

SUBJECT: CORONAVIRUS STRATEGIC AIMS: PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 1 July 2020

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide an overview of progress against the strategic aims set by Cabinet to navigate the response phase of the Coronavirus pandemic, and communicate a revised purpose as the county begins to unlock and the council transitions towards recovery and safely opening up our county.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet evaluate progress against the purpose and strategic aims that have been in place for the response phase of the pandemic and use this to inform the future shape of service delivery as the county transitions towards recovery.
- 2.2 That Cabinet revise the purpose and strategic aims established during the early weeks of the outbreak to reflect the council's shift in focus from response to transition towards recovery. The adjusted purpose statement is that shown in paragraph 3.5

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Coronavirus pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge to our way of life and the way in which we provide services. The need to preserve life and stop the spread of the virus, while continuing to support communities, has meant that we have paused or re-purposed a lot of our usual work as capacity was directed towards the emergency response effort.
- 3.2 Monmouthshire County Council has a long-standing purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities. At the outset of the pandemic Cabinet introduced a revised purpose and eight new strategic aims to provide clarity and ensure accountability through this period.
- 3.3 The pace of change over the past three months has been unrelenting, with hundreds of staff re-deployed, new services created almost overnight, and tens of millions of pounds re-directed towards preserving life and helping local businesses remain viable. Appendix 1, outlines some of the activity that has been delivered. These include:
- Paid over £21.5 million of grants to local businesses to help them survive lockdown;
 - Established hub schools to provide childcare for key workers like doctors, nurses, care staff and those involved in the supply of food;
 - Made phone calls to over 3000 people who were shielded to check on their well-being and offer the delivery of food parcels where these were needed;
 - Continued to safely collect waste and recycling from all households;
 - Helped co-ordinate and support a massive volunteer effort throughout the county helping people with shopping and collecting prescriptions;
 - Contributed beyond our borders to regional emergency response structures, the drafting of legislation and national representative groups.

3.4 Of course, these are exceptional times and there are some things that we haven't been able to do. This has also come at a financial cost. We've lost £3.5M in income and spent over £500K on the emergency response effort. Coming so soon after the floods of last winter our finances have been stretched to breaking point. Despite the many challenges, these efforts have resulted in new ways of doing things, some of which can form part of a lasting legacy of transformation with needs being met in new ways.

3.5 Our county and our nation are still a long way from normal; we are not yet sure what the new normal will look like. However, our role in the coming months will be to create the conditions for residents and businesses to take those first steps, while recognising that coronavirus remains an active threat to life and one that will cast a long shadow for many in our communities. For this phase, Cabinet have determined that our purpose will be:

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

3.6 This purpose is underpinned by eight strategic aims. These are shown in appendix two of the report. This also describes some of the activity that will be delivered as we begin to cautiously move to the next phase of dealing with the pandemic and supporting communities. This includes:

- Remodelling our town centres to encourage people to shop safely and shop locally;
- Ensuring the safe re-opening of our schools to all learners from 29th June
- Working with partners to operate the Test Track and Protect system that is helping identify people who have the virus to minimise further outbreaks;
- Opening up garden waste collections to new customers;
- Using technology to help reintroduce service provision such a request and collect service for library books

3.7 To support this work we need to have the structures and mechanisms in place to track progress and ensure we remain focussed on our purpose. As we move into the recovery phase, we will reinvigorate and adjust, where necessary, the Council's established performance framework to continue to facilitate service planning, performance management and risk management.

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

4.1 A completed Equality & Future Generations Evaluation is attached. The strategic aims have been informed by the latest available evidence and government guidance. National modelling indicates that the virus appears to have a disproportionate effect on BAME groups and older people while younger people are less likely to experience the worst health impact. The detailed proposals that follow the strategic aims will all consider the impact and mitigating actions required to minimise the adverse consequences for those with protected characteristics.

4.2 The virus has a huge economic impact with over 20% being wiped off UK GDP. This will be felt by all groups but particularly those experiencing poverty. The council has recently passed a motion on how it will tackle poverty as part of its social justice commitments and this will play an important part in the response to the Coronavirus. The proposed strategic aims have taken equality and the components of well-being into account. The legislation and the council's responsibilities in all these areas will remain an important part in our response as it continues to develop.

