

## **Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) Summary Report for the Equality and Social Justice Committee**

### **Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – Background**

- 1.1 The Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) played a key role in shaping the Welsh Government's response to the Covid19 pandemic. It brought together social partners (25 in total) from trade unions, devolved employers, the private sector as well as the Welsh Commissioners to better understand the challenges posed by Covid19. A number of senior Welsh Government officials also attended the SSPC either to act in support of a Minister or to update the Council directly on their areas of policy or operational responsibility.
- 1.2 Throughout the pandemic the SSPC met on a fortnightly basis, then in alignment with the three-week review cycle and sometimes at very short notice in reaction to emerging issues. Most meetings of the SSPC were chaired by the First Minister but on those occasions where he was unable to attend, another Minister chaired in his place.
- 1.3 The SSPC acted as a strategic discussion forum providing an important channel for sharing information and seeking advice. From these discussions Welsh Government officials met social partners outside of the SSPC to progress work across a range of policy areas in more detail. As an example, discussions at the SSPC covered:
- guidance on the re-opening of the retail and tourism sectors
  - support for businesses
  - development of the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) programme
  - worker safety
  - the re-opening of schools
  - the Covid19 vaccination/booster roll-out
  - post Covid19 recovery
- 1.4 Key to the operation of the SSPC was that it allowed social partners to play an active role in shaping the response to Covid19 as decisions were being made by the Welsh Government.
- 1.5 The following provides a synopsis of each meeting of the SSPC during the Covid19 pandemic. It captures key discussion points and actions from the first formal meeting of the SSPC to discuss the pandemic on the 14 May 2020 through to its termination on the 14 July 2022. All meetings were held virtually.
- 1.6 It should be noted that the SSPC also met on the 23 March 2020 to hold an unscheduled discussion about Covid19 as the pandemic first began to emerge. As an unscheduled emergency meeting the aim was to hear social partners initial thoughts on the developing crisis and no minute was taken by officials.

## Meetings of the SSPC (14 May 2020 – 14 July 2022) Synopsis of Key Discussion Points

### Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 14 May 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19: Easing of Lockdown The First Minister outlined the arrangements for reviewing lockdown measures</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed that the Welsh Government would publish its road-map document outlining the planned approach to easing lockdown provisions in Wales. Partners supported the careful approach to easing lockdown provisions and the importance of social partnership working.
2.	<b>Draft Covid19: Safe Return to Work Protocol</b>	Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	Members raised a need for the protocol to be drafted for employers and employees, with a particular focus on workers in the shielding category and stressed the importance of a phased re-opening of businesses in order to give them the time they needed to start operating safely and effectively.
3.	<b>Covid19: Supporting Business, Public Services and Workers through the Recovery</b>	Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister outlined the extent of funding provided by the Welsh Government, including the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF). Members generally supported the Welsh Government's approach though sought greater clarity regarding the social care sector.
4.	<b>Covid19: Ongoing Role of Social Partnership</b>	First Minister	There was general consensus that the broader range of membership at the SSPC had added value.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 28 May 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19: Review of Lockdown Measures</b>	First Minister	The FM outlined rates of infection and the importance of stemming community transmission. He confirmed an imminent announcement would be made regarding lockdown provisions.
2.	<b>Covid19: Update on Return-to-Work Guidance</b>	Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister confirmed the Welsh Government's higher level workplace guidance had been shared with members as a reference point based on Welsh Law. He explained more tailored guidance would be developed for individual industries/sectors. The trade unions proposed establishing a National Health and Safety Forum to address Covid19; more details were requested. There was a commitment for further consideration to be given to the needs of vulnerable groups and equality law in guidance.
3.	<b>Covid19: Test, Trace and Protect</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister outlined the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) approach. Discussions captured the importance of guidance being developed in the event of workplace outbreaks. The Minister confirmed that contact tracing would help move Wales out of lockdown until a vaccine was developed and that further briefings on TTP would be presented to the SSPC.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 11 June 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 – Priorities for the Next Review of Regulations</b>	First Minister	Update provided by the FM including a forthcoming announcement on some easing of lockdown in response to decreased transmission rates but retaining the need to stay local. Concerns were expressed over the lack of progress in establishing the National Health and Safety Forum. The FM confirmed membership invites had been issued. The importance of clear messaging over easement measures was stressed and Welsh Government committed to issuing guidance for the retail sector by close.
2.	<b>Covid19 – Next Phase of easement for schools</b>	Minister for Education	The Minister referenced the phased return guidance that had been published. The trade unions expressed concern over re-opening. The scientific advice underpinning the approach was outlined and it was agreed the CMO would

			<p>speak directly with the unions about their concerns. The Minister stressed the importance of being flexible and confirmed a checklist of key safety issues had also been developed.</p>
3.	<b>Update on Test, Trace and Protect</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	<p>The Minister confirmed TTP capacity had increased. Concerns were raised regarding pay conditions for workers needing to self-isolate, the length of time TTP would be in place and the alleged use of unlicensed Covid19 testing devices by some employers. The Minister for Health and Social Services confirmed he had written to the UK Government regarding pay, that TTP would be in place until a vaccine was developed and asked for more information on any potential use of unlicensed tests.</p>

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 25 June 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 – Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion</b>	First Minister	<p>The FM updated on changes to lockdown restrictions for specific sectors and confirmed as much notice as possible would be provided for any re-openings. He confirmed an initial meeting to discuss the National Health and Safety Forum had been set and a foundation meeting for the Social Care Fair Work Forum. The need for clear guidance, timescales and caution were all stressed during discussions. The Minister for Health and Social Services emphasised that all guidance was live.</p>
2.	<b>Covid19 - Economic Recovery – For Discussion</b>	Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	<p>The Minister outlined the 4 key areas of the Welsh Government’s approach to rebuilding the economy. The private sector supported the approach. The importance of decarbonisation to recovery was stressed by partners. It was agreed the private sector and Welsh Government would work together to ensure there was consistent messaging to businesses on decarbonisation.</p>
3.	<b>Covid19 – Welsh Government Supplementary Budget – For Information</b>	Director of Finance (Welsh Government)	<p>The Welsh Government Finance Director confirmed the first supplementary budget of 2020-21 had been approved by the Senedd and that it set out how the Welsh Government would respond to the pandemic. He outlined the key areas of spending from the budget: Health and Public Services, the economy, the third sector/Communities and Transport.</p>

