

T: 01495 356011 Ext./Est: 6011

E: committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Democratic Services



**THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND**

1st July 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the Executive Committee will be held in Virtually Via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday, 8th July, 2020 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris  
Managing Director

**AGENDA**

**Pages**

**1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION**

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

**2. APOLOGIES**

To receive.

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND  
DISPENSATIONS**

To receive.

**MINUTES**

4. **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** 3 - 16

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2020.

**DECISION ITEMS - ENVIRONMENT MATTERS**

5. **FUNDING OPTIONS - ABERBEEG ROAD** 17 - 22

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.

6. **JOINT MONITORING ITEM - EDUCATION &  
ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIOS: WATER SUPPLY  
QUALITY IN SCHOOLS** 23 - 34

To consider joint officers' report.

To: Councillor N. Daniels (Chair)  
Councillor J. Collins  
Councillor D. Davies  
Councillor J. Mason  
Councillor J. Wilkins

All other Members (for information)  
Manager Director  
Chief Officers

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

**SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 24<sup>th</sup> JUNE, 2020**

**REPORT OF: LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER**

**PRESENT: Leader of the Council/  
Executive Member Corporate Services  
Councillor N.J. Daniels (CHAIR)**

**Deputy Leader of the Council / Executive Member –  
Regeneration and Economic Development  
Councillor D. Davies**

**Executive Member – Education  
Councillor J. Collins**

**Executive Member – Social Services  
Councillor J. Mason**

**Executive Member – Environment  
Councillor J. Wilkins**

**WITH:** Managing Director  
Corporate Director Education  
Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services  
Corporate Director Social Services  
Chief Officer Commercial  
Chief Officer Resources  
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance  
Press Officer

**DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

<b><u>ITEM</u></b>	<b><u>SUBJECT</u></b>	<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
<b>No. 1</b>	<b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b>	

	It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
<b>No. 2</b>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>There were no apologies for absence received.</p> <p>The Leader welcomed everyone to the first formal meeting of the Council since the lockdown measures were enforced.</p> <p>He also offered thanks to officers for the hard work that had been undertaken over the recent months in order to ensure critical services continued to be provided and asked that the Executive's thanks be communicated to staff.</p> <p>The Managing Director responded that she would ensure the message was relayed to staff.</p> <p>The Leader also asked that as an Authority, our respects were given to those people who have lost loved ones in Blaenau Gwent and to those in neighbouring authorities and asked for a moment of reflection.</p>	
<b>No. 3</b>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>The Executive Member for Environment declared an interest in Item 11 - Business Rates Relief – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2020/21 and, having taken legal advice from the Monitoring Officer, remained in the meeting but took no part in the decision in respect of item 11. The reasons for the declaration of interest are recorded on a schedule maintained by the Proper Officer.</p>	
	<b><u>MINUTES</u></b>	
<b>No. 4</b>	<p><b><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The minutes of the Executive Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

	<b><u>DECISION ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS</u></b>	
<b>No. 5</b>	<b><u>COVID-19 EMERGENCY – TRANSITION TO THE NEXT PHASE</u></b>  Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director.  At the invitation of the Leader, the Managing Director presented the report which confirmed the Council's strategic response to the Covid-19 Emergency and to outline the next steps as Wales moved to the next phase of the pandemic, with easing of lockdown restrictions and a gradual restarting of services.  The Officer highlighted that in relation to the national emergency, the Council had set up its emergency planning arrangements in March 2020, as detailed in paragraph 2 of the report.  Section 3 of the report detailed some of the work that the Council had been undertaking during lockdown and that the focus had shifted to the delivery of only critical services with other available resources being redeployed to support the emergency response, those of which are detailed in paragraph 3.1 of the report.  The response to the emergency also involved school closures and school hubs were established to provide support to keyworkers. She reported that there had been good partnership working with schools, and the Council had continued to support families eligible for Free School Meals. The Council was currently supporting over 2000 families per week via direct payments.  The Managing Director then referred to paragraphs 3.4 to 3.9 which detailed the decisions the Council had made during the pandemic, e.g. the establishment of locality response teams to support vulnerable people in the community; and the support to the local business community through various Welsh Government grants. As an organisation the Council had also changed the way it operated, e.g. home working and the effective use of new technology, which had also been adopted by Members.  Highlighted in paragraph 3.10 of the report was how the pandemic had affected the workforce in the Council with high levels of absence at the start of the outbreak at around 18%, however, the most up-to-date figures showed that staff absence had reduced and was just	

---

below 3% of staff not available for work, largely owing to those who are shielded and unable to work from home.

Section 5 detailed the transition into the next phase, and how the Council could re-start its services whilst still being aware that the pandemic is not over. A Recovery Co-ordination Group had been established to lead the recovery work in Gwent the first meeting of which is on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and Blaenau Gwent would then be establishing its own group.

As part of the next steps the Council would undertake a refresh of its corporate priorities to include what had been learnt over the last few months and the good practice to carry forward into the future.

The Managing Director concluded by highlighting that the Council needed to focus on the positive things that had happened, which included working with our partners and communities and referred to the recommendations in Section 7.

The Deputy Leader / Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development commented that the support that had been provided to businesses from the Regeneration Section had been fantastic, however, there was still a lot of work to do, and noted that the differences in the easing of lockdown between England and Wales had been confusing for businesses, e.g. when furlough would cease and the lifting of lockdown measures for those people on the shielded list.

He also highlighted the need for those staff who had been redeployed to be returned to their substantive posts as soon as possible to enable services to restart.

