

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 30TH NOVEMBER, 2020

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 21ST OCTOBER, 2020

“154 CORONA VIRUS RECOVERY STRATEGY (REF) –

Cabinet, at its meeting on 21st September, 2020, had received a report on the Corona Virus Recovery Strategy and had requested that the report be referred to all Scrutiny Committees for consideration having regard to identifying any particular areas of focus for the Committees' Forward Work Programmes.

The Strategy was structured around the three phases to the Council's management of the pandemic: response, transition and recovery.

Reflecting on the learning from response had identified a series of recovery themes which had been aligned with the Council's Well-being Objectives drawn from the Corporate Plan 2020-25.

Informed by a Community Impact Assessment, Economic Impact Assessment and the reflective learning from staff, partners and Members, a number of strategic recovery priorities had been identified. These priorities provided the strategic direction for services to develop recovery plans and would inform the Council's Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation, in presenting the report, advised that the report provided a commentary to the structure and content of the Corona Virus Recovery Strategy it being noted that since Cabinet's consideration of a previous report in July 2020, recovery work had commenced in parallel with the transition phase for services. This phase involved the longer term consideration of how the Council would work in the future, giving thought to the learning from the pandemic and the pressure and demands arising from it. The Strategy identified that pursuing the strategic recovery priorities would require effective involvement, engagement and communication, understanding of the Council's partners' issues, working together, focusing on the longer term and seeking to understand and prevent the root causes of issues. One other important factor would be to ensure that the Council used its learning and moved forward. Director colleagues were putting together local plans and would be presenting progress and up to date information on these as part of the next quarter's performance monitoring reports.

During consideration of the report, a Member stated that in their view, there should be speedier and more regular updates provided for Members and that he was keeping an eye on the Public Health Wales figures. From the Vale's point of view, he stated it was refreshing to see that figures showed very low numbers in the Penarth and Barry areas. Another Member also commented that following an economic

briefing session they had attended it was evident that a number of local businesses who had not been able to trade during the Corona Virus pandemic may not actually reopen when things did eventually go 'back to normal'. Another Member also felt they would like to understand what the current feelings of the Cabinet were since the report had been considered in September.

Following a comment from a Penarth Member although they realised the report was a Strategy for Recovery, at a recent Penarth Town Council meeting where the positives were discussed it was noted that a Capital Grant of £400,000 was expected and Councillors needed to know rapidly the impact for businesses and hospitality and, in particular, what the Council was able to do for them. With regard to the four themes that were referred to in the report, the Vale Council also needed to be sure that equality was being foremostly considered with regard to these themes. It was evident they stated that if you were from a poorer background, elderly, or a person with an ethnic minority background they were likely to be affected the hardest. They therefore considered that the Vale needed to be saying exactly what it intended doing and what was integral as part of its Recovery Strategy.

It was however, acknowledged by all present that the Council faced a difficult situation with regard to the pandemic and that spending money was not always the answer. However, following a request from a Member that the Council should be thinking about what ideas it had going forward, it was subsequently reaffirmed by the Chairman that all Members, officers, the public etc, needed to be working together and put forward suggestions for recovery. It was also important, it was stated, that the Council helped the groups within the Vale that needed the most assistance and that all needed to consider and suggest ways of reaching those that are hard to reach within the area.

The Deputy Leader, with permission to speak, stated that guidance was awaited from WG with the regard to the proposed firebreak lockdown and that regular updates on the situation were being provided to Members, staff and the public from the Leader and the Managing Director. A considerable amount of work had also already been undertaken with hard to reach clients. There were constant meetings and referrals being undertaken and the schools had done considerable work to reach vulnerable families. However, she also urged all present to put forward any ideas and suggestions they may have to assist recovery, as it was a work in progress and everyone was learning. With regard to the business grants available, everyone had been working hard to ensure that the money was forwarded to businesses in as timely and urgent a manner as possible. The Town Centres Team had also held meetings with businesses and by working together, it would ensure that the work required was done.

The Head of Service stated that a number of the points that had been made by the Deputy Leader in relation to Members' concerns were also regularly being discussed by the Senior Leadership Group at their weekly meetings held under the mechanisms associated with the Coronavirus Prevention and Response Plan. The Chairman and Chief Executive of Cardiff and the Vale UHB and Leader and Chief Executive of Cardiff Council were also included in such discussions and work was continuing to ensure that maps or other ways of how the information was presented were developed as well as reducing the timeline for test results received. During the

pandemic peoples' wellbeing and mental health had also come to the forefront and the work of the Crisis Support Team had been refocused as a result. Its remit had also been broadened as well as general community support services. In terms of equalities, the Community Impact Assessment was probably the most focused work the Council had done and detailed who the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on. Multiagency work had also been ongoing throughout the pandemic and the team had met a number of organisations having regard to how to sustain and tackle equality issues. The report did not provide a detailed step-by-step process in relation to its actions as this had been considered to be the responsibility of each Directorate, however a framework had been required in order to assist with the Council prioritising its work.

At a recent meeting of the Council's Senior Leadership Team, the Leader and Deputy Leader had also met to finalise the implications for all services over the two week firebreak lockdown and following a call with the Head of Service for Welsh Government's Communications, the Council would be amplifying the Welsh Government messages, providing targeted local messages within the Vale and talking about what our residents could do and not just providing messages about the restrictions. The meetings had been very open and transparent with discussions focusing on working with Welsh Government in relation to the Communications Strategy.

Following a query as to where people could purchase food etc during the firebreak the Head of Service stated that the local restrictions advised that people should not leave the Local Authority for unnecessary travel. A Member advised that they had also been made aware that a member of the public had travelled from Bridgend to Culverhouse Cross and had been met with a fine from the police for doing so.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T Cabinet be informed of the comments made at the meeting in relation to the following:

- Support given to businesses;
- The need to ensure that the Council was as upfront as possible with its proposals and having regard to matters of equality.

(2) T H A T Members be updated as soon as possible on any proposals.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and the discussions at the Committee meeting.”