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 9 July 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 – Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed a decreased rate of infection would allow continued easing of restrictions. Welsh Government would continue to lobby the UK Government for additional support for infrastructure spending. The private sector stressed the need for specific dates regarding easement for indoor dining. The impact of lockdown on children and the need to consider reopening play facilities was emphasised. The trade unions called for greater clarity regarding the functions of the National Health and Safety Forum. The FM agreed to issue a statement in support of business.
2.	<b>Covid19 – Tourism and Culture Guidance – For Information</b>	(Wales TUC) and Director of Culture Sport and Tourism (Welsh Government)	The presenters highlighted the extent to which social partnership working had been used to develop guidance for the culture, sport and tourism sectors. It was emphasised that central to discussions at all levels had been openness and honesty, which had facilitated a more effective response to the pandemic.
3.	<b>Covid19 – Housing Priorities - For Information</b>	Minister for Housing and Local Government	The Minister emphasised the importance of housing to Covid19 recovery and highlighted the good partnership working in place with local authorities to provide accommodation for vulnerable groups. Discussions flagged the importance of developing accessible and sustainable homes and the need to develop suitable skills/apprenticeships to support the housing sector. The Minister welcomed further discussion within the different forums she chaired.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 20 July 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 – Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed future easements would focus on individual freedoms. School safety was raised by the trade unions in preparation for the new school term and concerns over transmission amongst children. The private sector stressed the importance of a unified approach across the UK for businesses and the need for

			clear messaging. The FM asked officials to provide data on transmission in children over the age of 12 to the SSPC.
2.	<b>Covid19 - Economic Recovery – For Discussion</b>	Counsel General and Minister for European Transition	The Counsel General outlined the dual impact of dealing with European Transition and the pandemic. He confirmed there had been limited discussions with the UK Government and emphasised the fundamental differences between the two administrations. Members were encouraged to respond to the UK Government’s consultation on the Internal Market.
3.	<b>Covid19 – Welsh Government Supplementary Budget – For Information</b>	– Welsh Government Deputy Director - Employability and Skills	The Deputy Director detailed the range of support being provided for skills and training development confirming an additional £40million of funding for catch up support for learners who have been detrimentally affected by the lockdown and employability and skills support. During discussions the needs of the most vulnerable were stressed and the importance of ensuring training would lead to good quality employment. The Deputy Director sought support of employers to create job opportunities.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 3 August 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19: Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM emphasised continued caution and confirmed the next review period would focus on the safe re-opening of schools. The trade unions referenced non-compliance with safety measures by some employers and the impact on those shielding, as well as potential abuses of the Furlough Scheme. The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd confirmed she had written to the UK Government on abuses of the Furlough Scheme and asked trade unions to provide any further examples to her.
2.	<b>UK Government Budget Announcements – Implications for the Welsh Government – For Information</b>	The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd	The Minister emphasised the financial challenges facing Wales and detailed new funding allocations from the Welsh Government’s Budget. Support for manufacturing, aviation and aerospace industries was discussed and the Minister welcomed further engagement with partners regarding the Budget.
3.	<b>Covid19 Update on Test, Trace and</b>	The Minister for Health and	The Minister updated on contact tracing and confirmed additional resources were being committed to develop infrastructure ahead of

	<b>Protect – For Information</b>	Social Services	autumn and winter. The importance of flu vaccinations was discussed including the prohibitive cost for some workers. The Minister welcomed further discussion with partners regarding the flu programme.
--	----------------------------------	-----------------	--

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 17 August 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19: Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM outlined the new powers granted to local authorities to enforce Covid 19 regulations. Trade unions raised concerns over the uneven collection of TTP information at hospitality venues and the FM confirmed TTP data should be collected at point of entry. The private sector stressed the importance of employees being able to work from an office where they wish to and the FM confirmed the Return-to-Work guidance offered flexibility.
2.	<b>Support for the Manufacturing Sector – For Discussion</b>	The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister emphasised the importance of the manufacturing sector and outlined new funding from the Welsh Government including £500million for the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF). He confirmed the consultation on the Welsh Government’s Manufacturing Plan would be launched on the 21 September. Concerns relating to the UK Government’s Furlough scheme were covered and the Minister suggested the trade unions and the Future Generations Commissioner discuss a combined approach to mitigate the effects of the Furlough scheme ending.
3.	<b>Influenza Vaccination Programme - For Information</b>	The Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister supported the paper provided by the CBI promoting take-up of the winter flu vaccination in the private sector to mitigate the impact of Covid19. He confirmed the paper encouraged social partners to meet with officials to discuss a joint approach which was accepted by the SSPC.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 7 September 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 – Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed transmission rates were increasing, in part, due to non-observance of Covid19 safety measures. The trade unions stressed the importance of consistent enforcement and expressed concerns over large

			numbers of people returning to work. The private sector confirmed most employers favoured a small return to work. The FM confirmed a statement would be issued re-emphasising the need to work from home whenever possible.
2.	<b>Covid19 – Re-opening of Schools – For Discussion</b>	The Minister for Education	The Minister confirmed that schools had been taking a staggered approach to re-opening, that staff transmission was a big risk factor and that additional funding for face coverings had been provided. The trade unions referred to inconsistencies over the use of face coverings in schools and a lack of clarity regarding the administration of the School Cleaning Fund. The Minister confirmed the Fund would be administered by local authorities. Welsh Government officials confirmed the School Partnership Forum was producing a Covid Support Plan with social partners.
3.	<b>Recovery – Post Covid19 – For Information</b>	The Counsel General and Minister for European Transition	The Counsel General explained that Covid19 had exacerbated many existing challenges. He emphasised that recovery work required a longer-term focus and a joined-up approach. The Counsel General explained that an Advisory Group on Covid Reconstruction had been established as well as a Joint Recovery and Continuity Board to consider both Brexit and Covid19.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 23 September 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 – Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM outlined recent lockdown measures introduced in some areas of Wales. Discussions covered travel, free school meals and the £500 payment to low-income workers. Also raised were the concerns of staff working for UK Government bodies based in Wales regarding return-to-work policy. The FM emphasised that people should stay local and asked the trade unions to keep him informed of any issues relating to UK Government staff based in Wales.
2.	<b>Welsh Government Draft Budget 2021-22 – For Discussion</b>	The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd	The Minister invited views on the Welsh Government’s budgetary proposals for 2021-22. She explained that there would be a focus on recovery and reconstruction and that discussions had been held with the other devolved governments regarding the UK Government’s Spending Review. The importance of fiscal flexibility, utilising existing EU money and equitable funding for those most in need were emphasised by members. The Minister invited the SSPC to submit further views to officials.



Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 8 October 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Update Economic Resilience Fund (ERF) and European Transition – Priorities for Business - For Discussion</b>	The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister outlined funding provisions under the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF) and confirmed there would be discretion to enable higher levels of support for micro businesses. The administration of the ERF and eligibility for its use were discussed. The Minister highlighted the continuing impact of EU transition on businesses across Wales.
2.	<b>The Voluntary Sector - Contribution to Social Partnership - For Discussion</b>	The Chief Executive of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)	The Chief Executive outlined the work of the voluntary sector in Wales. Concerns were raised by the trade unions that voluntary activity was being used by some employers to avoid providing paid work and the Future Generations Commissioner highlighted the importance of involving a broad range of people in this sector. The Chief Executive welcomed further discussions on the issues raised.
3.	<b>Covid19: Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM referenced growing concerns regarding people travelling into Wales from Covid19 hotspots in England. Discussions covered workplace safety, those in the shielding category and the needs of the hospitality sector. The FM confirmed shielding advice remained the same, that workplace safety guidance was proving effective and that there were no imminent plans to restrict the hospitality sector.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 15 October 2020 (Extraordinary Meeting)

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Escalating Position Covid19 - To Explore the Need for Further Interventions - For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed increased transmission levels with the NHS having reached critical capacity. He explained that scientific advice recommended a short but significant fire break to give the NHS time to build capacity for the winter. The FM outlined some of the issues being considered by Cabinet and the types of support that would be offered for schools and businesses. Discussions covered a broad range of issues including job and business support, places of worship, the classification of essential workers, care homes and the needs of children during

			lockdown. The FM explained that businesses would continue accessing the UK Government's existing Job Retention Scheme and then switch to the new Job Support Scheme from the 1 November. The FM confirmed he would again approach the UK Government for a bespoke package of support and that he had asked them to participate in a UK wide approach to the firebreak.
--	--	--	--

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 22 October 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>National Covid19 Firebreak - For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM emphasised the extent of the on-going crisis. The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales confirmed the Welsh Government had announced businesses affected by the firebreak would be supported with a new £300m fund. The private sector offered to lead in establishing a cross social partner group to discuss the needs of business. Moving forward the FM confirmed the Welsh Government would consider what additional support could be offered for workers falling outside of the current Job Retention Scheme. The FM confirmed the CMO would be writing to those in the shielding category outlining available support.
2.	<b>Internal Market Bill - For Information</b>	The Counsel General and Minister for European Transition	The Counsel General outlined concerns with the UK Government's Internal Market Bill. He stressed that the Bill went far beyond the structure needed to ensure economic co-operation between the UK nations and that the common framework that had been developed previously was more effective. He explained that consent to the Bill could not be recommended to the Senedd and that a suite of amendments were being proposed by the Welsh Government.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 28 October 2020 (Extraordinary Meeting)

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Managing Covid19 – Arrangements following the Firebreak Period - For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed Cabinet had recently met and that there were 5 key areas being considered regarding lockdown:  <u>National vs. Local Restriction Measures</u> – there was general support for a national approach which members felt was fairer and more consistent.

			<p><u>Transport Restrictions</u> – the importance of clear messaging and the needs of those in more isolated areas was stressed.</p> <p><u>Economy and Home Working</u> – home working was supported but the value of work hubs was stressed and the needs of specific sectors.</p> <p><u>Support for the Tourism, Sport and Culture Sectors</u> – it was agreed this was covered under previous discussions.</p> <p><u>Enforcement Regime</u> - general support was offered for the Welsh Government approach which favoured guidance over enforcement in the first instance.</p>
--	--	--	--

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 12 November 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>National Covid19 Firebreak - For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM outlined Welsh Government priorities including different levels of restrictive measures, mass testing and the development of a useable vaccine. The FM confirmed additional guidance would be produced for the clinically vulnerable, that guidance for businesses was being reviewed and that the Health and Safety Forum would be discussing vaccinations when it next met.
2.	<b>Update on the Socio-economic Duty – For Information</b>	The Deputy Minister and Chief Whip	The Deputy Minister explained that the Socio-economic Duty would commence on the 31 March 2021. She thanked members for their involvement and confirmed the Welsh Government would continue to work with them to ensure public bodies were prepared for the commencement of the Duty.
3.	<b>Know your Workforce Rights Campaign – For Information</b>	The Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government	The Deputy Minister thanked members for their involvement in developing the campaign and explained its purpose, asking members to promote it through their networks. The importance of clear messaging and alignment to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 were all highlighted during discussions.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 26 November 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update - For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed variable rates of Covid19 transmission. He explained that four meetings had been held between the UK nations to agree a unified approach to the festive season. The trade unions raised concerns over advice to the shielding and frustration over the wording of specific parts of the Economic

			Contract. The FM confirmed the Chief Medical Officer would meet with them to discuss shielding advice and that relevant officials would consider the wording of the Economic Contract.
2.	<b>Comprehensive Spending Review – First Implications for Wales - For Information</b>	The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd	The Minister outlined the impact of the UK Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review on Wales including a real terms reduction in funding. She expressed disappointment over the public sector pay freeze that had been enacted by the UK Government and the lack of funding for job support. She welcomed the proposal that Sir David Henshaw, Natural Resources Wales, attend a future SSPC to provide an update on the work of the green recovery group he chaired.
3.	<b>Covid19 Worst Case Scenario Preparedness – For Information</b>	First Minister	Due to discussions overrunning the First Minister confirmed a note on Worst Case Scenario Preparedness would be circulated to members.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 10 December 2020 (Extraordinary Meeting)

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Next Phase in Responding to Covid19 – For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM set out the Welsh Government’s priorities for the next phase in responding to the pandemic. The Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Executive of the NHS outlined concerns regarding peoples’ behaviour on transmission and the NHS. The FM described the tiered approach that would be taken to lockdown throughout Wales. He explained that schools would move to on-line learning and that hospitality venues would have reduced opening hours. Discussions covered the tiered/local approach to lockdown, the need for clear and tailored messaging to specific groups and support for businesses, children and the vulnerable. The FM confirmed the issues raised would be discussed at Cabinet as part of the Welsh Government’s approach to the pandemic.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 16 December 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update (including Vaccination Programme and Behaviour Change Campaign) - For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM advised that following discussions with the other UK nations Wales would enter Tier 4 lockdown after the festive period. The need to support both businesses and individuals was raised and the need for clarity over lockdown arrangements. Updates on the vaccination programme and the Welsh Government's Behaviour Change Campaign were provided by officials. The Counsel General and Minister for European Transition confirmed regulations would clearly describe each tier of the lockdown measures.
2.	<b>Update European Transition – For Information</b>	The Counsel General and Minister for European Transmission	The Counsel General advised that discussions were on-going between the UK Government and the EU with only 15 days remaining. The Minister explained the preference for a weak deal rather than no deal and outlined what this would mean for Wales. The impact of uncertainty on both businesses and individuals was discussed. The Counsel General advised that the Welsh Government was addressing the issues of EU Transition and the pandemic together to ensure a joined-up approach.
3.	<b>Update Green Recovery Taskforce – For Information</b>	The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales outlined the role of the Green Recovery Taskforce and invited the Chair to provide an update on its work. Partners outlined some of their own initiatives regarding green recovery and offered their support for the Taskforce. The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales emphasised the centrality of green recovery to the Welsh Government's work going forward.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 19 December 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>New Variant Strain of Covid19</b>	The Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport	The Deputy Minister emphasised the significance of a new variant strain of Covid19. He confirmed that the new strain was up to 70-80% more infectious and that Wales was facing an exponential rise in transmission. He explained that Wales would immediately be placed under Tier 4 restrictions and outlined what this would entail. Concerns were expressed over placing the whole of Wales

			under Tier 4 but the Minister explained that this would protect the NHS and outlined how quickly services could potentially be overrun. From discussions, the Minister confirmed that he would discuss the number of individual applications that could be made under the Welsh Government's Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) and explained that a press statement had been prepared covering the new restrictions that would come into force.
--	--	--	---

