

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

9 December 2020

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer – Karen Jones

Matter for Information

Wards affected: All

**Report Title: Update on the Covid-19 Member Panel - Recovery
Phase**

Purpose of Report

1. To provide a summary of business undertaken by the Panel to date.

Background

2. Council established a Member Panel earlier this year to advise the Cabinet and Council on the approaches that could be taken during the recovery phase of the pandemic.
3. The Panel has met on four occasions. The main areas considered are summarised below.
4. It is now clear that the Council will need to flex between response and recovery over an extended period of time and consequently the Panel will be recommending to Council that its terms of reference be extended to enable it to inform response as well as recovery. That proposal will be scheduled for consideration at the Annual General Meeting scheduled for 23rd December 2020.

Summary

5. Meeting 1 – 28th June 2020

- The Panel was provided with an overview of the situation and the way in which the Council was responding and considered an early draft of the “Moving Forward” report which set out a framework for stabilisation;
- The Panel as advised of the estimated financial impact of the pandemic on the Council;
- The Panel commissioned a survey of all elected members to capture feedback on the way in which humanitarian assistance had been provided during the national lockdown period;
- The Panel agreed areas for initial focus: humanitarian assistance and community response; the picture emerging from the Public Services Board’s Community Impact Assessment exercise; warning and information activities, especially how those who are digitally excluded are being catered for; the impact on tourism.

6. Meeting 2 – 16th July 2020

- The Panel was provided with a further overview of the situation and the key changes made since the previous meeting;
- The Panel received a presentation on the way in which communications work had been organised since 16th March. The communications team had been expanded and was covering 7 days/week. A range of existing and new channels of communication and new techniques had been introduced to engage the population. This included writing to all residents; use of radio and face to face communication through the network of volunteers/voluntary and community groups. The establishment of Buy Local was also explained with the hope this would help to sustain local businesses. The Panel was advised that there had been a reduction in bi-lingual communications because of the need for urgency and the lack of linguistic skills in-house although measures were being taken to restore bi-lingual communications when recruiting to new digital marketing posts;
- The Panel received a detailed report on the operation of NPT Safe and Well. The Panel commissioned further work from a wider range of stakeholders to inform further phases of response but also longer term community development. This included: a workshop involving a small group of elected members from each political group; feedback from community organisations using an external, independent research organisation; and consideration of

how this work could be aligned with other community work such as local area co-ordinators and activities delivered through the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate; and

- The Panel considered the results of the survey of all elected members and asked that the findings be examined in more detail through the member workshop which was to be led by the Deputy Leader.

7. Meeting 3 – 8th September 2020

- The Panel was provided with a summary of the key changes that had occurred since the previous meeting;
- The Panel received a report from the workshop convened to discuss the humanitarian response and the learning therefrom. The Panel noted the recommendation to concentrate on arrangements to support the community over the autumn/winter period in the first instance, drawing on the learning captured from stakeholders in relation to the national lockdown period. The Panel noted that the workshop was to reconvene to explore this in more detail;
- The Panel received detailed information about the operation of the regional Test, Trace, Protect service; and issues associated with the spread of the virus across the county borough;
- The Panel discussed anti-social behaviour evident in the Neath and Port Talbot town centres and officers outlined the work being done through the Community Safety Partnership to address the issues highlighted;

8. Meeting 4 – 22nd October 2020

- The Panel was provided with a summary of the key changes that had taken place since the previous meeting;
- The Panel noted that cases were increasing and that it was likely that a firebreak would be introduced to suppress the virus;
- The Panel discussed the complexity of information that the public were being asked to absorb and noted the continued efforts of the corporate communications and marketing team to help residents understand the most important messages;
- Pressures on the Test, Trace and Protect service were explained together with the measures that were being taken to alleviate those pressures;

- The Panel received a copy of the Community Impact Assessment report produced by the Public Services Board and noted that the Board had decided to prioritise a small number of areas for immediate attention: youth unemployment; homelessness; community response; support for local SMEs;
- The Panel discussed the terms of reference that had been set by Council and in light of the fact that the Council was now dealing with a second response phase it would be recommended that the Panel's remit be extended to inform response and response planning.

Financial Impacts

9. No impacts

Consultation

10. No requirement for consultation on this item.

Workforce Impacts

11. No impacts

Legal Impacts

12. No impacts

Integrated Impact Assessment

13. A screening assessment indicates that a full assessment is not required.

Recommended

14. Cabinet/Cabinet Scrutiny Committee receive and note the work undertaken to date by the Member Panel Coronavirus (Recovery Phase)

Appendices

15. Appendix 1 - Proposed revised terms of reference

Officer Contact

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Terms of Reference

Coronavirus – Member Panel

Purpose of Group

To support and advise the Cabinet and Council on the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the approaches that could form the basis of the recovery phase from the pandemic.

Key Tasks

To help communicate the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic

To provide community insight to inform the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic

To receive, comment upon and constructively challenge approaches proposed for the recovery phases of the pandemic;

To ensure the views and opinions of the community inform recovery planning processes and activities;

To ensure all members of Council and the political groups are able to inform recovery planning processes and activities;

To assist in ensuring recovery planning is based on a thorough assessment of the impact of the pandemic on communities, drawing out differential impacts between different groups of people, businesses and other organisations;

To test proposals for resuming council services and functions against government guidance and other relevant considerations;

To ensure sound financial estimates of the response and recovery phases are developed;

To test the adequacy of governance arrangements to support the recovery phase;

To assist in capturing the lessons learned from the response phases and to ensure these lessons learned inform recovery planning.

Membership

Chair: Leader of Council - Cllr. R.G.Jones

Cabinet Members: Cllr. E.V.Latham and Cllr. C. Clement-Williams

Labour Group: (5 members) Cllr. M.Harvey, Cllr. S.M.Penry, Cllr. S.Reynolds, Cllr. D. Cawsey and Cllr. M. Protheroe

Plaid Cymru Group: (3 members) Cllr. A. Llewelyn, Cllr. L. Purcell and Cllr. J.D. Morgan

Independent Group: (2 members) Cllr. S.K. Hunt and Cllr. H.C.Clarke

Frequency of Meetings

Every 4 weeks unless otherwise agreed by the Panel by majority decision

Reports to

Cabinet

Other Matters

Is able to commission research and advice from Council officers

Is able to invite third parties to give evidence to the committee