5 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The strategic aims have been developed, informed by the latest available evidence and government guidance, to inform the Council's ongoing response to the Coronavirus pandemic. While a number of arrangements have continued to be developed and implemented to support these aims, the Council continues to operate in a dynamic environment and delivery of each aim is not without challenges and risks. The delivery will continue to be monitored and programmes will need to be flexible in timescale and content as circumstances and guidance changes.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 Each of the actions that underpinned the strategic aims has a corresponding measure or milestone. These will be used to evaluate the success. Nonetheless, it needs to be recognised that in a changing external environment it is likely that actions, and therefore the corresponding measures of progress, will need to be continuously reviewed.
- 6.2 The Council's established performance framework will continue to facilitate service planning, performance management and risk management across Council services.

7 REASONS:

- 7.1 To put in place a set of aims which are focused on wanting everyone to feel safe in their communities, to continue to support each other and to reach out to those who need help while preserving the health and well-being of our workforce.
- 7.2 There remains significant challenges that must be responded to, clearly specifying the council's purpose and strategic aims will guide the Council's continuing response ensuring clarity and accountability.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 Delivery of the strategic aims will continue to have significant resource implications to the Council, including increased costs to maintain current service delivery and demands in setting up new or amended services. A number of the Council's income streams have also ceased and savings planned as part of the 2020/21 budget have been delayed.
- 8.2 To understand the full financial impact of the pandemic, we have produced an initial high-level assessment of the Council's current finances. We anticipate we will lose £3.5 million in income by the end of June as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. We have spent over £520,000 so far on our response to the coronavirus pandemic. To date, £229,960 is being recovered from funding made available by Welsh Government.
- 8.3 The significant factor that determines the level of impact on the Council's finances is the level of funding received from UK Government and Welsh Government to compensate for the losses, additional costs and delayed savings resulting from the COVID-19 response and impact. The other determining factor of course being the length of time that these impacts are felt.
- 8.4 A specific strategic aim has been identified to ensure the Council remains financially sustainable as an organisation. Even prior to the pandemic the Council was already facing significant financial challenges heading into the 2020/21 financial year. The ongoing pandemic presents its own financial challenges and uncertainty both in terms of additional cost and significant loss of income across services. We are now undertaking a detailed financial sustainability assessment and drafting a budget recovery plan which will re-evaluate financial commitments and funding forecasts.

9 CONSULTEES:

Strategic Leadership Team
Cabinet

The strategic aims have been developed by Cbinet in discussion with SLT.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Monmouthshire Coronavirus Response Strategic Aims
Monmouthshire Corporate Plan 2017/22

11 AUTHORS:

Matthew Gatehouse, Head of Policy and Governance
Richard Jones, Performance Manager

12 CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: (01633) 644397
e-mail: matthewgatehouse@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Tel: (01633) 740733
e-mail: richardjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk

| Aim: Provide clear, purposeful civic leadership | |
|--|---|
| What we said we would do | What we have done |
| <p>Influence and inform legislation changes so we can work effectively in our new context</p> <p>Ensure that every person or family in crisis that we're aware of receives support</p> | <p>Contributed legal advice to the working group drafting legislation</p> <p>Introduced remote meetings of council and Cabinet and live streamed these to ensure openness and accountability. Councillors continue to meet and take decisions in accordance with our rules</p> <p>Since lockdown, we have dealt with more than 20,000 enquiries from residents and businesses on topics such as food parcels, waste collection, council tax and benefits.</p> |
| Strategic Aim progress | |
| <p>We set coronavirus response strategic aims to provide clarity and ensure accountability through this period.</p> <p>We have worked to ensure the Council's overall response to the emergency is coordinated and managed. We continue to link into wider formal Gwent response structures and directly into regional, Welsh and Central Government.</p> <p>We rapidly adapted to new legislation and digital systems so that councillors could continue to meet and take decisions. Training and support has been provided to members to assist in utilising digital meeting technology.</p> <p>A programme of member seminars has been arranged to provide key information and to ensure all members remain involved; we are now setting dates for other committees including scrutiny, planning and licensing to begin meeting.</p> <p>We have focused on communicating timely and relevant service updates and information to residents across our communication platforms.</p> | |