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 14 January 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	First Minister	The FM provided an update on transmission, hospitalisation and vaccination. He confirmed that a workplace safety announcement would be made shortly. Conversations on the Self-Isolation Payment Scheme and the Discretionary Assistance Fund were held. Trade unions raised the need for renewed focus on workplace risk assessments and private sector stressed the importance of on-site testing of employees to strengthen workplace safety. Trade unions also raised concern about the pace of vaccination for teachers and stressed the importance of schools being safe before they are re-opened. The FM confirmed that a note on worst case scenario preparedness would be issued.
2.	<b>Update European Transition</b>	Counsel General and Minister for European Transition	The Minister outlined concerns with the transition agreement and confirmed a full analysis by the Welsh Government would be published. He outlined concerns with the UK Government's Future Relationship Bill and explained that legislative consent would not be recommended to the Senedd. The Minister confirmed the Welsh Government was developing urgent guidance for businesses.
3.	<b>Update Vaccinations Programme</b>	Senior Welsh Government Official	It was confirmed the Welsh Government's vaccination strategy had been published on the 11 January and that levels of vaccine rollout had increased. It was explained that discussions surrounding the definition of key workers were being held between Welsh Government and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation ahead of phase 2 of the vaccine rollout.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 28 January 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	First Minister	The FM provided an update on NHS capacity, vaccination and restriction levels. He acknowledged the need to give clear notice to businesses regarding restrictions. The trade unions felt the development of a shared set of principles around vaccination roll out and workplace vaccination should be developed. It was agreed the National Health and Safety Forum would develop a shared understanding of workplace safety issues including the use of lateral flow devices. The Children’s Commissioner for Wales highlighted the importance of positive and reassuring messaging to children regarding the lockdown restrictions.
2.	<b>Impact of Welsh Government Financial Support Programmes</b>	Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government	The Deputy Minister outlined the purpose of the Self-isolation Support Scheme and confirmed it would be reviewed to clarify eligibility and raise awareness. The Minister also outlined the Discretionary Assistance Fund and explained that work would be carried out to better assess whether people are accessing the full range of support available across different support schemes.
3.	<b>Initial Impact of Moving Guidance to Regulation: Safe Operation of Essential Retail and Businesses Undertaking Covid19 Risk Assessments</b>	Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister explained the new regulatory duty placed on employers including the need to carry out a specific on-site Covid19 risk assessment. He confirmed the extent of funding provided to specific business sectors and thanked members for ensuring this had been allocated effectively.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 10 February 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	First Minister	The FM updated on transmission and vaccination rates urging continued caution. He emphasised the prioritisation of children returning to school and

			confirmed the National Health and Safety Forum had discussed the vaccination roll out and would consider a set of agreed protocols on workplace testing.
2.	<b>Long Term Impact of Covid19 and Mitigating Factors for the Future</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recovery in the NHS</b></li> <li>• <b>Recovery in the Economy</b></li> </ul>	First Minister  Minister for Health and Social Services  Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport	<b>Recovery in the NHS</b> The Minister outlined the challenges facing the NHS and how services could be redesigned in social partnership to be more sustainable. Mental health support for staff was stressed by members and the Minister welcomed further discussion on this. He emphasised that central to reforms will be the patient experience in healthcare. <b>Recovery in the Economy</b> The Deputy Minister explained some of the long-term impacts of the pandemic and outlined the Welsh Government's economic recovery plan. The Future Generations Commissioner emphasised the importance of skills development. The Deputy Minister offered to discuss this further and explained that many of the levers for change were non-devolved and that it would be important to focus on what could be directly influenced in Wales.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 25 February 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed downward transmission and the continued success of the vaccination programme but still stressed caution. The FM also confirmed an extension of the Self-isolation Payment Scheme and an increase in funding to the Discretionary Assistance Fund. He discussed proposals for easing restrictions and the commitment to returning children to school, in a phased approach, as a priority. This was welcomed by the Children's Commissioner who suggested check-in days for those who would return later. The First Minister confirmed the draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill would be published for consultation on the 26 February and outlined some of its main provisions.
2.	<b>Ethical Issues Workplace Vaccination – Developing an Agreed Approach</b>	Senior Welsh Government Official	An overview was provided of the Covid19 Moral and Ethical Advisory Group for Wales' work. A discussion was held regarding workplace vaccination. The Minister for Health and Social Services confirmed a paper on vaccination take-up by different socio-economic and ethnic groups would be provided to the SSPC.



3.	<b>Refreshed Testing Strategy</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister confirmed publication of the Welsh Government's refreshed testing strategy and outlined its key provisions. Testing in the workplace and the use of lateral flow devices was discussed. There was a commitment for the Welsh Government to clarify on-line guidance for accessing a PCR test upon testing positive from a lateral flow device in the workplace.
----	-----------------------------------	---	--