The Leader noted that it was an excellent report, and a brief snapshot of what officers and Members have been undertaking.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive approved recommendation:

- the approach to moving to the next phase of the pandemic and recovery;
  - the refresh of the Corporate Priorities to ensure a clear focus on what the Council wants to deliver over next 18 months;
-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the proposal to use the disruption of the pandemic to reflect on how we work as an organisation and with our communities, partners, workforce and trade unions, informing a position on the 'new normal' to support delivery of the refreshed priorities;</li> <li>• supported the development of a wider place-based discussion with partners on the community impact of the pandemic and how the BG Public Service Board could respond and support recovery through its collective priorities and work programme;</li> <li>• supported the development of an Economic Recovery Plan through engagement with the BG Enterprise Board and Regional Forums – identifying the responding to the impact on local businesses in order to support economic recovery; and</li> <li>• Continue to ensure that Blaenau Gwent is an active participant in regional forums – such as G10 and Cardiff Capital City Region – to support recovery and development of the Borough.</li> </ul>	
<b>No. 6</b>	<p><b><u>THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE 2020/21 REVENUE BUDGET AND UPDATE ON BRIDGING THE GAP PROPOSALS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Leader the Chief Officer Resources presented the report which detailed an initial forecast of the impact of Covid-19 on the 2020/2021 revenue budget and to provide an update of progress made against the Bridging the Gap Programme.</p> <p>The Officer went through the report and highlighted the detail in Section 5 and referred to Appendix 1 that provided an overall forecast on a portfolio by portfolio basis and noted that the report showed a worst case scenario. The forecast included estimated claims to the Welsh Government hardship fund and the new Social Services hardship fund.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources then referred to Section 5.6 and the overall summary in Appendix 2 - Bridging the Gap proposals and that of the target of £1.465m, the Council is forecasting to achieve £1.2m or 83% of that target. Many of those proposals were income related.</p> <p>The Officer noted that as a Council we would also need to look to identify if there are areas in our own budgets to mitigate some of the costs that had been incurred and noted that paragraph 5.7.1 of the report identifies some additional income.</p>	

	<p>The Leader thanked the Chief Officer Resources for a comprehensive report and noted that the finance was an important priority on the WLGA agenda, and the WG, WLGA and Councils were working well together and had one consensus view that was to focus on the financial situation which had prevailed throughout.</p> <p>The Leader commented that from a positive political view, the interaction and the relationship between WG and LG had vastly improved. However, he noted that the funding sources from WG would not be available in the long term and agreed that the Council needed to look at its own budgets. He noted that the management of the financial position during the pandemic at both a local level and across Gwent and wider had gone very well. He commended the Chief Officer Resources and her team in being able to respond to the demand of the WG deadlines and all returns had been submitted on time.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive considered the current forecast position and provided appropriate challenge to the financial assumptions included in the report; and that progress made against the Bridging the Gap programme for 2020/2021 be noted. (Option 1)</p>	
<p><b>No. 7</b></p>	<p><b><u>TEST, TRACE AND PROTECT</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Leader the Chief Officer Commercial presented the report that detailed the arrangements put in place to establish Contact Tracing in Blaenau Gwent, as part of the regional response to the Welsh Government's Test, Trace and Protect Plan (TTP).</p> <p>The Officer referred to Section 3 and gave an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the service. She also provided information on the operational details of the service.</p> <p>She noted that the initial work would focus on the testing of staff and residents in Care Homes and to date the level of testing has been quite low, however, it was anticipated that figures would rise as lockdown measures were eased; and it was noted that it was likely that the service would continue until March 2021.</p>	



The Leader then, in light of the announcement over the last few days that there would be a strong potential that a testing facility would be placed at the Marine Colliery Site in Cwm, and asked that an officer provide a brief statement.

The Managing Director responded that a request had been made over the last few days, whereby Welsh Government (WG) and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) had contacted the Council to source potential sites in the borough for a drive-through testing centre. The Council had welcomed their interest to have a testing centre in the area, and WG and ABUHB were showed potential sites and Marine Colliery in Cwm was selected, mainly because of its size. Officers were now working through the plans to make sure the site would be suitable and testing should start next week. She noted that drive-through centres were part of a National approach to testing, through a national system, and it linked neatly into the work of the local contact tracing, any results would be fed into the team. This was positive news for Blaenau Gwent and officers had worked at pace over the last few days and expected a formal announcement over the next few days.

The Leader thanked the Chief Officer Commercial and other officers involved for the work they had done on the Test, Trace and Protect project, which would be crucial to the further easing of lockdown measures.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive noted and endorsed the establishment of Contact Tracing in Blaenau Gwent, as part of the regional approach in Gwent and in support of the national Test, Trace and Protect Plan. (Option 1)

#### **MONITORING ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES**

**No. 8**

#### **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING – 2019/20 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN**

Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.

At the invitation of the Leader the Chief Officer Resources presented the report that detailed the Provisional outturn position at the end of 2019/2020; the significant adverse variances within portfolios; the provisional outturn for Fees and Charges; and the progress on the achievement of the Financial Efficiency Projects for 2019/2020.

The Officer referred to paragraph 5.1.3 which highlighted the overall position across all portfolios.

She noted that the provisional outturn of £0.48m favourable variance was a significantly improved position to the forecast at December 2019; and also highlighted the costs incurred as a result of the severe floods in February 2020.

The Chief Officer Resources then referred to Appendix 1 and gave a brief overview of the variances for each Directorate.

She also referred to paragraphs 5.1.25 – 5.1.27 which detailed the Fees and Charges.

Finally, she drew Members attention to paragraph 5.1.29 and the Financial Efficiency Projects and the target of £3.35m and that 98% (£3.28m) had been achieved.

The Leader thanked the Chief Officer Resources for the report, and noted the remarkable turnaround from December 2019; and reiterated how well the Council had done over the last 2 to 3 years in managing its budget. He continued that it showed that Directorates working together can achieve the targets that were set. The continued commitment to the financial strategy had put the Council in a good position to achieve the budget at the end of the year.

He noted that adverse variances would continue into the current financial year and sought clarification that the Cost Pressure sub group would continue to meet to continually monitor those issues.

The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the Cost Pressure sub group would continue to meet.

