

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Strong Communities Select  
Committee held at County Hall, Usk on  
Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor S.G.M. Howarth (Chairman)

County Councillors: A. Easson, M. Hickman, M. Powell, V.E. Smith and S. White

County Councillors D. Blakebrough, G.L. Down, R.J.C. Hayward and S. Jones attended the meeting by invitation of the Chairman.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mrs. K. Beirne	- Chief Officer, Enterprise
Mr. R. Hoggins	- Head of Operations
Ms. D. Hill-Howells	- Head of Community Delivery
Mrs. S Wiggam	- Senior Strategy & Policy Officer
Miss H. Ilett	- Scrutiny Manager
Mr. R. Williams	- Democratic Services Officer

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1. Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors R.M Edwards, D.W.H. Jones, P. Murphy, A.E. Webb and A.M. Wintle.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2. Declarations of Interest are recorded under the relevant minute.

**CALL-IN OF CABINET DECISION REGARDING THE SALE OF LAND AT  
MYNYDDBACH TO MONMOUTHSHIRE HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

3. County Councillor V.E. Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Members' Code of Conduct as she is a member of Monmouthshire Housing Association.

County Councillor S. White declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Members' Code of Conduct as she is a member of Monmouthshire Housing Association and also the chair of the Monmouthshire Housing Association Project Board.

The Chairman advised that the Strong Communities Select Committee meeting had been arranged in order to consider a call in request in respect of the decision taken by Cabinet on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 regarding the sale of land at Mynyddbach to Monmouthshire Housing Association (M.H.A).

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We received a call in request in respect of the decision taken by Cabinet on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 regarding the sale of land at Mynyddbach to Monmouthshire Housing Association, as follows:

- To agree to the sale of land at Mynyddbach to Monmouthshire Housing Association at less than best consideration, using the powers provided via the General Disposal Consent Order (Wales) 2003.

The reasons for the call in were noted, as follows:

- The sale at less than best consideration fails to provide proper value for money and represents an unjustified subsidy to M.H.A.

The Chairman invited the members who had called in the Cabinet decision to make comments and ask questions in respect of the decision and the following points were noted:

- Members who had called in the Cabinet decision were in favour of affordable housing being located within Shirenewton and had accepted the Planning Committee's decision regarding affordable housing on this site. However, the issue related to the method of construction to be applied which was considered to be more expensive than conventional methods.
- The additional costs would be incurred by the County Council, as the Sustainable Futures Commissioner and the Welsh Government would not contribute financially to this endeavour. The Authority should not be subsidising this scheme.
- The scheme would not provide better homes for vulnerable people. It would be an experiment in building techniques.
- A reduction in income would be received for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme.
- The scheme does not support local business enterprise.
- Best value would not be achieved for Monmouthshire's taxpayers.
- The sale of the land should be subject to competition via the open market and to obtain the maximum value of this asset.

The Chairman invited officers to address the Select Committee and the Members who had called in the Cabinet decision to outline the reasons for agreeing to the sale of the land at less than best consideration. Members were informed of the following:

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- The project was not dependent on acquiring this land.
- The Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group had recommended that the project be undertaken on this land.
- Any additional cost would be met by Monmouthshire Housing Association.
- The General Disposal Consent Order (Wales) 2003 enables the Authority to facilitate the scheme that could not be delivered via the private sector.
- The implementation of the scheme would demonstrate added value.
- Of the three housing associations that the Authority works with, Monmouthshire Housing Association was selected to provide affordable housing for this scheme.
- The site is an exceptional site that lies outside of the Local Development Plan.
- The scheme will be funded via the Social Housing Grant.
- The site will be sold at less than best value to accommodate the pilot scheme. Additional funds will be available via Welsh Government to support the scheme.
- Concern was expressed that the Cabinet Member was not present. However, it was noted that the Cabinet Member had had a prior engagement and was unable to attend.

The Chairman informed Select Committee Members that in terms of the call in procedure, three options were available:

1. Accept the Cabinet's Decision.
2. Refer the matter back to Cabinet for re-consideration (with reasons).
3. Refer the matter to Council for consideration.

It was therefore proposed by County Councillor S. White and seconded by County Councillor M. Hickman to refer the matter back to Cabinet for re-consideration as the reasons within the Cabinet Log did not adequately explain why the land was to be sold at less than best value.

Upon being put to the vote the following votes were recorded:

For the proposal	-	3
Against the proposal	-	0
Abstentions	-	3

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The proposition was carried.

We resolved to refer the matter back to Cabinet for re-consideration as the reasons within the Cabinet Log did not adequately explain why the land was to be sold at less than best value.