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 10 March 2021

<b>Item</b>	<b>Ministerial Lead</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed the Welsh Government would be considering schools' transmission data from England as part of its return to school policy and would also provide information on transmission amongst the under 25s. The trade unions asked for data on the spread of Covid19 within deprived communities, recognising the link between living conditions and transmission. In response to the UK Government's budget, the First Minister explained that he had taken the decision to make a number of short-term investments to address the immediacy of the pandemic.
2.	<b>Covid19 Proposed Easement of Lockdown Measures</b>	First Minister	The FM shared details of the next stage of easement announcements. There was cross partner support for the cautious approach being adopted and the private sector confirmed the Welsh Government's retail re-opening checklist had been shared widely. The FM outlined funding priorities and arrangements for addressing the pandemic during the election period.
3.	<b>Race Equality Action Plan</b>	Deputy Minister and Chief Whip	The Deputy Minister explained the Race Equality Action Plan had been created in partnership, that continued engagement would be key to delivery, and that consultation on the plan would commence shortly. She emphasised the deepening impact of inequality and thanked members for their involvement in co-producing guidance for the Socio-economic Duty.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 24 March 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	First Minister	The FM announced the launch of the NHS recovery plan <i>Health and Social Care in Wales Covid19: Looking Forward</i> and set out plans for further easing of restrictions. Members agreed to reinforce workplace safety messaging by amplifying messaging through social partner networks.
2.	<b>Workplace Mental Health Support</b>	Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Welsh Language	The Minister provided details on the Welsh Government's approach to mental health support in the workplace which was supported by all partners. The voluntary sector stressed their role in developing the broader social model of mental health. The private sector highlighted the cumulative impact of debt on people's mental health. The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales explained that the Economic Contract was being strengthened to take account of the importance of mental health and wellbeing and urged the SSPC to use their networks to encourage sign-up.
3.	<b>Vaccination Programme: Differential Take-up across Socio-economic and Ethnic Groups</b>	Public Health Wales	Public Health Wales presented data highlighting differential vaccine take-up across socio-economic groups and communities and the disproportionate impact of Covid. PHW offered assurances that extensive engagement work with these groups was on-going to ensure vaccination take-up was maximised.
4.	<b>Vaccination Certificates</b>	Senior Welsh Government Official	The official explained the issues relating to vaccination certificates. Partners raised potential problems of vaccination passports for businesses. Trade unions emphasised the importance of educating people about vaccine take-up rather than making it mandatory and allowing paid leave for staff to be vaccinated.
5.	<b>AOB: Paper to Note – Support for the Blind and Partially Sighted</b>	First Minister	The FM drew attention to the paper to note that had been provided regarding support for the blind and partially sighted.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 31 March 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed the vaccination programme remained on track despite challenges to supply and that transmission levels were declining although there were some regional variations.
2.	<b>Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update</b>	First Minister	The FM outlined future easement proposals. The trade unions emphasised the continued importance of workplace safety both as easements progress and raised concerns regarding the application of the Self-isolation Support Scheme. The FM confirmed that further work on the scheme was ongoing. The private sector relayed confusion over the current guidance for those in the shielding category. Differential vaccine take-up was discussed and it was confirmed Welsh Government officials would consider the specific issue of vaccine take-up amongst ethnic minority students.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 22 April 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister warned of the dangers presented by new Covid19 variants. The private sector welcomed the devolved employers' initiative to provide lateral flow tests directly to businesses. It was agreed further discussions would take place to explore the potential incorporation of this scheme into the national approach. The unions raised concerns about the support schemes in place which they agreed to follow up in writing. The Minister asked officials to discuss concerns raised over the provision of lateral flow tests to social care workers.
2.	<b>Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle – Update</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister outlined the key points of the easement announcement that would be made the following day and financial support for businesses. The trade unions expressed concerns over risk assessment compliance and suggested using the review announcements to promote safety messaging. Members were encouraged to provide ideas over how the Welsh Government could clarify

			employer and employee expectations regarding agile and safe working guidance.
--	--	--	---

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 13 May 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	Welsh Government – Technical Advisory Cell (TAC)	Senior Welsh Government officials provided an overview of transmission rates and concerns regarding a new variant. Discussion followed on a lack of clarity and consultation regarding the use of face coverings in schools. Officials confirmed members would be consulted fully on this issue once a new Education Minister had been appointed following the election.
2.	<b>Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update</b>	Senior Welsh Government Official	A senior Welsh Government official detailed the next stage of the easement process. Members felt there was a lack of clarity over the wording used in some easement announcements. Officials explained the complexities of trying to communicate clearly the connection of various risk factors within different social settings and asked for any other issues in this area to be followed up outside the meeting. Discussions were held on the challenges of the social distancing rules and further support for businesses was outlined.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 3 June 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	First Minister	The FM warned of the threat posed by the Delta Variant and misleading media reporting over its level of transmissibility. He urged continued caution.
2.	<b>Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update</b>	First Minister	The FM outlined phased easement proposals and that protecting the NHS would remain a priority. The complexities of international travel were discussed as were the needs of specific business sectors. Following conversations, the FM confirmed officials would supply a note to members ahead of the next meeting of the SSPC on the capital funding implications of ventilation across the NHS

			estate and the lifting of the moratorium on the non-payment of rent for commercial tenancies.
3.	<b>Covid19 Workplace Testing – Lessons Learnt</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister stressed the importance of consistent workplace testing and outlined the refreshed Test, Trace and Protect strategy. The Minister asked members for their views on the continuation of workplace testing following the UK Government decision to end it on the 30 June. A commitment was made for Welsh Government to explore the quality of data being collated regarding non-workplace use of lateral flow tests by individuals and the potential impact of this on lateral flow data as a whole.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 17 June 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed the dominance of the Delta Variant and its impact. The FM confirmed he would provide an update on risk assessments at his press announcement the following day. He stressed the importance of continuing to work from home where possible.
2.	<b>Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update</b>	First Minister	The FM provided details of the next review cycle announcement. He confirmed the Welsh Government's position on face coverings in schools had not changed which was welcomed by the trade unions and that work was underway with the education sector to develop a more flexible set of arrangements for the new term.
3.	<b>Covid19 – Update on Support for Business</b>	Senior Welsh Government Official	A Welsh Government official provided details on the financial support being offered to businesses following a recent announcement by the Economy Minister. She confirmed discussions on future support were ongoing at Ministerial level. She also confirmed discussions were taking place with the UK Government regarding the furlough scheme, including the need for more data on its use.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 1 July 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 General Update (including the 21 Day Review Cycle)</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed increased transmission of the Delta Variant but that the lifting of restrictions remained on course for the summer period. He confirmed the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) had advised an autumn booster campaign. He confirmed that lateral flow tests in the workplace would remain free in Wales. All members stressed the importance of clear messaging surrounding restrictions.
2.	<b>Covid19 Subject Update</b>	Welsh Government Senior Policy Leads	Welsh Government officials provided verbal updates on post Alert Level 1, advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), vaccination, self-isolation, foreign travel, business support and the NHS. There was a commitment to ensure the next round of the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF), including proposals for future funding were explored at a future meeting of the SSPC as well as the long-term impact of Covid19.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 14 July 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 General Update</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister confirmed a doubling of transmission rates and that data showed a greater reluctance amongst young people to get vaccinated.
2.	<b>Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister emphasised caution over easement and outlined the different stages that were being proposed based on current transmission levels. She confirmed people who had been double vaccinated would not be required to self-isolate. The importance of clear messaging was emphasised by members and a commitment was made to provide forecasted hospitalisation admission rates to

			the SSPC as well as a copy of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) report regarding the vaccination of children.
3.	<b>Economic Resilience Fund (ERF) – Proposals for Future Funding</b>	Minister for Economy	The Minister outlined a final package of emergency support for businesses based on further restrictions being unnecessary. It was agreed Welsh Government would engage with social partners in designing guidance to support people transitioning back into work. The Minister confirmed the Welsh Government would be considering where existing programmes could be utilised to further support individuals and confirmed partners would be consulted on this. It was also agreed officials would discuss how COP26 could be used as an opportunity to progress the green agenda further with businesses.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 5 August 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Update: Health Position Across Wales</b>	Chief Medical Officer (CMO)	The CMO confirmed transmission rates were stabilising and stressed the importance of the autumn booster campaign. The significance of communicating the importance of vaccination to younger people was agreed. An announcement on the vaccine booster campaign was being formulated with health boards and local authorities.
2.	<b>NHS General Update</b>	Senior Welsh Government Official	A senior Welsh Government official provided details on the impact of the pandemic on the NHS including capacity, staffing levels as well as emergency and social care. The Trade unions requested similar data for the social care sector as well as the potential impact on staffing levels of former NHS staff returning to the EU.
3.	<b>21 Day Review Cycle</b>	First Minister	The FM discussed plans to move Wales to Alert Level Zero and explained the implications of this whilst also stressing the importance of basic safety measures. Following discussions, the FM confirmed the Welsh Government was developing further guidance regarding ventilation, with social partners. He also confirmed the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership would be calling a special meeting of the Health and Social Care Forum to discuss a reasonable measures regime for Wales regarding risk assessments.

