

Meeting of:	General Information Report
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 28 April 2020
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	COVID 19 / CORONAVIRUS - SERVICE IMPLICATIONS AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY - UPDATE
Purpose of Report:	This is a report, further to the reports to 23 March Cabinet on the same subject and is intended to provide members with an update on the work undertaken in responding to the threat posed by the outbreak of Covid 19/Coronavirus. The report outlines the Council's approach since 23 March and provides a summary of the key issues that have faced the organisation as well as the Council's response to those issues. The report also looks forward to the next month and outlines the Council's intended approach to ensuring service continuity during this period.
Report Owner:	Leader and Managing Director
Responsible Officer:	Managing Director
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Corporate Management Team & Cabinet
Policy Framework:	This is a matter within the Policy Framework
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further to the two reports considered by Cabinet on 23 March; https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/ Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2020/20-03-23/COVID-19-Coronavirus-Service-Implications-and-Business-Continuity.pdf and https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/ Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2020/20-03-23/Corona-Virus-Preparations-Officer-Delegations-and-Council-Working-Practices.pdf this report provides an update on arrangements put in place to ensure service continuity in response to Covid 19/Coronavirus, the work undertaken subsequent to the 23 March and further work that is currently underway. The intention of the report is to provide a general update in summary form, given that Members already receive regular updates from the Leader and Managing Director, Service areas and are also provided with substantial amounts of information from UK and Welsh Governments.

Recommendations

1. That Members note the report on the work that has been undertaken to date in responding to COVID 19/Coronavirus by the Council.
2. That members note the next intended steps that are planned in response to the COVID 19/ Coronavirus and the associated Business Continuity Planning work that is in progress across the organisation.
3. That this report is circulated to all Councillors and Town and Community Council clerks for information.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To note the work undertaken to date in response to COVID 19/Coronavirus.
2. To note the Business Continuity arrangements underway across the organisation.
3. To provide this information to all councillors and Town and Community Councils.

1. Background

- 1.1 A full background to the Covid19 / Coronavirus pandemic is provided in the report to Cabinet on 23 March and is available via the following link; [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/ Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2020/20-03-23/COVID-19-Coronavirus-Service-Implications-and-Business-Continuity.pdf](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2020/20-03-23/COVID-19-Coronavirus-Service-Implications-and-Business-Continuity.pdf) . This report does not seek to reiterate the advice and information given in that report. In the same way, a report to 23 March Cabinet also outlined and put in place governance arrangements to ensure that the Council could continue to function in the absence of any Cabinet, committee and Council meetings in the short to medium term. That report is available at the following link; [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/ Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2020/20-03-23/Corona-Virus-Preparations-Officer-Delegations-and-Council-Working-Practices.pdf](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2020/20-03-23/Corona-Virus-Preparations-Officer-Delegations-and-Council-Working-Practices.pdf)
- 1.2 The reports to Cabinet made it clear that the focus of Corporate Management Team was to put mechanisms in place to ensure Business Continuity Planning. The same reports, set out the actions taken around managing work practices and ensuring the health and safety of staff by managing workplaces and promoting more agile working. The report outlined the focus on communications and set out those vital and critical services that needed priority in terms of continuity planning.
- 1.3 The remainder of this report, sets out those key issues that have been the focus of activity over the past 4 weeks and serves as an update for members.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The remainder of this report documents in summary form those issues that have been considered over the 4 to 5 weeks since reporting the matter to Cabinet on 23 March.

Governance

- 2.2** The Council's Corporate Management Team meet daily under the auspices of a CMT Gold meeting using well established Emergency planning reporting mechanisms. This allows a consideration of urgent matters, a focus on strategic actions as well as those where decisions are required in a very short timescale. The meetings focus also on key areas of risk to the organisation as well as the communities of the Vale of Glamorgan. The meetings are chaired by the Managing Director and also involve the Leader and Deputy Leader as well as the Council's Emergency Planning lead and Communications Manager. Any decisions that are to be taken that would normally require Cabinet or Council approval are made via the Managing Director's Emergency powers and these are documented and members have had sight of reports that cover the same. In addition, Cabinet Members continue to have regular dialogue with Directors and service leads and Cabinet continues to meet virtually on an informal and weekly basis.