| Aim: Provide childcare for children of key workers and ensure continuation of learning for all young people | |
|---|---|
| What we said we would do | What we have done |
| <p>Provide hub schools enabling childcare for key workers' children</p> <p>Provide digital technology and connectivity so all pupils can access learning, minimising any potential digital 'gap'</p> | <p>We opened 11 hub schools for the children of key workers and to support vulnerable children, with an average of 255 young people attending each day.</p> <p>Our schools have provided IT equipment to pupils without their own devices so they could access on-line learning at home throughout the week</p> |
| Strategic Aim progress | |
| <p>We quickly opened hub schools so that we could provide childcare for the children of key workers and support for the vulnerable children in our area. The opening hours were extended in April to provide further assistance to key workers during the pandemic. Provision was also provided during the Easter break and May half term. As demand for childcare support has increased, further provision was opened.</p> | |

All schools have been progressing the delivery of a distance learning offer to their learners. To assist this, we have established digital learning technologies and approaches, which are being further developed going forward. We have provided digital technology and connectivity to pupils without access so they could continue to learn, minimising any potential digital 'gap'. On-line learning will continue to be an important part of pupils learning even when schools re-open as this will only be on a part-time basis. The pandemic has presented challenges to schools and learners. The significant time away from school will have affected the learning trajectory of many learners and this is not likely to be a uniform impact with disadvantaged pupils likely to be impacted upon more significantly.

We are preparing for the reopening of schools in line with Welsh Government Guidance, which is due to begin on the 29th June.

| Aim: Help vulnerable young people and adults who need our support | |
|---|--|
| What we said we would do | What we have done |
| <p>Provide access to emergency food parcels for shielded people who cannot leave home</p> <p>Provide vital social care services for all those who need them, including child protection, care at home and residential care, 24/7</p> | <p>We have made 3056 calls to shielding people to offer them food packages and check on their well-being</p> <p>We have made free school meal payments directly to the families of 1371 eligible pupils</p> <p>We are continuing to provide care at home to 779 people in our community supporting their health and well-being</p> |
| <p>Hub schools have provided provision for vulnerable children, and we opened Special Needs Resource Base provision. Not all vulnerable children have accessed this provision. The progress of learning of vulnerable pupils is likely to be more significantly impacted. Arrangements have been put in place to maintain contact with all vulnerable learners, and work is continuing to develop support provisions for vulnerable children. We set a goal of ensuring that every person or family in crisis that we are aware of receives support. In order to achieve this, we moved to a seven day working week to support our frontline delivery in Adults services, and adapted our delivery of Children's Services. We also developed a redeployment strategy to ensure staff were available to provide support, where needed.</p> <p>In order to provide vital social care services for all those who need them, including child protection, care at home, and residential care, 24/7, we are regularly assessing the impacts of the virus and lockdown as it continues.</p> <p>We established the Community Action Volunteer Team (CAVT) to assist offers of help being coordinated with the offers of support. Part of this process was establishing lists of businesses delivering food supplies locally and supporting those providing cooked food/meals. We also provided access to emergency food parcels for shielded people who cannot leave home, and created a contact centre to pro-actively call shielded vulnerable people in our communities.</p> <p>Shelter is being sourced and provided for homeless and vulnerable people in the county, helping to ensure their safety during this time. We have experienced unprecedented demand from some of the most vulnerable citizens in our county, at a time when identifying suitable and safe premises has been challenging. The temporary use of Gilwern Outdoor Education Centre was recently agreed by Cabinet to provide Covid-related emergency homeless accommodation until August 2020.</p> | |