The Executive Member Social Services commented on financial position and congratulated the Social Services Directorate on achieving its favourable variance.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and that the Executive considered and approved the report and provided appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report. (Option 1)

No. 9	<p><b><u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, PROVISIONAL OUTTURN FOR 2019/29 FINANCIAL YEAR</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources. At the invitation of the Leader the Chief Officer Resources presented the report that detailed the provisional financial outturn position to the end of March 2020 across all portfolios (subject to audit); and any significant adverse and/or favourable variances.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources referred to paragraphs 5.1.2 and 5.1.3 that overall budget holders had maintained spending within the overall total for the approved capital schemes; and that future year funding of £59m consisting of external grants and the Authority's own funded would be carried forward into the future financial year.</p> <p>The Leader noted that this was another very positive report.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report;</li> <li>• Continued to support appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council; and</li> <li>• Noted the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding. (Option 1)</li> </ul>													
	<p><b><u>DECISION ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS</u></b></p>													
No. 10	<p><b><u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The following additional grants were reported:</p> <p><b><u>ABERTILLERY</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Abertillery Ward- Councillor N. Daniels</u></b></p> <table> <tr> <td>1.</td><td>Old Tyleryans RFC</td><td>£100</td></tr> <tr> <td>2.</td><td>Abertillery Belles FC</td><td>£100</td></tr> <tr> <td>3.</td><td>Abertillery &amp; District Museum Society</td><td>£50</td></tr> <tr> <td>4.</td><td>Bishop Street Allotments</td><td>£50</td></tr> </table>	1.	Old Tyleryans RFC	£100	2.	Abertillery Belles FC	£100	3.	Abertillery & District Museum Society	£50	4.	Bishop Street Allotments	£50	
1.	Old Tyleryans RFC	£100												
2.	Abertillery Belles FC	£100												
3.	Abertillery & District Museum Society	£50												
4.	Bishop Street Allotments	£50												

5.	Adam Street Allotments	£50
6.	Abertillery Netball Club	£100
7.	Abertillery BG RFC	£100
8.	Abertillery Bowls Club Ltd	£100
9.	Abertillery Cricket Club	£100
10.	Abertillery Town Band	£100
11.	Abertillery Bluebirds FC	£100
12.	Abertillery Ladies Orpheus	£75
13.	Abertillery Excelsiors FC	£100
14.	Abertillery Excelsiors Juniors FC	£100
15.	Ebbw Fach Choir	£75

#### **Abertillery Ward- Councillor J. Holt**

1.	Adam St. Community Allotments	£100
----	-------------------------------	------

#### **Abertillery Ward- Councillor M. Cook**

1.	Abertillery Cricket Club	£100
2.	Abertillery Bowls Club	£100
3.	Abertillery Bowls Club Junior Section	£100

#### **Cwmtillery Ward- Councillor J. Wilkins**

1.	Abertillery Excelsiors FC	£150
2.	Abertillery BG RFC	£150
3.	Abertillery Bowls Club	£100
4.	Abertillery Netball Club	£100
5.	Abertillery Belles FC	£150
6.	Abertillery Town Band	£50
7.	Abertillery Business & Professional Ladies Ass.	£50
8.	Wyndam Vowles Community Centre	£50
9.	Abertillery Cricket Club	£50
10.	Six Bells Bowls Club	£50

#### **BRYNMAWR**

#### **Brynmawr Ward- Councillor J. Hill**

1.	Showstoppers	£100
2.	Ebbw Vale Works Museum	£100

	3. BGFM Limited £100  <u><b>EBBW VALE</b></u> <u><b>Badminton Ward – Councillor G. Paulsen</b></u> 1. Ebbw Vale Cricket Club £150 2. Ebbw Vale Mini & Junior Rugby £100  <u><b>Rassau Ward – Councillor G.A. Davies</b></u> 1. Special Movers £200  <u><b>Cwm Ward – Councillors G. Davies &amp; D. Bevan</b></u> 1. Waunlwyd OAP Associaton £300 2. New Cwm Institute £300 3. Cwm Pigeon Club £100 4. 1 <sup>st</sup> Cwm Scout Group £200 5. Waunlwyd Youth & Community Centre £200 6. Waunlwyd OAP Luncheon Club £100 7. TK's & Community Group £300  <u><b>NANTYGLO &amp; BLAINA</b></u> <u><b>Blaina Ward – Councillors J. Mason &amp; K. Rowson</b></u> 1. Nantyglo OAP Association £200 2. Winchestown OAP Association £200 3. Wesleyan Methodist Church £200 4. Holy Trinity St. Anne's Church £200 5. BGFM Limited £200 6. Coed Cae Interact Club £200 7. Abertillery BG RFC £200  RESOLVED subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and the grants contained therein be approved.	
No. 11	<u><b>BUSINESS RATES RELIEF – RETAIL, LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY RATES RELIEF – 2020/21</b></u>	

	<p>The Executive Member Environment declared an interest in this item and, having taken legal advice from the Monitoring Officer, remained in the meeting but took no part in the decision in respect of item 11.</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Leader the Chief Officer Resources presented the report for the Executive to consider and adopt, on behalf of the Council, the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2020/21 scheme(RLHRR), as a section 47 discretionary rate relief for 2020/21.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources referred to Appendix 1 that provided the criteria and guidance for the operation and delivery of the scheme.</p> <p>She concluded that Welsh Government had yet to confirm the actual funding allocation for Blaenau Gwent, but had provided an estimate of £3.5m for delivery of the scheme. It was anticipated that 300 businesses may benefit from the scheme if adopted and that in order that assistance may be given to rate payers the Council must resolve to adopt the scheme at a discretionary rate relief scheme in line with s47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.</p> <p>The Leader noted that this scheme would be a welcome relief to a number of organisations.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader / Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development commented this topic was an area that retail businesses in Blaenau Gwent had campaigned for many years and hoped that the rates relief would continue moving forward.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive adopted the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2020/21 scheme on behalf of the Council, to supplement the Council’s discretionary rate relief scheme. (Option 2)</p>	
<b>No. 12</b>	<b><u>EXEMPT ITEM(S)</u></b>	
	<b><u>DECISIONS ITEMS – REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS</u></b>	

---

**No. 13    EBBW VALE HI TEC TEST FACILITY**

Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.

At the invitation of the Leader, the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services presented the report.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development commented that it had been agreed that this would be done in stages and then the final decision to go ahead with project would be made and noted that the Council had moved in that direction. He noted that in recent days the national government had discussions regarding redesigning of cars, etc. and that discussion fitted with this agenda. Also organisations would be supporting the Council who know the industry, and that there are some unique selling points, not least the area.