Partner Liaison

- 2.3** The Council is represented on regular meetings of a Joint PSB (Public Service Board) across the Cardiff and Vale health Board region. In the same way, the Council is represented at both a strategic and tactical level across the South Wales Police area through the Local resilience Forum, alongside other local authorities, the emergency services as well as other partners including Natural Resources Wales, Health Boards and Welsh Government. Finally, at an all Wales level, various Directors discuss and share practice by service area and there is an all Wales Chief Executives meeting held regularly and a Leaders meeting held regularly, facilitated by the WLGA. This allows, as far as practicable a consistent approach across Wales, or where this is not possible, an understanding of the differences that lead to varying approaches. This has been particularly useful in relation to liaison with the UHB through existing partnership arrangements on health and social care issues.

Managing the workplace and workforce

- 2.4** As indicated in the report of 23 March, the move to home working and mechanisms to protect staff whilst at work was an important initial response. This has continued to an extent where the vast majority of staff are working from home, where this is practicable. The identification of critical services has allowed the organisation to focus on those service areas and has in turn allowed us to continue to deliver those vital, important services. A full list was provided on the report to 23 March and is not repeated here, but includes, social care, school

staff and school support, ICT (to facilitate home and agile working), waste and refuse, homelessness, business support and finance.

- 2.5** As we move through the pandemic we continue to review the organisation and workforce requirements, which could lead to a decision to furlough some employees in the short to medium term, in line with government guidance and with a commitment to paying full pay. This further protects the Council's financial position and ensures a prudent position is maintained.

Residential and domiciliary care – pressures and Business Continuity

- 2.6** The challenges to resilience in these areas are due to staff shielding, staff isolating and staff sickness primarily. In response the Council has been running an external recruitment campaign for care staff since the beginning of the COVID-19 situation. In total we have received and processed 93 applications. This campaign has been supported by our Communications Team who have ensured a wide audience for the advert via social media, local media platforms and aligning to a national campaign for recruitment of care staff. Of these applications we have employed 30 new staff across our residential and domiciliary care service. This number is increasing on a weekly basis. New staff are being provided the relevant manual handling training, and online certified training in relation to Infection Control; Medication and Food Hygiene. Their DBS applications are also being processed on day one, with an appropriate risk assessment in place.
- 2.7** We have also been repurposing staff from across the Council. The initial repurposing exercise identified 45 staff who expressed an interest in working in some capacity across Social Services, given the changing nature of people's roles due to the COVID-19 pandemic a number of these individuals were required to continue in their current roles i.e. teaching staff and subsequent Government advice and guidance (shielding) further reduced this number. However, we have currently repurposed 15 staff across our residential and domiciliary care service. These staff have been utilised in a range of positions in the service such as business support and as domestic assistants and care assistants.
- 2.8** Concerns regarding the availability of PPE continue to have an impact. The Council is seeking to source additional PPE to supplement the supply from Welsh Government. The guidance relating to the required PPE has changed several times since the beginning of the Covid-19 situation, which has also impacted on the volume of equipment required. Additionally we are working successfully with both the national testing arrangements at Leckwith and with Cardiff and Vale UHB to increase the numbers tested. The availability of testing and the criteria for testing has limited the numbers that have been able to be tested to date.
- 2.9** Social Services have excellent working relationships with our local care providers, ensuring that we have shared policy changes and developments, arranging PPE

deliveries and providing financial support. Newly announced funding from Welsh Government will also be allocated appropriately across the care system.

School Childcare Hubs

- 2.10** Welsh Government took a decision to close all schools for educational purposes by 20th March. It was announced that schools in Wales would be repurposed from 23rd March to provide childcare for vulnerable children and the children of critical key workers.
- 2.11** All schools in the Vale of Glamorgan remained open for this purpose. However, it became apparent that this approach could not be sustained due to reduced staff capacity resulting from illness and self-isolation.
- 2.12** On 25 March, discussions commenced with Headteachers on the development of a hub childcare model. A new hub model commenced on 1 April based in 14 schools across the Vale. The provision is available from 7am – 7pm, 7 days a week. This was also made available across the two-week Easter holiday, including the bank holidays.