| Aim: Help local businesses to survive | |
|---|--|
| What we said we would do | What we have done |
| Support local businesses wherever possible and specifically, through timely payment of COVID-19 grants | <p>We contacted 1180 local businesses advising them they were eligible for financial support</p> <p>We paid over £21.5 million in grants to 1651 local businesses to support them to survive</p> |
| <p>Support has been provided to local businesses, wherever possible, and specifically through timely payment of COVID-19 grants. We have strived to ensure businesses are aware of the support available and continued to provide business advice and support.</p> <p>Work is underway to prepare for the safe re-opening of Monmouthshire’s town and village centres, and the businesses that reside within them. Proposals are being finalised on how we adapt our main town centres to make them safe when retail returns. Considerable consultation has taken place to seek the opinions of our residents and to gather ideas about how Monmouthshire’s town and village centres could look in the future to inform this.</p> <p>We have promoted the message to ‘stay at home’ and ‘Visit Monmouthshire – later’, and preparation and planning has begun for when restrictions are lifted to promote Monmouthshire as a destination.</p> | |

| Aim: Keep our neighbourhoods clean and tidy whilst managing waste as sustainably as we can | |
|---|---|
| What we said we would do | What we have done |
| <p>Reconfigure our services so that we can continue domestic waste and recycling collections</p> <p>Keep our roads and cemeteries safe by maintaining our levels of ground maintenance</p> | <p>We continued to pick up waste and recycling from the doorstep of all 40,000 properties in the county; our crews have collected over 4,500 tonnes of waste.</p> <p>We paused garden waste collections for 6 weeks and closed household waste and recycling sites for 9 weeks to focus on key services</p> <p>We have restarted garden waste collections and re-opened 2 household waste and recycling sites, booking 10,645 slots for residents to deposit waste.</p> <p>We prioritised grounds maintenance based on public safety and road visibility requirements, which also resulted in an increase in wildflowers and pollinators.</p> |
| <p>We reconfigured our services to ensure domestic waste and recycling collections could continue by increasing vehicles and facilitating social distancing for staff, wherever possible. To assist our communities, recycling bags were distributed to supermarkets and to residents shielding, where possible.</p> <p>Following the initial cessation of garden waste collections, work has been undertaken to re-start collections and we are now able to accept new applications for residents who wish to start green collections.</p> | |

Following the closure of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC's), provisions have been introduced that allow for the reopening of two sites; Llanfoist and Five Lanes. A booking system has been developed to keep numbers to a manageable level to maintain social distancing, which continues to operate effectively.

We were forced to reduce many of our grounds maintenance services in order to redeploy staff into waste and recycling roles. Despite this, we have kept our roads and cemeteries safe by retaining an essential grounds maintenance team operation. We prioritised the maintenance based on public safety and road visibility requirements, which has had a positive impact on the flora and fauna of our county with many areas seeing an abundance of wildflowers and wildlife.

Aim: Be a trusted partner for other agencies/organisations

| What we said we would do | What we have done |
|---|---|
| <p>Deliver our part in COVID contact testing, tracing and community surveillance</p> <p>Coordinate community volunteering and support local food banks</p> | <p>We have provided 34 staff for a Gwent-wide Test, Trace, Protect scheme</p> <p>We are working with 83 lead coordinators across 60 community groups, there are 656 active volunteers helping their communities in various ways</p> <p>We are supporting 4 foodbanks who continue to provide food to those who need it.</p> |
| <p>As many residents saw their employment and financial situations change, we helped to coordinate community volunteering and support local food banks. There has been a huge response from residents to volunteer across Monmouthshire and these efforts have been integral in supporting those most in need in our communities during the pandemic.</p> <p>We continue to work with our public sector partners via the Gwent Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) to provide a joined up response across our area. We also developed closer working relationships with other agencies who support the social care system to ensure a joined up approach to care provision for some of our most vulnerable residents.</p> <p>Alongside our Gwent partners, we are contributing to the COVID-19 Test, Trace and Protect scheme. This aims to trace and contact residents who have been in contact with the virus to provide advice and request they self-isolate to try and minimise the spread of the virus and minimise the reproduction rate of the virus (R-rate).</p> | |