The Executive Member proposed option two and agreed that the Council should look for funding to develop the project further.

The Executive Member for Social Services sought clarification on the funds that had been committed to the project and enquired if those figures could increase.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services responded that those figures would increase and the key would be to receive CCRC support for the next stages. Funds would be required for planning applications, etc., it would also be expected that partners would contribute at least equally.

The Managing Director commented that the Council would not be able to undertake this project on its own, it would be about developing

---

---

<p>the project in partnership and the next stage would be to submit a Strategic Outline Business Case to the CCRCD, the research would provide the project with credibility and expert evidence, and receiving agreement for development funding would allow the Council to develop those partnerships to move forward. This would be a key step on how the project would be received and how much support and funding would be made available.</p>	
---	--

<p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and Option 2, namely to extend the land Option and to continue with the Soft Market Testing and submit the project to CCRCD for development funding.</p>	
--	--

---



# Agenda Item 5

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

**Committee:** **Special Executive**

Date of meeting: 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Report Subject: Funding Options - Aberbeeg Road

Portfolio Holder: Cllr J Wilkins, Executive Member Environment

Report Submitted by: Richard Crook, Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	18-06-20					08-07-20		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide options for funding repairs to Aberbeeg Road.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Outlines possible method of funding for the remedial works for Aberbeeg Road.

## 3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 Option 2: Utilise the BGCBC Capital Programme Big Arch allocation (£1,000K) - An application to Cadw for consent to undertake remedial works has been delayed and works can't progress until consent is awarded resulting in actual works on site delayed until July 2021/22 at the earliest – the funding will be reviewed / reinstated prior to Cadw approval and works on site. If WG subsequently agree the flood funding for the scheme then the £405K can then be 'repaid' to this capital allocation.

## 4. Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

- 4.1 To undertake remedial works to a damaged section of the A4046 following storm Dennis.
- 4.2 Longitudinal cracking was reported to the Authority and following an inspection by the Borough's Engineers the road was closed to vehicular traffic

on public safety grounds while a site investigation was undertaken to determine the cause of the failure.

- 4.3 The site investigation report has identified the remedial works required and also a recommendation to continue to close the northern lane of the carriage.
- 4.4 The highway is currently restricted by means of traffic lights to one lane of traffic and assigned a 7.5tons weight limit.
- 4.5 The A4046 is a strategic highway for vehicles and provide a southerly access to and from Ebbw Vale to Newport and the M4 - the restriction has resulted in a lengthy detour for vehicles over 7.5T via the A467 to Brynmawr.
- 4.6 Following a meeting with the Heads of the Valley Road contractor we were informed they probably intend to undertake a significant temporary traffic switch at Brynmawr in August, as part of their ongoing works. The current proposed traffic switch requires significant diversionary routes – including the A4046. The potential unavailability of the A4046 as a diversionary route for the proposed Heads of the Valleys works will result in additional traffic movements being displaced onto local roads and the potential for increased traffic disruption at Brynmawr.
- 4.7 A provisional programme for the proposed traffic switch works at Brynmawr – it is the weekend of 15/16<sup>th</sup> of August for an estimated duration of 12 weeks (completion mid-November). The Aberbeeg works is programmed to take 12 weeks and will initially overlap the HOV works at the initial stages of their contact.
- 4.8 Although we have a 7.5T weight restriction on the road HGV's are still using this section of the highway as a short cut to and from Ebbw Vale - If we wait for HOV to complete their works we run the risk of not only working during the winter months but increase HGV traffic that may result in further damage/slippage to Aberbeeg Road and lead to a full closure.
- 4.9 Progress/Timescale to date:
  - Storm Dennis /Structural Damage to Aberbeeg Rd – 18th Feb 2020
  - Mobilisation of Specialist Drilling Investigation Works - 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020
  - Receipt of Consultants Report – 4<sup>th</sup> March 202
  - Discussions with Site Investigation Consultant and agreed to re-open the southern lane of the road under lights but with a weight restriction of 7.5T - 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020
  - COVID – Interruptions to Investigation activities
  - location of BT Plant plotted on site W/E 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020
  - amend the design /structural calculations to suit position of BT services

- BT approval of designs in relation to their apparatus – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020
- Waiver to standing orders and appoint a Contractor direct - Waivers £75,00 to EU Threshold (CPR10.3) – 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020
- Estimate from contractor received 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020
- Approval of Funding subject to Executive decision 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020
- Commencement Work anticipated 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020
- Duration of work approx. 12 weeks

## 5. **Implications Against Each Option**

An application for 'Flood Recovery' funding for £605k [initial estimate cost of repairs including ongoing traffic management costs] have been submitted to Welsh Government but no decision on the amount of funding allocated to the Authority has been received from WG to date. Following receipt of Contractor rates the revised estimate for these works are now costed at £405K.

Options to fund the proposed works in the short terms are as follows:

Option1: Utilise the Highway Capital Programme funding (current funding provision of £737K) - reduce the amount of Highway works undertaken this financial year – no reductions necessary if awarded funding from Welsh Government.

Option 2: Utilise the BGCBC Capital Programme Big Arch allocation (£1,000K) - An application to Cadw for consent to undertake remedial works has been delayed and works can't progress until consent is awarded resulting in actual works on site delayed until July 2021/22 at the earliest – the funding will be reviewed / reinstated prior to Cadw approval and works on site. If WG subsequently agree the flood funding for the scheme then the £405K can then be 'repaid' to this capital allocation.

Option 3: To Utilise the Capital Programme Contingency Fund – When the current Capital Programme was agreed a sum of £2m was left unallocated between the period 2019/20 to 2025/26 for allocation at a later date when future priorities arise. The £405K could be funded from this in the short term. If WG subsequently agree the flood funding for the scheme then the £405K can then be 'repaid' to the capital programme.

Option 4: One off Prudential Borrowing of £405K could be undertaken to finance these works, this will require savings of approximately £25,000 over a 20-year period.

### 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

The £405K could be funded from this in the short term. If WG subsequently agree the flood funding for the scheme then the £405K can then be 'repaid' to the capital programme.