Continuity of Learning

- 2.13** Schools are using a variety of approaches to support children's learning from home. Local authorities are working with Welsh Government, Education Consortia and ESTYN on a Continuity of Learning Plan to provide advice and guidance for schools, governing bodies and parents. The Council is working with schools to identify and support children who are digitally excluded. Welsh Government's Continuity of Learning statement can be accessed via the following link: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-04/stay-safe-stay-learning.pdf>

Preschool Childcare

- 2.14** Welsh Government announced its Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme on 7th April 2020 which supports Welsh Government funded pre-school childcare for critical workers. The Vale of Glamorgan's on-line application system went live on 9 April for childcare commencing from 14 April. The Council's Early Years team has worked with 21 child minders and 9 day-care settings during the first week of the scheme to provide care for 103 children aged 0 - 4 years.

School Meals and Catering

- 2.15** Following the closure of schools for education purposes, arrangements were put in place for those eligible for free school meals to collect a meal from school or in certain circumstances to have them delivered to their home.

- 2.16** As a result of the social distancing requirements and restrictions to individual journeys, a voucher system was introduced from 1st April in lieu of the launch of an anticipated national system. Notification was received from Welsh Government on 16th April that a national voucher scheme would not now be introduced. In view of this the Vale of Glamorgan's free school meal voucher system was extended. Those eligible for free school meals are sent 10 day's supply of vouchers fortnightly. The daily value of the voucher is £3.90. Vouchers can be redeemed at Tesco, Asda or Filco.
- 2.17** Catering staff continue to work in the Childcare hubs to provide breakfast, lunch and a light evening meal where required.

Libraries and Adult Community Learning

- 2.18** In response to the requirement to close all facilities where people gather with immediate effect from the 20th March, all libraries in the Vale of Glamorgan, the Art Gallery and face to face adult education classes were closed.
- 2.19** There is social media output from all libraries and local networks are also being used to promote digital resources and share useful links on-line. The libraries have online registration for the digital resources and they are now providing story times and book clubs as new activities for the current situation. We have also ensured an increase in e-books, e-magazines and similar resources as a result of additional funding.
- 2.20** Most learners on Get Back on Track and English as a Second Language (ESOL) courses received homeworking packs from their tutors prior to shut down. Our tutors continue to support them on-line and through class WhatsApp groups.
- 2.21** Learn Welsh tutors are using a variety of online programmes to contact and continue to teach Welsh for adult learners, including Skype and Zoom. Tutors are maintaining contact with learners who don't have social media or interactive programmes by email and those with no internet by phone and post.

Waste and recycling – Business Continuity

- 2.22** Due to the potential for public health issues that could arise from any failures in this service area, a decision was taken to continue to provide all waste collection and recycling operations and at the same frequency as normal. To do this, it was necessary to delay the start of the green waste service for 1 month, until 13th April 2020, to allow time for replacement staff to be recruited and trained to take the place of those who were socially isolating. The black bag restriction of 2 bags per fortnight has been lifted to 4 temporarily to allow for the increased waste generated by families staying at home. All recyclable material is being recycled as normal.

- 2.23** The roll out of the waste collection Blueprint scheduled for Barry in the spring of 2020 has been delayed. This is due to the new vehicle deliveries being delayed but also recognises the many current challenges faced by families at this difficult time. It is anticipated that this will now take place later in the year.
- 2.24** It was necessary to close the Council's two Household Waste Recycling Centres due to the inability to ensure the safety of the public and staff, and current legislation which does not determine visits to domestic waste disposal sites as being essential travel. This is currently the all-Wales position.

Open spaces, Country Parks and Resort management – Social distancing and avoiding unnecessary travel

- 2.25** Due to extensive social gatherings and large groups of visitors not observing social distancing at our Feature Parks, Country Parks and Resorts at the start of the lockdown, a number of these have been closed to the public. There are still many areas of public open space available, but these do not generally attract visitors from outside of the immediate locality.
- 2.26** All grounds maintenance activities have continued to ensure that all parks and open spaces remain useable and in good condition for when the lockdown ends.
- 2.27** Restrictions and other controls on visitors, visitor parking and cyclists have been introduced in various popular areas in the Vale to assist with social distancing and to help avoid unnecessary car journeys. Alongside this a vehicle based tannoy system has been deployed asking people to respect guidance and stay home and avoid unnecessary travel. This is supported by the Council's Enforcement Team who are making regular patrols of the area. All the above arrangements are reviewed regularly.

