/20	Budget Monitoring report - month 7 (period 2)	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the forecast outturn position of the Authority at end of month reporting for 2019/20 financial year.	Mark Howcroft	18/04/19	
Cabinet	08/01/20	Redundancy implications within MonLife		Marie Bartlett	07/11/20	
Cabinet	08/01/20	Homelessness Report		Deb Hill-Howells	07/11/19	
Cabinet	08/01/20	Primary School Places Reiview in Caldicot		Matthew Jones	02/10/19	

Cabinet	06/01/20	Fixed Play Provision		Mike Moran	26/08/20	
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