

Emergency Response

Audit Committee Briefing July 2020



Sir y **F**flint a chi yn ymladd **C**oronafeirws **C**COVID-19 *fel un*
*Together we are F*ighting **C**oronavirus **C**COVID-19

Helpu pobl #Arosadref #Achubbywydau #FCC
Helping people #Stayhome #Savelives #FCC

National Chronology

- Covid-19 became recognised and established as an international pandemic throughout January and February
- UK and Welsh Governments began to contingency plan in early March
- Welsh Civil Contingencies command arrangements - from national to regional level - were set-up under national direction from COBRA
- The North Wales Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) (which is also called the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) first met w/c 09.03

Local Chronology

Cabinet made the first official Council statement on 17.03.20

“This is a fast-developing and changing national and international situation. Be assured that we have full business continuity planning in place across our services in readiness.

The regional planning and response for North Wales is led by the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG), a group made up of senior professionals from health, emergency and public service partners. We are a very active member of SCG through the Chief Executive and other lead officers.

Although we (as the Council) play a very important role, we are not the lead in the public eye and must work to national and regional advice and direction.

The situation will develop quickly and we will make decisions on prioritising our resources for the most critical services as necessary.

We appeal for all to help us maintain a sense of calm, to show personal responsibility in following national advice, and to contribute to community and family actions to support the most vulnerable wherever you can.” (Extracts taken from the full statement)

Local Chronology

- Internal Emergency Management Response Team (EMRT) led by Chief Executive set-up and meeting twice-weekly from 17.03. Reverted to weekly meetings in June and is meeting through to the end of July
- Business Continuity Plans were invoked for all corporate services and service portfolios
- Service closure or restricted access decisions were made based on Government guidelines, national trends and public behaviour
- Critical services were maintained - classed as those which protect life, protect the vulnerable, ensure public safety, and/or keep the transport infrastructure open and help workers to do their job
- Key workers were supported to provide these services
- Remote and home working was maximised

Command Structure - Hierarchy

Emergency Management Response Team (EMRT) - Gold

- Directing strategy and making principal decisions
- Co-ordination of tactical groups and any inter-dependent activities
- Risk evaluation and management
- Escalation to regional and national decision-makers as required

Tactical Groups and Leads - Silver

- Direct strategy and decision-making in areas of specialism/delegation
- Risk evaluation and management
- Escalation of decisions/risks to EMRT as required

Operational Groups and Leads - Bronze

- Implement strategy and make operational decisions within delegations

Command Structure – People and Groups

Emergency Management Response Team (EMRT) - Gold

- Chief Executive (Gold Command), Chief Officers and all silver leads
- Executive, Emergency Management Team and Communications Team support with a recorder (called a *Loggist*)

Tactical Groups and Leads (x 11) - Silver

- Personal Protective Equipment (Vanessa Johnson), Health and Social Care (Jane Davies), School Childcare and Free School Meals (Claire Homard), Poverty (Jen Griffiths), Homelessness (Neal Cockerton) Support for Local Business (Dave Barnes and Niall Waller as joint leads), Enforcement (Andy Farrow), Finance (Gary Ferguson), Workforce (Sharon Carney), Governance and Legal (Gareth Owens) and Communications (Claire Homard)

Operational Groups and Leads - Bronze

- Various groups and lead bronzes

**all meetings are fully logged for an audit trail of decision-making and risk management*

Decision-Making and Risk Management

- All key decisions risk-assessed and logged with their rationales recorded
- Some key decisions made under emergency delegations by EMRT or senior command officers, all key decisions involved at least informal consultation with senior members e.g. Leader and Cabinet Members, and the most significant decisions were made under formal delegations with the Cabinet Member being a joint signatory (specifically major financial decisions)
- Democratic governance is being restored in stages
- Internal Audit have been central in advising on the control environment
- Recovery business plans and risk registers have been produced for the corporate organisation and all five service portfolios

Financial Risk Management

- A detailed tracker of all revenue and capital risks is updated weekly
- A cash-flow tracker – to ensure that the Council is in good liquidity – is updated weekly
- All financial decisions are managed within the command hierarchy
- Financial risks are being mitigated through (1) controls of non-essential expenditure (2) use of *Furlough* scheme for trading services and (3) access to special national funds and grants in full
- Emergency support has been given to some ADMs/CATs on request
- An emergency holding fund has been set-up from reserves (£3.0m)
- We work closely with WLGA and WG on financial risk profiling, and in lobbying for and accessing national emergency financial support

Recovery Planning

- A cross-group Member Recovery Board has been in operation for two months (advisory to the Cabinet with all Group Leaders as members)
- The recovery business plans, risk registers and mitigation action plans, and financial tracker documents are reported to the Board. These are reviewed and updated at either weekly or two-weekly intervals
- A full organisational and community strategy will have been compiled by September (with a joint PSB with Wrexham for community recovery)
- The full democratic governance arrangements will then be resumed
- Audit Wales is reviewing our operating model and communications strategy for the response phase, and our recovery strategy, for assurance and good practice sharing

Reflections

- Our emergency response has been swift and effective
- Our operating model has been well-drilled, resilient and inclusive
- Our response actions are fully logged for an audit trail
- As reported by Internal Audit the internal control environment has been well managed through a disruptive and challenging period
- The Council and our partners have achieved incredible things!