Country Parks and Public Rights of Way – Social Distancing and Avoiding unnecessary travel.

- 2.28** The Countryside team has been working with landowners to maintain and keep clear the Public Rights of Way network that remains open for public use, responding to complaints regarding illegal closures and any health and safety issues. In addition, the teams are ensuring that facilities such as country parks and PROW that have been closed under emergency powers are managed appropriately and that legal orders are in place.

Personal Protective Equipment

- 2.29** Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is being provided to front line workers in line with national guidelines. PPE stock, primarily for the social care sector is provided by Welsh Government via their NHS Wales Shared Services, this arrangement uses the Joint Equipment Store (JES), a joint facility with Cardiff Council.

- 2.30** The PPE team is made up of officers from across the Council including Social Services, Emergency Planning, Regeneration, Procurement and Health and Safety. A system for monitoring and distributing PPE stock has been developed, this includes our and commissioned social care homes, domiciliary care and direct payment care. We are linking with the Councils front line services to ensure that they have a supply of the correct PPE.
- 2.31** A PPE store has been established at Civic Offices, this creates a single point for staff and partners giving a simple straight forward method for collection and enquirers.
- 2.32** Members will be aware through national and local media that there is a shortage of PPE stock. We have worked closely with NHS Wales Shared Services, Cardiff Council and Cardiff and Vale Health Board to ensure that we have an adequate amount of PPE, however, this has been and continues to be challenging. The Council has also received PPE from schools who have begun production of this equipment, for example, face visors. The system in place monitors stock level against stock held within the care setting environment to ensure we can give a supply of PPE using a needs-based approach, to date we have distributed 466,341 items of PPE to the social care sector. The Council's Business Support team from the Regeneration & Planning service have also led on directly procuring enough PPE for the Council's front-line services and supported a local school in the purchasing of sufficient material to produce face shields.
- 2.33** As well the Social Care PPE stock we have successfully made an enormous effort to secure a supply of PPE stock for our front-line key workers and to support the social care sector. This is on-going. The provision of adequate PPE and the timely supply of such equipment is a regular item on the Local Resilience Forum as a key risk factor.

Testing

- 2.34** The Council is working collaboratively with partners at the UHB and the Local Resilience Forum to provide testing for all key workers across the local authority at three local testing centres Leckwith, Splott and Whitchurch.
- 2.35** Despite a slow start initially the current capacity at these testing centres is greater than demand and all those referred are tested with 24 hours, receiving their test results within 48 hours of their test.
- 2.36** The service has been rolled out widely across the Council to independent residential care providers, independent childcare providers and commissioned services for those who support the most vulnerable within our communities. The service provides our key workers with the ability to return to work quicker than the current self-isolation guidance should the results be negative, and the symptoms have subsided.

- 2.37** The total number of test episodes among residents in the Vale to date is 1,408, the Council having the second highest rate of testing per head of the population of all local authorities in Wales (1,065 per 100k of the population to date). This compares to an average of 789 per 100k of population in Wales.

