

A message from the Chief Executive – 12th June

Dear colleague,

“It is important to remember that we cannot become what we need to be, by remaining what we are.”

Max De Pree AUTHOR, FORMER CEO OF HERMAN MILLER, INC.

This quotation really captures where my mind is focussed at the moment. Our initial Covid response has been very fast, very effective and just amazing. Over the last 12 weeks we have taken command of our own destiny, taken advantage of our own talents and abilities whilst “selfishly” focussing on our people and place. We have shut down and shut out many long meetings, and we have instead replaced them with evidence, analysis and a need for action.

Our purpose throughout, has been to do whatever it takes to protect our people and place. There have been no reported deaths in our county borough for a number of days now, so progress is slowly being made.

This week we have committed to taking over the food parcel scheme for shielded people from Welsh Government, undertaking preparation work to enable the safe operation of our town centres, and launching a new wide spread outreach offer for our library users. All our schools are putting in place arrangements that will enable children to return to their schools in a couple of week’s time, in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. Throughout it all, we have achieved these fantastic results with a focus on outcome, not hierarchical boundaries and the term “it’s not my job” has certainly not been in our thinking or vocabulary.

We now move into our next stage. All of the above needs to continue as we build a better picture of the next three months and beyond. Social distancing will remain with us, distance restrictions on travel are unlikely to be relaxed, non-essential retail is likely to re-open and there are no immediate signs of a vaccine. We have to avoid that R number edging back towards 1, but we have to live and we have to get ourselves ready for a new environment.

Unfortunately it seems many residents across the county borough may lose their job, along with their income and stability. Many more will be fearful and anxious of returning to public spaces. It’s likely that many will have mental health consequences, lost physical fitness, missed scheduled medical procedures, be claiming benefits for the first time in their lives and will be worrying about how they meet their mortgage/rent payments, whilst feeding their families. At the same time there will be others that have actually saved money, reduced their outgoings and taken advantage of the opportunities afforded by these strange times. We have seen hundreds of volunteers mobilised and lots of neighbourly actions take place

and throughout, new friendships will have been formed. The social web and inter-connectivity of our people has become even more complex and it is this space that we are now drawn towards. New challenges face us, new asks are made to us and many will need us to flex our approach to make the impact we need to make.

So as a Corporate Management Team and at Cabinet level we are starting to think about all this stuff. In addition, over recent weeks I have been focussing on this with the Leadership Team. What is very clear, is that the Team Caerphilly operating model already agreed by Cabinet and emerging is still relevant, in fact, it is more relevant than ever. Over the next few weeks I will be sharing with you how this model will be accelerated and embedded to help us be flexible in our approach to enable us to do whatever is needed to support our people who have gone through a really tough time.

So watch this space!

Just a few other areas I wish to focus on –

Over recent weeks we have all seen the “Black Lives Matter” movement across all the various media channels and I’m sure, like me, it has made you reflect upon our own actions and beliefs. From an organisational perspective, it is quite simple - we embrace, encourage and actively promote the wonderful, colourful rainbow of diversity we have within our organisation and across our communities. Our suite of Equalities policies we have in place, underpin and support our values and actions. We are also focussed upon improving wherever we can, and with regular dialogue between staff and our Trade union colleagues, we aim to constantly review and improve what we do.

As a Council that is committed to equality in action, and in response to recent events, we affirm that black lives matter and pledge to work to ensure that we act in that spirit as an employer, as leaders in our communities and as a public service provider, to demonstrate that commitment.

If people wish to challenge the inequalities in our society and be heard in a safe way during this pandemic, the Race Council Cymru in Partnership with Wales TUC and BAWSO will be hosting an online protest on Saturday 13th June from 1pm – 3pm.

This week is also National Carers week – what can I say? Under normal circumstances these individuals are so special. Over recent months they have been exceptional! Please take a look at the following video where the Carer support team will give you an insight into their world.

<https://youtu.be/OTkhsHDIUic>

Thanks to those of you who have completed the Agile working survey. The findings will now be considered in detail and will help shape our future working model, which I will share with you shortly.

Finally, as we approach the middle of the calendar year, I wanted to remind you all once again, about the importance of taking regular breaks and using your annual leave allocation. I know these are tough times but regular breaks really do help manage your own health and general well-being. I have explained previously how this needs to be managed across the organisation in a timely and methodical way, so please prioritise this, as I will only authorise the carry-over of 5 days into next year, unless there are extenuating circumstances, or the nature of the pandemic changes. Please "use it" or you really will "lose it"!

Have a good weekend and take care.

Christina

Christina Harrhy

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