### 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

- 1) Will substantially reduce the funding available for highway resurfacing works this financial year unless we secure WG funding for Flood Recovery
- 2) The remedial works to the Big Arch has been delayed with works not expected to start until July 2021- no immediate impact this year but will have to be review prior to our application to Cadw to ensure we have sufficient funding to undertake the works next year. If funding isn't allocated in relation to the flood recovery then there would be a risk of insufficient funding available going forward to complete the Big Arch project (the Authority is contractually obliged to complete this project under terms and conditions associated with grant funding made available to the Authority on The Works project) and to avoid an enforcement notice from Cadw relating to the temporary structure under the arch.
- 3) Should the WG flood funding not materialise there will be £405k less funding available for allocation in the capital programme at a later date, this could result in other priority schemes being unable to go ahead.
- 4) There isn't a sufficient revenue budget available to fund the savings required.

Preferred option (2) – Utilise the BGCBC Capital Programme Big Arch allocation (£1,000K).

### 5.3 ***Legal***

#### **Call-in Urgency**

The call-in procedure set out in the Constitution under Clause 7.25.2 Call-in Urgency shall not apply where the decision being taken by the Executive is urgent. A decision will be urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would, for example, seriously prejudice the Council's or other public interests.

The need to undertake repairs to Aberbeeg Road at the earliest time is in order to mitigate the impact associated with the diversion route planned for closure works on the Section 2 A465 at Brynmawr, commencing later this summer, and prevent the Heavy Goods Vehicles illegally using the Aberbeeg Road.

(7.5T weight limit imposed following a site investigation)

The works to be issued via a Waiver to Standing Orders - £75k to EU Threshold (CPR10.3)

#### 5.4 ***Human Resources***

No staffing issues - All works to be undertake by the Infrastructure Section of the Environment.

### 6. **Supporting Evidence**

#### 6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Re-open the A4046 at Aberbeeg Road to all vehicles

#### 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Re-open the A4046 at Aberbeeg Road to all vehicles

#### 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Members / Public to be informed of the works

#### 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

To maintain a strategic highway for vehicles and provide a southerly access to and from Ebbw Vale to Newport and the M4.

#### 6.5 ***Preventative focus***

NA

#### 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

NA

#### 6.7 ***Integration(across service areas)***

NA

#### 6.8 ***EqlA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

NA

**7. Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 *State how the work will be monitored e.g. through scrutiny or directorate performance management arrangements*

Re-opening of a strategic highway for vehicles and provide a southerly access to and from Ebbw Vale to Newport and the M4.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

-

# Agenda Item 6

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 6.7.20

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 6.7.20

Committee: **Special Executive**

Date of Meeting: **8<sup>th</sup> July, 2020**

Report Subject: **Water Supply Quality in Schools**

Portfolio Holder: **Executive Member for Environment and Executive Member for Education**

Report Submitted by: **Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration and Interim Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	7/7/2020					8/7/2020		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Executive on the current position of the water supply quality issues in schools following the announcement by the Welsh Government (WG) that schools would reopen on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

## 2. Scope and Background

### 2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 Importantly, the safety of our children and staff is the priority and is of paramount importance in dealing with the school water supply issues across the school estate. It should be recognised that the majority of the school water quality test results have indicated low levels of localised contamination, which have been managed effectively to facilitate the large proportion of schools to reopen as planned.
- 2.1.2 In accordance with national guidance in respect of COVID-19 schools were closed from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March. Some schools within the Council remained open as childcare hubs for key workers and vulnerable learners. Following the WG announcement on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 that schools were to reopen on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020, the risks to our water supplies from the unprecedented period of shutdown, coupled with low water usage within the school estate was identified and a water hygiene testing regime was immediately introduced, following the Ministers announcement on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, to check the water quality within the schools' supplies, prior to allowing the schools to reopen.
- 2.1.3 Normally schools are only closed for a period of five to six weeks through the summer holiday period, and therefore, a routine flushing of the system

on a weekly basis is carried out to maintain the safe quality of the water. The period of shutdown has been fourteen weeks since the schools reopened on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June. This is an unprecedented period for schools to be either closed or not in normal use, and effect on water systems in the schools over that period is unknown and can only be assessed through a robust water testing programme prior to schools returning to their normal function.

- 2.1.4 Bearing in mind that WG announced on 3rd June that Councils had effectively three weeks to prepare for schools to reopen, should any schools water systems present significant levels of Total Viable Count (TVC) and/or Legionella contamination, it should be recognised that the timescale to safely reopen has been extremely challenging.
- 2.1.5 TVC analysis looks at the overall number of micro-organisms including mould, yeast and bacteria present in the water that is able to grow. Potable water whilst not sterile should not contain harmful bacteria. As well as picking up legionella, water sampling will also detect faecal indicator bacteria such as coliforms and e-coli, which would render water as unsafe to drink.

## 2.2 Sampling and Testing

- 2.2.1 The Council has taken a very pro-active and responsible approach to school reopening from a Health and Safety perspective, including water testing. Further to the Welsh Government Minister for Education's announcement on the Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June that schools were to reopen on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June, the Council's resources were mobilised immediately. A plan was established and contractors commenced sampling/testing on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June. A programme of sampling/ testing was agreed with the Council's water hygiene contractor to visit all the school sites as soon as possible. The final school samples were collected on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June.
- 2.2.2 The testing process involves a five days' test for TVC bacteria e.g. e-coli and other coliforms bacteria, and a twelve days' test running in parallel for Legionella bacteria. If the test results record bacteria above safe limits, then remedial action must follow, either flushing, disinfecting, pasteurising or chlorinating outlets or the complete water system. The system then has to be retested, which can take a further five days for TVC bacteria and twelve days for Legionella bacteria. Therefore, it can be clearly seen that when bacteria contamination is above safe limits it could potentially take up to a period of twenty-six days to conclude the sampling/testing process in a school, in order to allow a contaminated school to safely re-open. During that period a school would also have to remain closed for potentially twelve days until the all clear test result had been received.
- 2.2.3 The period of three weeks to prepare for schools to reopen after a prolonged period of shutdown is clearly very challenging in managing the full water sampling and testing regime to be satisfactory concluded, in order to



facilitate the schools to open safely and minimise the risks to the staff and children.