Volunteering & Community Information Coordination

- 2.38** Following the outbreak of coronavirus in the UK, the Council quickly developed a dedicated section of the website, www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/ValeHeroes , as a way of providing information to our residents about the support available to them.
- 2.39** Vale Heroes enables people to find information about the very many established third sector organisations as well as newly formed community groups that are providing support in response to the coronavirus pandemic. These groups are offering a range of support services, including shopping and befriending services as well as more specialist support for residents. The site has been expanded to include information about supermarket delivery arrangements and other businesses offering their services to our residents, such as grocery deliveries. Community groups and businesses are able to submit information for inclusion in the Heroes database.
- 2.40** Vale Heroes also provides information about the volunteering opportunities that are available across the Vale and how residents can volunteer their time and links to guidance on safe volunteering and establishing community groups.
- 2.41** The Council is grateful for the partnership with Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) who compiled the initial list of support groups that has formed the basis of the Vale Heroes database.
- 2.42** The Council is working specifically with Age Connects to make referrals to those residents in crisis, or who are shielding, and are over 65 and need support with shopping services. Likewise, the Council is referring residents under 65 to GVS who are liaising with community groups to organise shopping.
- 2.43** The above has been supported by a strong social media and press campaign.
- 2.44** A grant has been provided by the Council to GVS (for their administration) to support local grass-roots level groups to meet incidental costs. A new £65k fund, 'The Vale Heroes Crisis Grant Fund' is being promoted and offers grants to Community Groups, the Voluntary Sector, Town & Community Councils and eligible businesses towards the cost of initiatives within the Vale of Glamorgan that help members of the community severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Shielding, People in Crisis and Food Provision

- 2.45** Following the Welsh Government letter to approximately 88,000 people across Wales who have significant underlying health conditions and asking them to shield themselves for 12 weeks, the Council has put in place a Crisis Support Team who are making contact with approximately 3,600 Vale residents who are on the list. Where people do not have support in place, the Crisis Support Team are arranging for a basic free weekly food parcel to be delivered by Welsh Government. Alternatively, if people would prefer for shopping to be done for them (paid for by themselves), or require befriending support, the Crisis Support Team will make a referral for this to be put in place. We are working with Age Connects and GVS (who will coordinate a local group) to do this. The Welsh Government has provided supermarkets with details of those on the shielding list and advice on this, and other arrangements is on the Council's website and provided over the telephone to shielding residents.
- 2.46** If residents are not on the shielding list, but feel they should be, they are advised to contact their GP for a possible referral on to the list.
- 2.47** The Crisis Support Team are also providing advice and support to those who are affected by the pandemic but may not appear on the shielding list. This service is available to provide support those residents who are most in need. The telephone number for the Crisis Support Team is 01446 729592 and this line will be staffed from Friday 0800-1700 Monday to Friday and outside of these times calls will be diverted to the emergency out of hours line.
- 2.48** The Council is in regular contact with the foodbanks operating in the Vale of Glamorgan. A significant donation of food was made by the Council to The Vale Foodbank in March to ensure sufficient stocks of essential items. Subsequently, the Council has also secured a further substantial donation from the Admiral Group to purchase further supplies and meet increased running costs associated with the expansion of the foodbank's operation at the current time. Where residents contact the Council in financial crisis, referrals are made to the foodbank to meet these needs.
- 2.49** Work is underway to consider the way in which community needs, including the provision of food and other forms of support, can be met by establishing other services. Further information will be provided in due course as these develop.

Business Support

Officers from the Regeneration, Tourism and Creative Rural Communities teams have been working with Colleagues in Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) to help deliver the NDR Grants scheme to eligible businesses. As of 27th April, over £19.4 million had been allocated to 1,535 businesses in the Vale of Glamorgan.

- 2.50** The team have also worked to signpost and support business in applying for the other grants introduced by Welsh Government such as the Economic Reliance Fund and has also set up a detailed information page targeting business support related to the current crisis.
- 2.51** The Business support team have also led on directly procuring enough PPE for the Councils frontline services and supported a local school in the purchasing of sufficient material to produce face shields.

Homelessness service

- 2.52** Welsh Government has issued new guidance on rough sleeping: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-local-authority-support-for-rough-sleepers-html> and has outlined £10 million of funding available for local authorities to accommodate and support rough sleepers <https://gov.wales/written-statement-coronavirus-and-local-government>
- 2.53** The Rough Sleepers Guidance requires LAs to set up a centralised co-ordination cell to manage the logistics for all accommodation, health and support facilities and in the Vale this group is chaired by the Head of Housing.
- 2.54** The increased demands on the homelessness service due to the new guidance has required the block booking of hotel rooms to accommodate those presenting. Several hotels in the Vale are being used for this purpose and to date 36 homeless people have been accommodated. In addition to this demand, the early release of prisoners due to Covid-19 could place further demands on the homelessness service, though the extent of this is unknown at the present time.