Aim: Sustain a safe, healthy and productive workforce

| What we said we would do | What we have done |
|---|--|
| <p>Ensure all our staff who have the need can access the right Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</p> <p>Maximise our use of technology so our organisation can keep delivering the things that matter</p> | <p>We have over 1000 members of staff who offered their skills for redeployment to other areas if needed</p> <p>We quickly rolled out further technology to improve how our 1875 office-based staff work from home</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>We secured licences for our 700 staff who previously did not have access to digital communications so our whole organisation can be kept up to date.</p> <p>We have strived to ensure all our staff, who have the need, can access the right Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</p> |
| <p>During this difficult time, we have provided a range of support services to all colleagues to support their wellbeing via the Health, Welfare & Information group. We have strived to ensure all our staff, who have the need, can access the right Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and all staff are now able to access testing if they display symptoms.</p> <p>The Logistics group has ensured that staff and resources are allocated to priority services, and that staff being re-deployed have the necessary training, equipment and guidance for them to undertake their new roles in a safe manner. The Digital group has aided business continuity through the use of digital tools and remote working facilities, and development is ongoing in this area as remote working continues. Where required, we have maintained cleaning services in buildings that have remained open, and we are now preparing our other buildings for a return to work, ensuring safe distances and cleanliness for the safety of our staff. The directive remains however, that working from home is the safest mechanism for staff where possible, and working in council buildings should only be undertaken where essential to do so.</p> | |

| Aim: Ensure we remain financially sustainable as an organisation | |
|---|--|
| What we said we would do | What we have done |
| <p>Ensure we remain financially sustainable as an organisation</p> | <p>We anticipate we will lose £3.5 million in income by the end of June as a result of the coronavirus pandemic</p> <p>We have spent over £520,000 so far on our response to the coronavirus pandemic. To date, £229,960 is being recovered from funding made available by Welsh Government.</p> <p>We will apply for funding from UK Government and Welsh Government to lessen as much as possible the financial impact of our response</p> |
| <p>The pandemic has affected many of our services and the way in which they work. To help accommodate this change, we have been Influencing and informing legislation changes so we can continue to work effectively in this new context.</p> <p>To understand the full financial impact of the pandemic, we have produced an initial high-level assessment of the Council's current finances and are reviewing our original budget savings plans for 2020/21. The Council even prior to the pandemic was already facing significant financial challenges heading into the 2020/21 financial year. The ongoing pandemic presents its own additional financial challenges and uncertainty both in terms of additional cost and significant loss of income across services. We are now undertaking a detailed financial sustainability assessment and drafting a budget recovery plan which will re-evaluate financial commitments and funding forecasts.</p> | |

OUR CORONAVIRUS STRATEGY

The Coronavirus pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge to our way of life and the way we provide services. We will continue to focus on the things that matter most to our residents and businesses and have agreed a set of strategic aims which will be in place to shape our continuing response and our transition into recovery.



| Our Purpose | Our Design Principles | What we are Doing |
|--|---|--|
| <p>We want everyone to feel safe in their communities, to continue to support each other and to reach out to those who need help</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with and alongside local communities • Being innovative and creative • Learning and adjusting in real time • Considerate of short-term response and medium-term recovery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remodel our town centres and encourage people to shop safely and shop locally; • Ensure the safe re-opening of our schools to all learners from 29th June while continuing to offer distance learning • Work with partners to operate the Test Track and Protect system to help identify people who have the virus to minimise further outbreaks; • Ensure staff working in key services have access to testing and Personal Protective Equipment • Open up garden waste collections to new customers; • Use technology to help reintroduce service provision such a request and collect service for library book • Continue to provide vital social care services, including child protection, care at home and residential care, 7 days a week • Support our community volunteering network to provide long-term benefit to our communities • Begin our financial recovery programme |
| <p>Our Values</p> <p>Openness: We are open and honest. People have the chance to be involved and tell us what matters</p> <p>Fairness: We provide opportunities for people and communities to thrive. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently.</p> <p>Flexibility: We are flexible, enabling delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.</p> <p>Teamwork: We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved. We will make the best of the ideas, and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.</p> | <p>Our Strategic Aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide clear purposeful civic leadership • To develop a long-term approach to learning for all young people • To help vulnerable young people and adults who need our support • To help local businesses survive, reopen and thrive • To keep our neighbourhoods clean and tidy whilst managing waste as sustainably as we can • To be a trusted partner for other agencies / organisations • To keep a safe, healthy and productive workforce • To ensure we remain financially sustainable as an organisation | |