## 2.4 Position Statement - Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020

2.4.1 Of the twenty nine school sites sampled/tested, the large majority of sites identified varying elevated levels of TVC bacteria contamination, ranging from localised contamination to full system contamination. Localised contamination e.g. a tap outlet can be dealt with by flushing, disinfecting and pasteurising, and a full system contamination requires chlorination. The following six schools had been identified with full system TVC contamination.

- Six Bells Primary Campus; Chlorinated Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June
- St Illtyd's Primary; Chlorinated Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June
- Bryn Bach Primary; Chlorinated Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June
- St Mary's Church in Wales Primary; Chlorinated Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June
- Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary; Chlorinated Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June and,
- Ebbw Fawr Secondary. Chlorinated Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June

2.4.2 All these schools required chlorination of their water systems and the schools water would, therefore, be unavailable for drinking and hand washing post chlorination, until the all clear retest results were available. In order to mitigate the situation, twenty six portable hand washing units were purchased and bottled water was made available for drinking purposes. This pro-active action has allowed the schools to reopen as planned on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June.

2.4.3 On Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June notification was provided that the test results for the following schools were positive for Legionella contamination.

- Blaen-y-Cwm Primary; Chlorinated Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June
- Ystruth Primary: Chlorinated Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June and
- Brynmawr Foundation. Chlorinated Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July

2.4.4 The decision to close these schools was discussed and agreed with the headteachers on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June. These schools required a full system chlorination, and following a retest would not be able to open for a further twelve days until an all clear legionella test result had been received.

2.4.5 In recent discussions with the headteacher of Brynmawr Foundation School, mitigation measures have been agreed to relocate portable hand washing units, provide bottled drinking water and provide temporary toilet facilities at the school, which will allow the school to reopen during week commencing Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July.

2.4.6 On Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June, the Tredegar Comprehensive school received an elevated TVC bacteria level above safe limits, and required full system chlorination. Discussions took place with the headteacher and it was agreed

that the school would not open on 29<sup>th</sup> June as planned. The chlorination of the full water system took place on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June.

- 2.4.7 Importantly, the mitigation measures including, relocating portable hand washing units and bottled drinking water allowed the school to be reopened on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June.
- 2.4.8 Moreover, the test result was outstanding for Willowtown school and it was agreed with the headteacher on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June that in order to safeguard staff and children the school would not open on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June as planned.
- 2.4.9 We have now received confirmation of full system TVC contamination for Willowtown Primary School. This coupled with the fact that the legionella test results were anticipated towards the end of last week, has resulted in the requirement for the school to remain partly closed. The Legionella test result was received on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> July confirming contamination of the system. However, in agreement with the headteacher the Council have been able to relocate the key worker childcare provision to Ebbw Vale Sports Centre from Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June, which has been agreed to be a suitable and safe facility by Health & Safety. Furthermore, it has been agreed that the school will continue to function using the Ebbw Fawr Primary school for two days a week, from week commencing Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July. Necessary provisions have been made to assist the relocation, such as cleaning and transportation. The chlorination of the full system took place on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June.
- 2.4.10 The re-test TVC results for both Six Bells Primary Campus and Bryn Bach Primary School were received on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June, resulting in the water supply in both schools being reinstated for use. As such, the mitigation methods i.e. six handwashing units were relocated to Tredegar Comprehensive School to enable them to reopen from Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June.
- 2.4.11 On Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June notification was provided that the initial test results for River Centre (Pontygof) were positive for legionella.
- 2.4.12 It was agreed with the headteacher that the school provision would be relocated to the River Centre's Thomas Richards Centre. The full system chlorination was undertaken on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July.
- 2.4.13 On Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July notification was provided that the initial test results for the following two schools were positive for legionella
- Tredegar Comprehensive
  - Sofrydd Primary
- 2.4.14 Discussions have taken place between Education, Property, Health and Safety and Environmental Health officers and jointly agreed with the headteacher that Tredegar Comprehensive school can remain open as the health and safety mitigation measures are already in place, and the

remedial system chlorination had already been carried out on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June.

- 2.4.15 For Sofrydd Primary school, the level of Legionella contamination is very low, localised to one shower head and one blended outlet. These outlets will be isolated, and the system chlorinated at the earliest opportunity. The water is safe to use, however, as an added reassurance precaution we will relocate a hand wash unit to the school, and provide bottled drinking water.
- 2.4.16 One additional hand washing unit has been transferred from Bryn Bach Primary to Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary to supplement the three units the school already had in place. The school reopened on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June as planned.
- 2.4.17 One hand washing unit has also been provided to Glyncoed Primary school to mitigate the effect of localised contamination in the toilet area.
- 2.4.18 The provision of the portable hand washing units has been a key factor in allowing schools to reopen as they can be reallocated to the other schools as they become available.
- 2.4.19 Importantly, WG has been informed of the current situation across the school estate within Blaenau Gwent. As a consequence, Welsh Government has requested confirmation of satisfactory health and safety checks including water supply testing, from Corporate Directors of Education throughout Wales.
- 2.4.20 The other school test results show localised contamination and these have been dealt with, allowing the schools to open as originally planned. Health and Safety officers and Environmental Health officers are satisfied with the temporary arrangements currently being implemented within the affected schools.
- 2.4.21 The initial legionella test results have now been received for all school sites. Of the twenty nine school sites, seven sites have tested positive for legionella.

### **3. Options for Recommendation**

#### **3.1 Options**

- 3.1.1 There are two options available to dealing with the water contamination situation faced within our schools.
- 3.1.2 Option 1 – Close all the affected schools.
- 3.1.3 Option 2 – Manage the contamination risks, implement mitigating measures, control the risks within health and safety regulations and guidelines.