Shared Regulatory Services (SRS)

- 2.55** SRS leads on enforcing and monitoring business premises, but HSE will investigate any concerns raised about the lack of social distancing between workers, in workplaces that are allocated to HSE under the *Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1998*. The focus for the police is the regulations relating to individuals, movements and gatherings. SRS has teams out daily challenging those who are ignoring the rules or exploiting the current situation.
- 2.56** We are reviewing the use of hotels for use by the Homeless and key workers and have begun work with the partner Councils and Welsh Government to ensure compliance with the Regulations. In Cardiff the focus has been upon the hotels in the city centre and the potential opening of the Principality Stadium as an overflow facility for COVID. In the Vale and Bridgend officers have been advising on the closure of the Caravan Parks to make sure the owners/residents have the correct information.

- 2.57** One of the consequences of the lockdown is the large number of people who are, correctly, following the Government advice to stay home generating a sharp upturn in housing and noise complaints. Some of these also involve allegations of parties being held and officers are liaising with the Police regarding illegal gatherings. There has been an increase in complaints regarding nuisance from burning in gardens and complaints of rodents linked to waste accumulation in domestic premises. Concerns have been voiced about an increase in fly tipping; several firms are using Facebook and other social media sites to offer 'waste removal'. Officers are working with NRW to ensure these firms are legitimate and are disposing of waste legally.
- 2.58** We are providing advice to Primary Authority companies to assist them in understanding the restrictions placed on them not only by the new legislation, but where other control such as Sunday trading and planning controls are being relaxed. Through this work, we have been able to lead a consistent approach to enforcement by authorities across Wales.
- 2.59** We are working with our kennelling providers, Cardiff Dogs Home and Hope Rescue, to put preparations in place for the increase in dog collections that is anticipated due to the pandemic. This might arise through people suffering financial hardship or where we are being called upon called on to assist in the collection of dogs from homes where residents have been taken ill / gone into hospital with COVID 19 symptoms. We are working with the RSPCA to ensure common procedures are adopted and officer safety is prioritised.
- 2.60** Our infectious diseases team is providing advice to care homes and sheltered accommodation managers on infection control and general virus control.
- 2.61** It has recently been announced that SRS (Environmental Health) officers will be involved with contact tracing for Covid-19 and we are currently working on the details of this with WG and the Health Boards.

Financial management

- 2.62** The key issues in relation to this area are as follows:
- 2.63** Welsh Government is making funding available to support Councils in meeting the additional costs associated with responding to COVID19. Systems are in place to claim the funding available and by the end of April claims will have been made in relation to additional expenditure and lost income.
- 2.64** As stated above, Welsh Government has also made funding available to support local businesses which Local Authorities have been administering. As at 27th April, £19.4m of grant had been paid to nearly 1,500 businesses across the Vale. This work is continuing. The team have also ensured that any payments that were due by Direct Debit from business that have become exempt from paying

business rates in 2020/21 have been cancelled and no payments will be taken. This amounts to £10+m.

- 2.65** Management of the Council's cashflow has been a significant factor, ensuring that the Council has been able to make the payments referred to above and the other additional expenditure that has been required to meet the service requirements at this time. The cash flow position will be closely managed going forward.
- 2.66** The Cabinet Office has issued updated procurement advice to Authorities to enable them to be able to respond quickly to increased demand for certain goods and services. These new ways of working have been agreed via Emergency Powers and are supported by the procurement function.

Registrars service

- 2.67** The co - located bereavement services based at the University Hospital, Llandough, has been temporarily closed for birth and death registrations. This decision was taken in consultation with the Hospital.
- 2.68** Following the COVID-19 Act which allows for death and still-birth death registrations to be carried out by telephone and the electronic transmission of coroner, medical certificate cause of death and burial/cremation forms all death registrations are being carried out within the Register Office in Civic Offices where access to all ICT equipment is available.
- 2.69** The service is functioning through a mix of arrangements, including work being carried out within the office and at home, as appropriate and necessary. The support of 1 former Registration Officer who has been redeployed to the Service is utilised as and when necessary to assist with these registrations.
- 2.70** Relief Registrars who were scheduled to work are assisting with administration and supporting the Registrars.
- 2.71** The General Register Office (Home Office) has provided guidelines for Registration Managers to follow which has allowed many of the Registration Services to be suspended during this pandemic allowing death registrations to take priority with the view to supporting Health Boards in relation to excess deaths.
- 2.72** From 01st March 2020 – 21st April 2020 there has been an increase of 42.2% in death registrations for the same period in 2019.
- 2.73** Due to the suspension of other Registration services, Registration staff have been able to manage the death registrations within statutory timeframes. Most registrations are being carried out within 2 days from receipt of all the required documentation.

