

A message from the Chief Executive – 28th April 2020

Dear colleague,

We have another very full week ahead of us as we look to continue to make progress on our eight strategic aims (go on test yourself – can you remember more than 4?). Over recent weeks I have been listening carefully to the feedback you have been giving me about what you are learning and improving through these current circumstances. Some key themes that are emerging include a focus entirely on high priority tasks and a feeling of being trusted.

The reference to 'trust' is massive for me. I know that we all have a shared passion and commitment to deliver quality services and that innovation and 'new ways of working' will be critical in order to move us forward, therefore we should trust each other and give it a go. This is something that I am focussing upon in discussion with CMT and Cabinet, as I am keen not to lose the momentum and great work that we have collectively done over the last few weeks and the key lessons we have learnt from it.

In terms of the current outbreak, over the weekend we have continued to see the numbers of new cases go down and, thankfully, we are seeing the number of daily deaths decrease, with only 2 deaths in the ABHUB area since Friday – this is really good news, but 2 is still too many.

The testing regime continues to roll out for key workers – we still have some problems with it but it is improving and we will get there.

PPE appears to be settling down now with regular deliveries being received, along with supplies being sourced through our local businesses who are diversifying to focus on PPE wherever possible.

The narrative at a national level about the necessary conditions to enable a relaxation of lockdown continues to play through, with the most recent announcement today about a phased return to school over the next few months, setting out the stall. This is an area of work I am personally assisting Welsh Government colleagues with alongside representatives from the wider Education family. I am keen to share with WG the great work of our childcare hubs for key workers and my ideas as to how we can scale the hub concept as part of a phased return. So, watch this space! The imminent signs of lockdown release appears to be giving permission to a small number of people to start acting in a more normal way – this is incorrect behaviour. We are in lockdown and that's the end of it, so no change at the moment.

Work is being undertaken to assist care homes with infection control. Our Environmental Health officers are being trained to assist with this piece of work in line with the recently received guidance from Welsh Government and we may be offering further support in this space over the next few weeks.

Some of the things that will be focussed upon this week include:

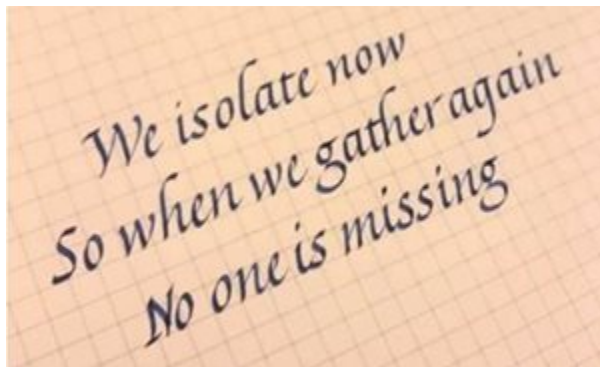
- Getting us ready for our first virtual Planning committee in June – the new regulations were released by Welsh Government last week to allow us to do this but there's lots of detailed preparation needed to get us ready to take this big step.
- Finalising plans to sit underneath those strategic aims that you will be trying to remember (hint - see list at bottom of this email!)
- Continue to satisfy ourselves that our whole authority safeguarding arrangements are standing secure despite these unusual times
- Continuing to pay business grants and support local business - 2,224 firms have been paid £26.1million to date.
- Continuing to evaluate our approaches to ensure our engagement with vulnerable learners continues to work.
- Continuing to support our amazing volunteers
- Calling in on our most vulnerable and those in the "shielding category" to check they are ok or to find out if there need any further support from us. This includes the development of a county borough wide prescription collection service, with over 5,500 items needed every week.
- Picking up our refuse and recycling and beginning to carry out cleansing, fly tipping clearance and grass cutting (only of vision splay areas so we can limit the impact upon biodiversity)
- Operating our cemeteries, after the recent re-opening over the last weekend, which received a phenomenal amount of positive traffic over social media. One Facebook post alone reached over 123k people!
- Taking forward planning/land use matters wherever we can
- Starting to look at our highway surfacing programme
- Constantly reviewing our whole authority risk register to make sure it reflects our current position and focus.
- Some detailed thinking around the sequence and shape of the services we will turn back on when the conditions are right.
- And lots more!

Much of this work is because of the circumstances we find ourselves in but increasingly it is important work that we have always done but we are learning to do it differently.

I hope you enjoyed the detailed overview from Dave Street (Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing) last week. I'm sure it gave you a detailed insight into the daily challenges being faced but more importantly, how they are being addressed. What was clear from Dave's update, was the pride he shared for each and every member of staff and how collectively they are making a big difference.

So my update later this week will continue with the thematic approach with a "deep dive" into Education/Corporate Services. Ed (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services) will shine a very bright light into the work of the department and show how it is impacting positively upon our daily lives.

I will sign off today with a simple but eloquent reminder of why we are all putting in these big shifts and why we must continue to beat the drum as hard as we can for social distancing, in order to protect our people and place.



Take care and stay safe.

Christina

Our immediate strategic aims are:

- to provide clear purposeful civic leadership
- to keep you safe, healthy and productive
- to be a trusted partner for other agencies / organisations
- to continue to provide childcare for children of key workers and ensure continuation of learning for all young people
- to help vulnerable young people and adults who need our support
- to help local businesses survive
- to keep our neighbourhoods clean and tidy whilst managing waste as sustainably as we can
- to ensure we remain financially sustainable as an organisation