**CHARGES FOR STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING**

4. We received the draft Street Naming and Numbering Policy.

Members were reminded that the policy had been received at the previous Strong Communities Select Committee. Since that meeting the policy had been updated. Monmouthshire's charges were now the same as Newport City Council.

Monmouthshire's charges compared with other local authorities and were close to the Welsh average. However, the charges were slightly below the average for local authorities in England.

We resolved to receive the report and note its content.

**SPEED MANAGEMENT FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF A PETITION FOR A  
50MPH SPEED LIMIT ON THE B4598 AND R64**

5. We received a report by the Traffic and Network Manager on speed management following receipt of a petition for a 50mph speed limit on the B4598 and R64.

Members were informed that in light of the petition calling for a 50mph speed limit along the B4598 and R64 to Council in December 2013 and the wider issues of community concerns about speed limits and the potential implications of such changes, the development of a Speed Management Policy for Monmouthshire was being considered.

The local Member for Llanover and representatives of the public were in attendance and the Chairman invited them to address the Select Committee in respect of the petition for a 50mph speed limit along the B4598 and R64.

The following information was noted:

- The Police Commissioner and the Bryn y Cwm Area Committee support the need for a 50 mph speed limit on the B4598 and R64.
- The current speed limit on the B4598 and R64 has created a detrimental effect on the local community and local tourism.

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- For many years, Llanover Community Council has expressed concern regarding the number of road accidents that have occurred on these routes, many of which had not been reported to the police.
- The Bryn y Cwm Road Safety Sub Committee had been established in which the highways issues in respect of the B4598 had been discussed. Subsequently, the Bryn y Cwm Area Committee had voted unanimously to support the petition by the Local Member for Llanover to reduce the speed limit to 50mph on the B4598 and R64.
- Traffic speeds on the B4598 and R64 have increased in the last 10 years. Summer activities at Llanfair Kildeddin Community Hall have had to be curtailed on safety grounds. Improved road safety was required at this location.
- Speeding motorcycles, particularly during the summer months, were creating noise levels that were detrimental to the surrounding community affecting the quality of life of local people.
- Farming, local businesses and tourism in the area were being affected making it difficult to sell rural Monmouthshire to the wider public.
- The speeding vehicles and noise generated were creating a detrimental effect on trade for a local public house.
- It has taken 12 years to obtain a 40mph speed limit outside Llanfair Kilgeddin Primary School.
- The local community were asking the Select Committee to support the petition for a reduction in the speed limit to 50mph on the B4598 and R64 as a matter of public safety.

Having received the report and the views expressed by the local Member and residents of the community, the following points were noted:

- Select Committee Members expressed their support for a reduction in the speed limit to 50 mph on the B4598 and R64. It was considered that the speed limit on sections of these routes could be reduced even further to 40mph, with a temporary 20mph speed limit outside Llanfair Kilgeddin Primary School. The local Member stated that the petition

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referred to a reduction in the speed limit to 50mph. However, for built up areas, the request would be for a speed limit of 40mph.

- The police would need to be able to enforce any reduction in the speed limit on these routes.
  
- The Traffic and Network Manager stated that the Capita report had resulted in the implementation of advisory signs on bends, extended to cover the Abergavenny area. 'Slow Down' signs had been installed in Llanfair Kilgeddin. There was a need for a consistent countywide speed limit policy. This could be investigated via a working Group.

It was proposed and seconded that in addition to the recommendation outlined in the report to establish a Member Working Group, which would be led by relevant officers and the Cabinet Member, the Select Committee would also support a reduction in the speed limit to 50mph on the B4598 and R64 with a request being made to the Cabinet Member to consider implementing a single member decision, as soon as possible, following the appropriate consultation period.

We resolved to:

- (i) establish a Member Working Group, which would be led by relevant officers and the Cabinet Member, regarding the development of a Speed Management Policy for Monmouthshire. Such a policy would need to seek to achieve an appropriate balance between the concerns of the local communities with the practicalities of delivering changes to existing speed limits taking into account national legislation and policy. The Group could also consider how officers currently assess speed limits and consider whether a specific Monmouthshire County Council policy would help to ensure that a more appropriate approach is adopted or whether there are no benefits from moving away from the current method of assessment and practice;
  
- (ii) support a reduction in the speed limit to 50mph on the B4598 and R64 with a request being made to the Cabinet Member to consider implementing a single member decision, as soon as possible, following the appropriate consultation period.

**The meeting terminated at 12.30 p.m.**