- 2.74** Hensol Private Hospital will soon be in operation as a field hospital to provide additional capacity for the Royal Glamorgan Hospital Covid 19 patients. This facility will also include a bereavement service. The registration of deaths at this facility will be dealt with by the Service as Hensol Hospital is within the Vale of Glamorgan Registration District.

Democratic process

- 2.75** The Local Authorities (Coronavirus)(Meetings)(Wales) Regulations 2020 ('the Meeting Regulations') came into force on 22 April.
The Meeting Regulations provide that the usual restriction on the date for holding the Annual Meeting is suspended for 2020 and the Annual Meeting may be held on any date in 2020 as determined by the Proper Officer (Managing Director).
- 2.76** The Meeting Regulations also deal with the matter of existing Chairs and Vice-Chairs continuing to hold office until the 2020 Annual Meeting or the May 2021 Annual Meeting; and the requirement to give access to the public to Meetings is suspended until 30 April 2021.
- 2.77** As a minimum, Members attending a Remote Meeting must be able to hear and be heard.
- 2.78** When establishing procedures for Remote Meetings, Section 5(5) of the Meeting Regulations require Local Authorities to have regard to guidance issued by Welsh Ministers; however it has been confirmed that guidance will not be issued by Welsh Ministers in the foreseeable future, although guidance is available from the WLGA and was issued on 24 April.
- 2.79** Our officers together with Heads of Democratic Services across Wales are working on the Procedures and Protocols for Remote Meetings.
- 2.80** We will need to consider (or otherwise) the need for certain meetings to be held in coming weeks and months. By way of example, there may be a need to hold Planning Committee Meetings and if this is the case advanced training sessions will be required. Consideration will also need to be given to revising existing Procedures for the Planning Committee in light of the Meeting Regulations and the technology required for the Meeting and if necessary we will use the Managing Director's Emergency Powers to authorise any necessary changes.
- 2.81** Another area which may require a meeting is with Audit Committee, where there may be a need for such a committee to be held in the Summer to report the closing of the Council's Accounts for 2019/20, a matter that is ordinarily reported to Council in September.

- 2.82** School Admission Appeal Hearings will be required to start being convened by the middle of May. Legal and Democratic Services plus Learning and Skills have undertaken a considerable amount of work in drafting Procedures, liaising with Panel Members, and trialling GoToMeeting technology with a view to meeting the required deadline. In so doing consideration has been given to Welsh Government Guidance and proposals across Wales for dealing with such Hearings, however the finalisation of such arrangements await the Regulations for such Hearings from Welsh Government.
- 2.83** Due diligence testing has been carried out by ICT in respect of GoToMeetings and the Council is satisfied that this is a secure system. A specification of what is required for Cabinet, Committee and Council Meetings will be worked on so that we can further assess what is available and its appropriateness.
- 2.84** Key issues which will feed into further work and the Council's Recovery Planning include the timing and form of various Committee meetings and the Annual General Meeting, whether they be held online or in an environment where social distancing is feasible, or indeed a mix of the two approaches. In the same way, consideration will need to be given to whether meetings should be streamed or webcast at a later date.