- 3.1.4 Option 1 is not a viable option due to the impact on the education of the children, and the necessity to ensure that contact was made to as many children as possible prior to the summer holiday period.
- 3.1.5 Option 2 was the agreed option to follow, and the pro-active risk management plan was put in place to maintain as many schools open as possible. The plan was flexible, in that it allowed individual schools test results to be analysed from a risk basis, and mitigating measures introduced to allow the schools to open. As a consequence, only three schools have remained closed, which is a significant achievement.
- 3.1.6 The course of action followed in Option 2, to manage and control the bacteria contamination in our water systems is the only mitigation option which will allow all of the affected schools to reopen before the summer recess holiday. This outcome will be delivered across the school estate
- 3.1.7 Clearly, the Council has generated positive outcomes in delivering the level of school provision in such unprecedented circumstances. However, there are lessons to be learned at a corporate and school level, therefore, a lessons learnt review will be conducted and the outcome will be reported to the Executive and the appropriate Scrutiny Committees in due course.

#### **4. Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

##### **4.1 Evidence**

- 4.1.1 The actions to keep our schools open aligns with the Corporate Plan to maintain education objectives, and meet the authority's statutory responsibilities and wellbeing goals.

#### **5. Implications**

##### **5.1 Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**

- 5.1.1 The impact on the budget is that additional costs will be incurred in respect of the temporary measures necessary to manage and control the risk, and allow our schools to reopen, in accordance with WG guidelines. The costs associated with the mitigation and management of the water testing programme are estimated to be within the region of £40,000. We will seek to reclaim these costs as additionality from WG or will be identified as a Covid cost pressure.

#### **6.0 Risk including Mitigating Actions**

##### **6.1 Causes of Elevated Bacteria Contamination Levels**

- 6.1.1 The recognised method of controlling risks and levels of bacteria in the water systems is by flushing the systems. The Council established an

Essential and Statutory Maintenance guidance and regime for the schools and all schools confirmed that arrangements would be put in place to deal with the shutdown period. Water turnover via flushing is undertaken by the schools' caretakers on a weekly basis, by working through the building and opening taps, shower heads, toilets, etc., to flush out the bacteria in the pipes. An enhanced flushing routine has been carried out through the school shutdown period. The probability is that the schools have now been shut down or in such low usage for an unprecedented fourteen weeks period, and that even the enhanced flushing routine carried out in some schools has not been sufficient to maintain the bacteria levels in the water supplies within safe limits. The level of bacteria in a water system, is significantly affected by the time period that it remained unused within the system, and although during the normal school summer holiday period of five weeks, no problems have generally been encountered, the unprecedented period of the current COVID shutdown of fourteen weeks has allowed the bacteria in the system to propagate and proliferate to unsafe levels. It needs to be recognised that the water samples from all sites have indicated that the water system contains no faecal contamination by coliforms or e-coli which would render the water system unsafe for use.

## 6.2 Management and Control of Bacteria Risks

6.2.1 Throughout the COVID-19 shutdown period, the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) L8 and Health & Safety Executive (HSE) specific advice has been provided and followed with regard to hot and cold water systems, whereby it is advised that weekly flushing of the system is undertaken. This advice has been followed. It should also be recognised that contractors have been working within the restrictions of COVID-19 guidelines during this period, resulting in increased demand, timelines and decreased availability of resources. The decisions taken in managing the bacteria contamination risk to health can only be based on the test results as they are received.

- Where the test results have confirmed localised elevated TVC bacterial contamination the affected outlets have been flushed, disinfected, and pasteurised, and then retested. These outlets have been isolated from use until the retest results are known. The remaining water supply outlets can be used for hand-washing and drinking purposes.
- Where the test results have shown complete system TVC bacteria contamination, the schools have been prevented from using water supplies for hand washing and drinking purposes, and the system chlorinated and retested. The school water supply cannot be used until the retest results are known. All the children using those schools were relocated to other local schools/school hubs in the area.
- Where the test results have confirmed high legionella contamination the schools have been closed, or relocated to other school facilities and the systems chlorinated. The school water supply cannot be

used until the retest shows the water is clear of the legionella bacteria.

- 6.2.2 All schools with test results in health risk category (i) have undertaken remedial works, flushing, disinfecting and pasteurising in localised outlets, and retested. When the test results are known to be clear of TVC bacteria, then the outlets can be used by the school.
- 6.2.3 All schools with test results in health risk category (ii) have been chlorinated, and retested. Portable hand washing units have been installed and bottled water have been available, until the test results are known to be clear of TVC bacteria, following which the school water supply can be used.
- 6.2.4 All schools with test results in health risk category (iii) have been closed, risk managed or relocated to other suitable school facilities, the system chlorinated and retested. These schools water supplies will not be used until the test results are known to be clear of the Legionella bacteria.
- 6.2.5 The four schools identified below with elevated positive Legionella results had localised contamination on TVC results and initially identified in health risk category (i), and therefore, remained occupied until the Legionella test results became known and they were then elevated into health risk category (iii) and the water systems were then immediately shut down to all staff and children. The systems have been subsequently chlorinated.
- Blaen-y-Cwm Primary
  - Ystruth Primary
  - Brynmawr Foundation
  - River Centre (Pont-y-Gof)
- 6.2.6 The two other school identified below with positive Legionella test results have not been closed due to chlorination already having been carried out, or low levels of contamination in localised outlets that can be appropriately managed.
- Tredegar Comprehensive
  - Sofrydd Primary
- 6.2.7 The reasons why these two schools were able to remain open, is due to the chlorination at Tredegar Comprehensive school undertaken due to the high TVC results, and the mitigation measures already in place, when the Legionella positive results were received on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July. In the case of Sofrydd, there was very low Legionella contamination, which could be isolated, and the remaining water system was clear of contamination. There is clear differentiation between the schools that are remaining open and those that remain closed, due to the higher level of contamination identified in the latter.
- 6.2.8 Willowtown Primary school has tested positive for Legionella contamination, and the school has effectively been relocated to alternative school facilities.