4.	<b>Self-Isolation</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed that from the 7 August people who had been double vaccinated would no longer be required to self-isolate, that the TTP system would now act as more of a process to warn and inform people and that the Self-isolation Support Scheme pilots had revealed a need for other areas of support beyond financial assistance.
----	-----------------------	----------------	---

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 16 September 2021

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO confirmed high levels of transmission but emphasised the positive impact of the vaccination programme. Following discussions, the CMO explained that regional variations in transmission were normal and stressed the importance of partners promoting vaccination through their networks. Officials confirmed issues regarding schools would be discussed at the next Schools' Partnership Forum.
2.	<b>Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update</b>	First Minister	The FM outlined key priorities including the autumn booster campaign and vaccinating 12–15-year-olds. He confirmed Cabinet had decided to implement a Covid19 pass approach as opposed to a certification system and that a press statement would list all the high-risk venues covered by this. The FM explained discussions were on-going with the UK Government over the Comprehensive Spending Review which would cover a number of the concerns raised by trade unions relating to support for individuals. He confirmed the Counsel General would meet with trade unions to investigate claims that some workers were being pressurised into getting vaccinated.
3.	<b>Covid19 – Autumn Booster Campaign – Including the Approach to the Clinically Vulnerable and Unvaccinated</b>	Senior Welsh Government Official	A senior Welsh Government official explained the complexities of the vaccination programme and shared details relating to the autumn booster campaign. She outlined the measures being taken to protect the most vulnerable and vaccinate children.



Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 7 October 2021

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Remote Working - Update</b>	Deputy Minister for Climate Change  The Deputy Minister outlined the Welsh Government’s strategy for remote working and the engagement on this that had taken place. Officials confirmed there would be continued engagement with social partners to ensure flexible working was delivered fairly. The private sector reported mixed feedback from the business community regarding flexible working and trade unions acknowledged the benefits of home working but also emphasised that it would not suit all workers.
2.	<b>Covid19 Update</b>	Chief Medical Officer  The CMO confirmed high transmission levels were being mitigated by the vaccination programme. He explained that a revised vaccination strategy was being prepared for publication and stressed the importance of the autumn booster campaign. Addressing concerns raised by the trade unions regarding schools the Minister for Education confirmed a number of the issues had already been addressed at the Schools’ Partnership Forum and other concerns remained the subject of on-going discussions.
3.	<b>21 Day Review Cycle</b>	First Minister  The FM confirmed Wales would remain at Alert Level Zero for a further three weeks and explained that the updated Coronavirus Control Plan would be published shortly; he thanked members for their contributions. The FM confirmed a proportionate approach would be adopted in the early days of launching the Covid19 pass system to allow businesses to adapt. He explained that the pass system had been designed to support businesses so they could continue to operate.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 28 October 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update - For Discussion</b>	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO explained transmission levels remained high but were showing early signs of decreasing. He outlined some of the factors behind this and explained that the recent sub variant of the Delta strain was likely to be more transmissible. Social partners called for safety messaging to be strengthened and simplified.
2.	<b>Covid19 - 21 Day Review Cycle – Update – For Information</b>	Minister for Education and Welsh Language	The Minister confirmed that compliance with safety measures, face coverings and working from home had all been discussed by the Cabinet. The Minister emphasised the importance of developing the vaccination programme, that schools’ guidance was being developed and that he could not rule out the reintroduction of restrictions. Social partners outlined some of the challenges facing workers in different settings. The Minister confirmed that the advice expressed would be built into on-going communications work.
3.	<b>Net Zero Wales Plan – For Information</b>	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	The Deputy Minister confirmed that the Net Zero Wales Plan had just been launched and thanked social partners for their involvement. The private sector requested further engagement with officials to better understand the requirements of the Plan and the trade unions called for the SSPC to be involved in delivery. The Deputy Minister emphasised the importance of continuing to work in social partnership.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) - 18 November 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update - For Discussion</b>	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO confirmed community transmission rates remained high and that transmission in the over 60s was of particular concern. He confirmed a new wave of the Delta variant was being closely monitored and that further guidance on the vaccination of different groups was being developed by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. The First Minister

			confirmed he had taken part in discussions with the other UK governments the previous evening and the situation was one of high volatility.
2.	<b>Covid19 - 21 Day Review Cycle – Update – For Information</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed Wales would remain at Alert Level Zero. The trade unions offered to be involved in developing work from home and self-isolation guidance and called for terms and conditions in the social care sector to be reconsidered. The private sector emphasised the concerns of small businesses including the use of hospitality passes. The FM explained that the pass system had been designed to allow businesses to continue operating and that following advice from the Social Care Forum the Deputy Minister for Social Services would be re-considering terms and conditions of employment in the sector.
3.	<b>Business Support Update – For Information</b>	Economy Minister	The Minister provided details on the financial support being held in reserve for businesses. He explained that the next phase of support would run until April and provide £70 million. The Minister confirmed business support for the next financial year formed part of on-going budget discussions. The trade unions requested earlier involvement in discussions. The importance of funding flexibility was stressed by devolved employers and clear messaging by the private sector. The Minister emphasised the Welsh Government's commitment to Fair Work and the decarbonisation agenda for business.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) - 9 December 2021

<b>Item</b>	<b>Ministerial Lead</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	
1.	<b>Welsh Government Draft Budget – For Discussion</b>	Minister for Finance and Local Government	The Minister outlined the priorities of the 2021 Welsh Spending Review and 2022-23 Draft Budget. She explained that challenging decisions would need to be made due to the on-going pressures of Covid19 and the loss of EU funding. The Minister confirmed the Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy (WIIS) would be published alongside the draft budget and outlined its content. The trade unions asked for further details on the budgetary process so they could better understand the Welsh Government's priorities. The private sector highlighted pressures facing businesses regarding next year's energy cap review and rising national insurance contributions. The voluntary sector raised

			concerns regarding the loss of EU funding and its impact on the most vulnerable. The Minister referred members to the Budget Improvement Plan for further information and outlined future priorities.
2.	<b>Covid19 Update - For Discussion</b>	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO confirmed that the Delta variant remained stable across Wales but that cases of the new Omicron variant, whilst small, were transmitting at a significant rate. He estimated this would shortly be the most dominant strand of Covid19. He highlighted the significance of the booster programme, the need to strengthen protections in closed settings and ensuring the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) system remained flexible.
3.	<b>Covid19 - 21 Day Review Cycle – Update – For Information</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed the Welsh Government would move to a weekly cycle of decision making due to the severity of the current situation and that the next review announcement would strengthen safety measures. The trade unions raised issues on sick pay in social care and the differential impact of transmission on specific ethnic groups. The private sector offered to develop a joint statement with the trade unions supporting paid time off for workers to get vaccinated. The devolved employers emphasised the importance of the testing system to ensure public services could continue to operate. The FM confirmed issues raised regarding social care and safety guidance would be considered by officials and that more work was needed on the impact of transmission by ethnicity.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 16 December 2021 (Extraordinary Meeting)