Pay and Remuneration – valuing key front-line staff

- 2.85** The Council have recently communicated a temporary 10% pay uplift to nearly 500 key front line workers across the Vale in recognition of their dedication and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been a matter of some debate amongst Welsh Council Leaders, but as the decision has been agreed locally and is one that can be taken locally it remains in place on a temporary basis and will be reviewed at the end of August.
- 2.86** Consistent with the Council's wellbeing objectives 'to work with and for our communities and 'to support people at home and in their community', the uplift is intended to recognise those employees who are working in extremely difficult circumstances within our communities to achieve these objectives.
- 2.87** In collaboration with our trade union representatives the group identified are all below grade 5 and include residential care homes employees, care attendants and assistants waste and recycling teams, reablement support workers, cleaners and hostel workers.
- 2.88** The uplift will also include agency workers who are currently supporting these teams, where they have been engaged for 12 weeks or more. This is in line with the requirements of the Agency Worker Regulations and follows our commitment to our agency worker contingent through this pandemic.
- 2.89** In this instance the bonus is very temporary in nature due to the unprecedented circumstance arising. It has clear objectives which are to provide staff in the

Council's most challenging areas of work currently with an acknowledgement of their dedication and commitment and also to meet an evolving work force deficiency which is expected to be further impacted upon by market forces influenced by the private sector and further workers required elsewhere in publicly funded organisation, (the NHS).

- 2.90** Efforts are being made to ensure it is applied across the work force to include both gender biased areas in order to reduce any potential equality risks. This work will be ongoing. This is in addition to further considerations of the council's establishment as to the identity of any other potential areas of the workforce that meet the criteria.

Development Management

- 2.91** The Council's Development Management service has remained open to the submission of new Planning and Building Regulations applications via its online portals. To date, since the start of the lock down on 23rd March, the Council has received 123 new Planning applications and 45 new Building Regulations submissions. All these applications have been registered and allocated to relevant officers for processing.
- 2.92** The team has also determined 161 applications related to various planning submissions, with 131 of these being planning applications which have been determined with the existing delegated powers.

Recovery planning

- 2.93** As our approach to Covid-19 becomes the 'new normal', attention has already started to turn to Recovery planning and how the organisation will move from its Emergency planning phase to the Recovery Phase. Accordingly, various Tactical Groups have been put in place to assess and plan for Recovery across a range of services. These groups include the need to consider recovery in a variety of settings and circumstances, including but not restricted to:

- Schools and Learning,
- The Future phased return to using Council offices and premises and what arrangements need to be put in place,
- The re-establishment of the Council committee structure and how meetings should be held.
- The use of local parks, open spaces, resorts and Country parks and the management of the same
- Future project work and contracts
- The approach to reshaping services and the lessons learnt from the crisis

A recovery strategy is being developed to provide an overarching framework within which these workstreams will contribute. Further information will be communicated to members in due course.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The continuity of Council Services is clearly closely aligned to all Five ways of working. The Council has worked closely in partnership and collaboration with other organisations at a strategic and local level, as set out above. This includes joint PSB meetings and collaboration across the Local resilience Forum, and also at an all Wales level through discussion with colleagues and with Welsh Government. We have also need to collaborate and integrate our service delivery across the organisation to ensure that the most vital and essential services continue to be provided.
- 3.2** Much of the work underway seeks to prevent the spread of the virus amongst the staff base. Allowing staff to work from home, wherever possible and allowing remote and agile working has now become embedded in a very short space of time.
- 3.3** A key element of our approach is to involve all of Corporate Management Team in decisions that are being taken. A CMT Gold structure has been established which includes the leader and Deputy leader as well as our Emergency Planning lead and Communications Manager.
- 3.4** In situations such as this it is often difficult to consider long term implications, but much of the continuity planning that is being undertaken is designed to ensure that our communities and residents are as resilient as possible into the future. The same will apply with local businesses. Our attention is focussing on pressing strategic issues, but work has also been developed in planning for recovery, as indicated above.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** There are a number of financial implications that relate to this issue as set out in summary above. Many of these will be financial implications that arise as various initiatives have been put into place to secure continuation of vital services. All decisions taken via the Emergency Powers route reference financial implications, where applicable.

Employment

- 4.2** All Human Resources implications are being considered and are outlined within the body of this report

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.3** A report to Cabinet on 23 March dealt with issues relating to constitution and governance. This is a fundamental issue to enable the Council to continue to function as matters progress, to allow decisions to be made on day to day and operational matters. Members have had sight of reports that document all decisions taken under Emergency Powers.

5. Background Papers

Various press releases and correspondence to staff and partners.