

## A message from the Chief Executive – 19<sup>th</sup> June

Dear Colleague,

I thought I would begin my briefing today with a few staggering facts and figures.

The tallest building in the world is the Burj Kalifa in Dubai, standing at over 828m high! The circumference around the world is 24,901 miles.

What has this got to do with us I hear you ask? Well, the 8.5million sheets of paper we used last year towers some 100m over the highest building in the world and we collectively travelled the equivalent of 341 times around the world last year at a cost of over £1.3million.



So we may badge ourselves as a “Green” council, but I certainly don’t think we are quite there yet. There’s much for us to do, and the experiences over the last 3 months has shown us that we can operate differently, more effectively and efficiently. Thanks so much to taking the time to complete the Agile Working survey. The overwhelming message is that it works for many of you, you are more effective, able to manage your work/home life better and your wellbeing is much improved. There are some concerns though, around how it can be effectively managed and not abused, how we maintain our collective team working and, if not balanced correctly, working in an agile way could have a detrimental impact upon your wellbeing, if you don’t socialise with work colleagues regularly.

These are not insurmountable and can be managed. Working in an agile way, allows us to be more flexible. Work is something we do not where we go. We can balance our need and desire for social interaction without turning up at a building each and every day.

I’m sure you will agree, these announcements are most welcome, but we must still remain vigilant, as this is all dependent upon that R infection rate number remaining below 1.

So what do I do with this information? Well, there are a number of key reports that are currently being drafted that will make their way into Cabinet over the next month or so, that seek to embed all the great new things we have done over recent months that we want to

keep. This includes, a further report on the Team Caerphilly transformation plan, a Place Shaping plan and Agile Working. I will share these with you as soon as they are ready.

The first virtual Planning Committee took place this week and it went pretty well. A few minor issues to work through but no major glitches. This didn't happen by accident! The democratic services team have done a fantastic job in getting the Members ready for this meeting. They have been so patient with Members as I know there have been many challenges along the way. This meeting firmly sets out a path for a new way of democratic decision making for us and local government as a whole. The first virtual Cabinet meeting is scheduled for next Wednesday and there are a few key reports that will be considered. The first is a report written by myself which captures all your efforts over recent months. It's a long report but it just scratches the surface of the breadth and depth of our response to Covid19. Please do view the meeting as I know the Leader has a few things she will want to say, but in the meantime, grab yourself a cuppa and take a look at the report!

<https://democracy.caerphilly.gov.uk/documents/s32385/The%20Council%20Response%20to%20the%20Coronavirus%20Pandemic.pdf?LLL=0>

The number of new cases across Wales and across the region continue to reduce. The First Minister made his much anticipated announcement today, which has seen a continuation of the cautious approach being taken by Welsh Government easing us out of lock-down.

From Monday 22nd June: -

- There will be changes to the regulations to enable non-essential retail businesses to re-open where they can take all reasonable measures to comply with the physical distancing duty, which will help to protect both employees and customers from coronavirus.
- A gradual reopening of childcare facilities, operating under new guidelines developed with the sector. Children should attend just one setting wherever possible. If a child attends more than one setting, such as school and childcare, they should remain in the same, small consistent group across both.
- Ease restrictions on outdoor sports courts but not for contact or team sports. Social distancing should be maintained at all times.
- Amendments will also be made to the regulations to enable non-professional elite athletes, such as our Olympic and Paralympic hopefuls, to return to training.
- Start to reopen housing market by making changes to allow viewings to take place in vacant properties and house moves where a sale has been agreed, but not yet completed. Continue to work with the sector to consider the next steps for future review cycles.

- Amendments to allow for private prayer in places of worship where social distancing is maintained and gatherings do not take place.
- On Monday 29 June, pupils will return to school, under the plans previously announced by the Education Minister, to check in, catch up and prepare for summer and September.
- There will be a further review of the requirement to stay local in two weeks' time. Local communities, local authorities and outdoor visitor attractions should use this period to prepare for reopening. Final decisions will be based on the latest scientific and medical evidence and advice available at that time.
- But, travel outside a person's local area will be permitted on compassionate grounds, for example to visit a loved one who needs help or at a youth offender institution when visits are allowed.

The specific areas for consideration in the next review are:

- Preparations for reopening the visitor economy, including accommodation without shared facilities where social distancing is possible.
- Preparations for restarting personal care services by appointment, including hairdressing.

I'm sure you will agree, these announcements are most welcome, but we must still remain vigilant, as this is all dependent upon that R infection rate number remaining below 1.

Still lots going on this week -

Our plans to install some temporary measures in our town centres to ensure social distancing requirements are met - we were hoping would be in place before the shops open but I anticipate these will be put in place over the next week or so. As part of our economic recovery plan, we have temporarily suspended our car parking charges in the town centres, to encourage people back into our town centres. This has been warmly welcomed by both the traders and residents.

School and LEA staff continue to be really busy preparing for a return to school on the 29th June. Antibody testing of our school staff has begun in readiness. Ed and I visited Blackwood primary school earlier this week, to see first-hand how the childcare hubs have operated and how this model will be used as the basis to the safe re-opening of our schools. I was so impressed with everything I saw – it certainly didn't feel uncomfortable – far from it – it felt safe, secure and above all, fun! My thanks to all that made the visit possible and the school lunch was a welcome surprise! Especially as it was an opportunity to meet Phyllis the cook-in-charge who has worked with us for 40 years!

TTP – contact tracing continues to work well. The focus is now on developing and agreeing governance arrangements across the Gwent regional footprint and how we sustain this service over the longer term.

Care homes - testing of our care home staff and residents has been completed and all will now receive weekly testing. We are currently working through how this will be undertaken.

I have included a link to latest infographic that the Communications teams have been pulling together for us – I'm always amazed by the scale of the numbers and these numbers across the Housing service speak for themselves.

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Covid-19/Care-first-coping-with-Covid-19/COVID19-In-Figures>

Our buildings remain closed to both staff and the public at this time, with only a skeleton number of staff operating from our key buildings. Our services continue to work effectively and remotely. Heads of Service are currently planning how our services will return to buildings, whilst maximising the agile working opportunities we have available to us. I don't anticipate a return to our buildings for a few weeks yet, so in the meantime, any use of the buildings is only being allowed, following specific authorisation from either myself or CMT.

Finally here is a link to the latest edition of our 'Team Caerphilly' staff newsletter a social care special, it contains more examples of the fantastic work you are all doing at the moment. It makes a fantastic read! Please give it a few minutes to load it is a huge edition with 18 packed pages!

[https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/Coronavirus/TeamCaerphillyNews\\_June2020e\\_fb.aspx](https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/Coronavirus/TeamCaerphillyNews_June2020e_fb.aspx)

I'm taking some leave next week, so my update next Monday will be provided by the Communications Team, as they have something to share with you. I'll give you a clue, it has something to do with our "Caerphilly cwtch"!

Take care  
Christina

Christina Harrhy  
Prif Weithredwr | Chief Executive  
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## **Schools update**

Further to my staff update earlier today, there has been some developments with regards to the reopening of schools, which I wanted to share with you, as I am mindful many of you with children will be impacted by this. Please see the information in this news story - .

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/News/News-Bulletin/June-2020/CCBC-confirms-return-to-school-arrangements?lang=en-GB>

I hope this information is of assistance to you.