<b>Item</b>	<b>Ministerial Lead</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	
1.	<b>Covid19 - Review Cycle – Update – For Information</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The CMO confirmed Omicron transmission was doubling every two days and stressed the importance of the booster programme as a means of stemming transmission. The Minister emphasised that the severity of Omicron was unknown at this time but was likely to peak in January and February. She explained that Cabinet would be meeting to discuss what measures would be put in place but that these would escalate in the new year. The Human Rights Commissioner raised concerns over care home residents accessing vaccinations. The trade unions called for further funding of the Welsh Government's Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) and devolved employers

			outlined the pressures of self-isolation on staffing levels. The private sector confirmed a joint statement had been issued by the business sector and Wales TUC over the importance of staff being allowed to get vaccinated. The pressures facing businesses, social care and schools were acknowledged by Ministers. It was confirmed that an additional £14.7 million had been made available for the DAF and that business support remained a priority.
--	--	--	--

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 22 December 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update - For Discussion</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister for Health and Social Services explained that this meeting had been called to provide an update on the pressures facing the NHS due to the rising Omicron variant and the measures being taken to stem its transmission.
2.	<b>Covid19 - 21 Day Review Cycle – Update – For Information</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	Due to the severity of the situation the Minister outlined the additional measures to be introduced. The private sector asked for greater clarity over the potential to fine people for travelling to work unnecessarily. The trade unions supported this call and felt that restrictions would focus on workers rather than employers. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership explained that the focus would remain on employers and the Counsel General said the fining system would be used on an exceptional basis and would empower and protect employees and their representatives in resisting unreasonable demands to come into work. The devolved employers called for greater clarity in the future regarding home working and the testing of close contacts. It was confirmed the issues raised would be discussed with the FM and progressed further.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 13 January 2022

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>No set Agenda</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The CMO explained that transmission figures were moving in a positive direction but that community transmission remained high. He outlined the on-going impact on the NHS. The Minister emphasised the need for continued caution and outlined the restrictions that would be announced the following day by the FM. The private sector supported the clarity offered by the Welsh Government and asked what conditions would trigger an easing of the self-isolation period. The trade unions supported the maintenance of restrictions underpinned by scientific evidence. The Minister stressed that more analysis would be required before any reduction in self-isolation periods could be made. The trade unions referenced concerns discussed at the Schools Partnership Forum but generally supported the approach taken by Welsh Government. The Counsel General explained that the plans outlined had been based on transmission continuing to decline.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 20 January 2022

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	<b>Covid19 Update - For Discussion</b>	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO confirmed transmission levels were significant but declining. The trade unions asked about confidence levels in the booster campaign and whether a fourth jab would be required. The Human Rights Commissioner asked if data was available for vaccination take up in ethnic minority communities. The CMO confirmed high levels of confidence in the booster campaign and explained that the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) felt that a fourth booster was not required at this point. The CMO confirmed he would provide data on vaccine take-up amongst ethnic minority and disabled groups.

2.	<b>Covid19 - 21 Day Review Cycle – Update – For Information</b>	First Minister	The FM outlined the detail of the review announcement he would make the following day. He reiterated that the current position was based on the effectiveness of the vaccination programme and that Wales had the lowest levels of transmission in the UK. The trade unions and the Children’s Commissioner for Wales expressed concern over the lifting of restrictions in schools and the FM acknowledged the importance of being cautious and following scientific advice.
3.	<b>Business Support Update – For Information</b>	Minister for Economy	The Minister outlined previous funding that had been provided for businesses and explained that a discretionary fund would also be delivered by local authorities. He outlined some of the details of this and the impact of UK Government decisions on Welsh Government funding. The private sector emphasised the importance of positive messaging in building business confidence and the trade unions asked what funding would be made available for the cultural sector. The Minister acknowledged the importance of positive messaging and confirmed discussions were on-going with the cultural sector. The Minister mentioned the anticipated levelling up White Paper from the UK Government and the likely limitations on any replacement funding but welcomed further discussion with members. The trade unions highlighted the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the Minister and the FM outlined the Welsh Government’s approach but stressed the impact of financial decisions being made by the UK Government.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 10 February 2022

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	<b>Covid19 Update - For Discussion</b>	First Minister	The FM explained that the next few meetings of the SSPC would have a designated item addressing the long-term impact of Covid 19 across key portfolio areas. The CMO confirmed transmission and hospital admission levels remained high but stable and that there were no new variants of concern. The devolved employers asked if it was likely an annual booster programme would be implemented. The CMO confirmed advice was anticipated shortly from the Joint Council on Immunisation and Vaccination (JCVI) but that this was unlikely to be implemented immediately.

2.	<b>Covid19 Review Cycle Update – For Information</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed discussions at Cabinet had focussed on moving beyond Alert Level Zero and were changing from a mandatory to an advisory approach to restrictions. The FM provided more detail on specific areas. Social partners asked for clarity regarding the work from home requirement. The FM explained this would now be advice but remained one of the most powerful methods of stemming transmission. The trade unions explained that some UK Government offices in Wales were pressurising staff to come into work. The FM confirmed he had written on this matter and that UK Government departments in Wales must follow Welsh regulations.
3.	<b>Long Term Impact of Covid19 – NHS - For Discussion</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister emphasised that the longer-term harms of Covid19 had been monitored by the Welsh Government alongside reacting to the immediate pandemic. She emphasised the scale of the challenge ahead including the need to reduce the NHS treatment backlog. The Minister stressed the importance of addressing health inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic through the newly established Health Inequalities Group and outlined future funding for health. The voluntary sector stressed the important role they could play going forward which was acknowledged by the Minister who also highlighted the need to join up social care and the NHS which she was discussing with the Deputy Minister for Social Services.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 3 March 2022

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Minister for Health and Social Services and Dr Fu-Meng Khaw, National Director of	The Minister highlighted the importance of the vaccination programme in stemming transmission moving towards Alert Level Zero and confirmed the Welsh Government's Vaccination Strategy had been published on the 24 February. Dr Fu-Meng Khaw confirmed that transmission and hospitalisation rates had continued to fall across Wales and that Omicron was now the dominant variant. He outlined the impact on the NHS as well as planning for moving from pandemic to the endemic stage. The private sector stressed the effectiveness of Lateral Flow Tests and the need to continue their free provision. The devolved employers stressed the need to build vaccination surge capacity in the event of new variants of concern. Dr Fu-Meng Khaw