- 6.2.9 As the test results evidence has become available, the health risks to the children and staff have been evaluated and decisions as to whether a school can remain open, or must close, is made on an individual school by school basis.
- 6.2.10 The health risk for users attending the school repurposing hub sites affected throughout the course of the last few months, are minimal. Staff have been briefed accordingly by Council officers as to the symptoms and procedure to follow should any issues arise. The extract below explains the level of risk involved with the disease and the demographics in our schools reduces an already low risk to even lower. Also, the fact that our vulnerable staff and children are shielding as a result of COVID-19, and will not be attending the schools, lowers the risk even further.
- 6.2.11 *Legionella Facts and FAQ 6 – The illness occurs more frequently in men than women at a ratio of around 3:1. It is thought that this may be a result of typical occupations, lifestyles and possibly lungs size. However, it usually affects middle-aged or elderly people and individuals with suppressed immune systems. Legionnaires’ disease is very uncommon under the age of 20 and whilst children can catch the disease it is very rare.*

### 6.3 Mitigation Plans to Facilitate School Re-opening

- 6.3.1 Meetings have been attended by H&S officers, EH officers, Technical officers, Education officers, and the headteachers from the aforementioned affected schools, to discuss the matter and to explain the reasons why it has been necessary to advise their schools should close, relocate or provide temporary hand washing facilities at some of their schools. This is in order to meet the COVID-19 guidance requirements regarding handwashing and comply with the risk assessments prepared by the schools and Council officers for managing the risks to allow the schools to re-open.
- 6.3.2 Discussions had also taken place between Education, H&S and Technical officers to develop alternative temporary arrangements to allow the majority of the schools to be open on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June, as planned. These temporary arrangements involve the purchase of portable handwashing units, to be sited in agreed locations within the schools. The alternative would be to close the affected schools, until the water systems had been chlorinated and retested.
- 6.3.3 H&S officers are satisfied with the temporary alternative arrangements, and the EH officer has also confirmed that he also has no concerns with the temporary arrangements.
- 6.3.4 The school Risk Assessments (RAs) have been amended to include the temporary arrangements; however, these were relatively minor changes, as the RAs were already based on regular hand washing routines.

## 6.4 Legal

- 6.4.1 The legal health and safety responsibilities arising from our obligations to meet the statutory requirements associated with water hygiene are far reaching. The testing and mitigation measures that are in place are in compliance with the Health and Safety Executive Approved Code of Practice (L8) and HSE Guide 274.

## 6.5 Human Resources

- 6.5.1 The Council's corporate response team have worked extensively to deliver a positive outcome in challenging circumstances. Corporate and Education's school based staff have been engaged regarding the water quality and have been informed of the necessary changes to the RAs to mitigate the low risks and to ensure that the both the health and safety requirements in the use of uncontaminated water and the COVID guidelines are met for the period that schools are open prior to the summer holiday. For example, cleaners require clean safe water to undertake their cleaning duties and their hands need to be constantly washed to meet the COVID guidelines.

## 7.0 **Supporting Evidence**

### 7.1 Test results

- 7.1.1 A pro-active and robust sampling and testing regime has been undertaken on all our school buildings over the past month. Varied levels of TVC and Legionella contamination have been found in our water systems. The contamination present has been managed and controlled in accordance with the regulations to ensure that the health and safety risks to staff and children using the buildings is maintained within safe limits.

### 7.2 Expected outcome for the public

- 7.2.1 Managing public messages and concerns children are safe when attending school has been a priority. Corporate Communications have worked with the response team to deliver key messages through the schools and via corporate mechanisms e.g. web-site etc.
- 7.2.2 Reassurance have been provided directly to staff in the affected schools via headteachers and managers that the risk from the water bacteria contamination is low. Although there have been no reported cases of any symptoms, as a precaution staff have been informed of the symptoms and to either visit their doctor, or the can discuss with the Environmental Health officer.

### 7.3 Communication (consultation, engagement, participation)

- 7.3.1 The Council's officers have maintained close communication links with headteachers in the affected schools, in order to ensure that they are briefed



of the risks involved, and can agree the way forward to mitigate the impact of the risks on the schools re-opening. Essential and Statutory Maintenance Guidance regarding flushing requirements was circulated in early May to all schools and also discussed at the Repurposing Planning Group meetings throughout April and May. Confirmation was sought from headteachers regarding compliance with these arrangements, including flushing regimes, for which all schools confirmed compliancy.

7.3.2 As soon as the test results for individual schools have become available the headteachers have been informed, and the actions described in previous sections put into operation. There have also been twice weekly meetings were held with the School Repurposing Planning Groups to discuss the health and safety requirements for their schools. Schools have been fully engaged with regards to the implications and planning for their respective settings throughout this process, and have agreed all temporary arrangements necessary to reopen their school. Meetings have also taken place with between officers and headteachers of the affected schools. There has also been a dedicated Education JCC meeting convened with all Trade Unions on the reopening plans associated with the water testing process.

7.3.3 Regular communications messages have been sent out via various media channels to the affected schools, to inform parents of the position regarding their schools and the alternative provisions that are in place.

#### 7.4 Preventative focus

7.4.1 Water quality assurance systems and procedures will need to be reviewed as a result of the extent of contamination that has propagated and proliferated through our building water systems over the period of the fourteen weeks shutdown.

7.4.2 However, it also needs to be recognised that this period has been unprecedented and a pragmatic response is required.

7.4.3 The important fact is that no known cases or any person has been directly affected by the level of contamination in our water systems. Although some schools have been used for the period of shutdown as childcare hubs, it is reassuring that the level of risk to staff and children in the affected schools was extremely low.

7.4.4 Officers are making substantial efforts to open and keep open our schools, complying with the COVID-19 guidelines, whilst managing the low risks and water test results in a sensible and pragmatic way, using the extensive knowledge and experience of Technical officers, H&S officers, Environmental Health officers, and Education officers, in the field of water quality hygiene, particularly Legionella management.

7.5     Integration (across service areas)

- 7.5.1    The team involved with the management of this water contamination situation includes officers from Education, Property Services, Health and Safety and Environmental Health Departments in the Council and this is an outstanding example of cross departmental working, utilising the skills, knowledge and experience of the officers to ensure that the level of risk was effectively managed and that the large majority of schools were allowed to open.

7.6     Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.6.1    Statutory procedures are already in place to monitor and control the quality of our water systems, however, they will be reviewed on the basis of risk and the effects that long periods of shutdown of buildings can have on the quality of the water.
- 7.6.2    However, it does need to be recognised that the normal longest period of our schools is for five/six weeks in the summer, and no issues of contamination have been experienced over the very many years that schools are closed during the summer.