		Health Protection and Screening Services, Public Health Wales (PHW)	outlined on-going work to ensure testing capacity was maintained and supported the Lateral Flow Tests.
2.	<b>Covid19 - Review Cycle – Update – For Information</b>	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister confirmed the Welsh Government would, the following day, publish its transition plan setting out the approach to the endemic stage of Covid19. She explained this would offer 2 scenarios – Stable and Urgent. The Minister emphasised the significance of protecting the vulnerable and the vaccination programme. She confirmed both spring and autumn booster campaigns would be offered for specific groups and outlined details for testing going forward. The Minister confirmed that on the 24 March the majority of the devolved provisions in the Coronavirus Act would expire. The trade unions asked when the work from home advice would be lifted and raised concerns about the haste with which the transition plan had been developed. The Minister explained the reasons for this and offered assurances that social partners views had been considered.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 24 March 2022

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	<b>Covid19 Update - For Discussion</b>	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO explained that as anticipated, levels of transmission remained high and were rising. He outlined the key reasons and explained there had been a steep increase in hospital admissions but that this had not impacted on intensive care. The CMO confirmed an autumn booster campaign was likely. The private sector asked if the spring and summer periods had been factored into future transmission projections. The CMO explained that a decrease in

			transmission throughout the summer was anticipated ahead of a resurgence later in the year. The CMO then outlined on-going Covid19 surveillance work.
2.	<b>Covid19 - Review Cycle – Update – For Information</b>	First Minister	The FM confirmed Cabinet had met earlier and explained that whilst transmission was manageable the impact on the NHS was significant. He confirmed that face coverings in health and social care settings would be retained and that Covid19 workplace risk assessments would continue for the next 3 weeks. The private sector emphasised their on-going commitment to workplace safety. Devolved employers emphasised the impact of self-isolation absence on local government services. The trade unions outlined concerns over workplace guidance and asked what advice would be provided to employers when restrictions were lifted. The FM outlined provisions post the 28 March and stressed the increased threat posed by flu during the winter period following prolonged periods of isolation.
3.	<b>Long Term Impact of Covid19 – Economy - For Discussion</b>	Minister for Economy	The Minister outlined the current impact of the pandemic, departure from the European Union, the cost-of-living crisis and the UK Government's settlement on the Welsh economy. He emphasised the importance of skills development for Wales including an increase in apprenticeships. The private sector outlined their commitment to supporting staff and suggested best practice examples could be developed. The trade unions highlighted the negative practices of some employers and the needs of vulnerable workers. The Minister supported proposals to develop best practice examples to address the cost-of-living crisis and stressed Welsh Government opposition to unethical work practices.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 13 April 2022

<b>Item</b>	<b>Ministerial Lead</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	
1.	<b>Covid19 Update - For Discussion</b>	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO confirmed transmission remained high reflecting levels across the UK but due to the vaccination programme this had not impacted further on the NHS. He explained that there may be a need for a further booster campaign later in the year but this would depend on advice issued by the Joint Council on Immunisation and Vaccination (JCVI). The CMO outlined 3 key priorities including the Covid19 surveillance work that was being developed. The Human Rights Commissioner highlighted the priority needs of the over 75s and the

			vulnerable. The CMO confirmed Wales would follow JCVI guidance on vaccination prioritisation.
2.	<b>Covid19 - Review Cycle – Update – For Information</b>	Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution	The Minister explained that Cabinet had decided to continue with the mandatory use of face coverings in health and social care settings but to no longer apply the requirement for a mandatory Covid19 workplace risk assessment. Moving forward the Minister stressed that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and local authorities would be the main bodies for ensuring compliance with workplace regulations.
3.	<b>Long Term Impact of Covid19 – Social Services - For Discussion</b>	Deputy Minister for Social Services	The Deputy Minister explained that the pandemic had exacerbated existing fragilities within social care. She referenced staff shortages and attempts to recruit into the sector and the Welsh Government's commitment to introduce the real living wage for social care. The Deputy Minister outlined funding and increased on-line support for social care workers. She confirmed that children's services had remained relatively stable throughout the pandemic and emphasised her commitment to ensuring adult care homes swiftly return to normal. The trade unions stressed the importance of unionising the social care workforce and the Deputy Minister confirmed she would discuss further with them. The Children's Commissioner asked if the use of face coverings in children's homes had been considered and the Deputy Minister explained this would be addressed in on-going engagement with social partners.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 14 July 2022

<b>Item</b>	<b>Ministerial Lead</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	
1.	<b>Achievements of the SSPC and Lessons Learnt – For Discussion</b>	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	The Deputy Minister explained that this would be the last meeting of the SSPC in its current form designed to address the challenge of Covid19 and thanked members for their advice throughout the pandemic. The trade unions acknowledged that the regularity of meetings throughout the pandemic, the ability to have very open discussions and to feed in advice had been helpful. However, they felt there had not always been enough time to do this. They felt relationships with employers had been strengthened by the SSPC. The Deputy Minister explained that there had not always been time to fully consult with social partners. The voluntary sector stressed the importance of continuing to

			work in social partnership to address the challenges ahead. The private sector felt relationships had been strengthened, commended the speed of decision making but felt there needed to be a refreshed strategic focus for any repurposed forum. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales also supported the view of strengthened partnership relations but stressed that a more detailed analysis of long-term challenges was needed.
2.	<b>SSPC Transition and Next Steps – For Information</b>	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	The Deputy Minister reiterated the importance of the SSPC transitioning to a new mode of operation following the pandemic. Whilst not wishing to pre-empt the Senedd, the Deputy Minister explained that it would be important to have a body in place that could discuss key aspects of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) (SPPP) Bill. She confirmed that a new body called the Social Partnership Forum would be established for the autumn and that officials would provide further details in due course.
3.	<b>Covid19 Transmission - For Information</b>	Deputy Chief Medical Officer	The DCMO confirmed that infection rates had been increasing but there had been relatively low levels of severe harm recorded. He explained that the Omicron variant was more transmissible than previous variants but that it was unclear when it would peak. The Deputy Minister warned against complacency and asked members to continue promoting health and safety messaging through their networks. The trade unions asked for more information on Covid19 and flu vaccination programmes heading towards the autumn. The DCMO explained that a booster vaccination would likely be offered for the over 50s and those with chronic conditions to be administered with other seasonal vaccines.
4.	<b>Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill Update – For Information</b>	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	The Deputy Minister confirmed that the SPPP Bill had been introduced to the Senedd on the 7 June. She reiterated its aim to put social partnership on a statutory footing and outlined the evidence she had provided to various Senedd committees. The Deputy Minister confirmed that from the evidence presented there appeared to be clear support from social partners over the need for legislation and that they were already engaging in the work of a new Programme Board established by officials to oversee the creation of the new statutory SPC and implementation of the duties set out in the Bill. The Deputy Minister put on record the appreciation of the Welsh Government for the advice and contributions made by members throughout the Covid19 pandemic.