

**Minutes of the Strong Communities Select Committee meeting
held in Steve Greenslade Conference Room, County Hall, Usk on
Thursday, 18th September 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**

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

County Councillors: D.L.S. Dovey, R. Edwards, A. Easson, P. Jordan and V.E. Smith.

Also in attendance County Councillors D. Edwards and S.B. Jones.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr R. Hoggins	- Head of Operations
Mr B. Winstanley	- Acting Estates Manager
Mrs R. Jowitt	- Head of Waste and Street Services
Miss H. Ilett	- Scrutiny Manager
Mrs N. Perry	- Democratic Services Officer
Mrs S. King	- Senior Democratic Services Officer

1. SCRUTINY OF CRIME AND DISORDER MATTERS

There were no crime and disorder items to scrutinise.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors, S. Jones, S. White and K. Williams.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor D. Edwards declared a personal interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct as a member of ACT.

4. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public in attendance.

5. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Strong Communities Select Committee meeting held on Thursday 10th July 2014 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

Apologies add 'Councillor R. Edwards'

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In reviewing the action sheet, we noted the following points:

- The speed monitoring working group had met and a visit would be undertaken to the CCTV office. Mr Lewis had been invited to attend the next working group meeting.

**6. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15 MONTH 3
OUTTURN FORECAST STATEMENT**

We agreed that the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring 2014/15 Month 3 Outturn Forecast statement report would be deferred to next meeting.

7. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF THE PEOPLE STRATEGY

We agreed that pre-decision scrutiny of the People Strategy would be deferred to the next meeting.

8. PARK STREET LEASE TO ACT – UPDATE

We received a report which updated member son the Park Street project, presented by the Acting Estates Manager.

Some members expressed dissatisfaction that the Cabinet member and senior officer had not attended.

We noted that a question had been raised at a full Council meeting and this had been deferred to a future meeting.

The committee were reminded that a decision made by Cabinet was called in and the Strong Communities Select scrutinised the report on the 28th November, it was subsequently agreed to refer the matter to full Council.

Council considered the report on 16th January 2014 and agreed to ratify the original Cabinet decision, which involved funding the works from the Property Maintenance Budget by deferring planned works to the Schools Kitchen programme.

It was confirmed that following the decision by Full Council, Property Services have engaged in undertaking the works which include:

- Undertaking an asbestos survey
- Strip out of identified asbestos
- Completion of fire precaution works
- Completion of a new fire alarm and emergency lighting

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- Repairing suspended ceilings.

The main elements of the works were completed on site at the beginning of September, the final snagging works are currently being agreed and should be completed in the near future.

There were outstanding issues identified in relation to the main lease, however, the committee were advised that these issues should not cause the project to be delayed further.

We were notified of one other issue There was an issue which we
Works done and lease on course to be signed.

A report was presented to Cabinet on 6th November seeking funding to undertake health and safety works to the former Park Street School to enable the letting of the property to Abergavenny Community Trust, a community organisation.

ACT were reluctant to apply for grant funding until the works had commenced as a copy of the lease agreement would have to be provided, ACT were not prepared to enter into an agreement until health and safety works have been completed.

During consideration of the report we noted:

- Members requested figures and breakdown of costs in the event that work had not been required. We expected that a repayment facility should have been built into the project, when grants were received from ACT.
- A query was raised whether ACT legal costs would be indemnified. Officers advised that they were unable to provide at the present time but information could be obtained following the meeting.
- Concerns were expressed that the initial survey may have been inadequate, as snagging issues were not identified.
- We were informed that issues had presented themselves during the process and when works had already commenced. It was noted that legal dialogue had contributed to delays.
- Some members perceived that the budget for the project had been overestimated at the start, which had subsequently resulted in an under spend.
- The committee expressed disapproval of the proposed 12 month lease and it was suggested that 3 year rolling lease would be more appropriate.
- In response, the phased approach would be 3 year term, funding had been sought. If funding was secured then it would be reviewed and a 25 year lease would be pursued.
- The Car Park area was where the main building site would be developed. Parking could be provided on the school playground area, which would be surplus as an asset. There had been thoughts for the

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playground to be extended for workshops and uses which were not included in the original ideas. Members were reassured that this to extend to playground for workshops and other uses, which weren't part of original ideas. This aspect would not cause the project to be delayed as it would be treated separately.

- We recognised the need for a longer lease and for income to be generated through the car park.

In summing up, we agreed that the car park should become part of the project and further information should be obtained from the Cabinet Member, the committee recommended that a 3 year lease should be considered. In addition, legal issues should be progressed and resolved.

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

We agreed to exclude the press and public during consideration of the following item, on the grounds that it included exempt information.

10. KERBSIDE COLLECTED ORGANICS TREATMENT CONTRACT

We were presented with a report which updated members on the proposed arrangements for kerbside collected organics treatment contract.

The committee agreed to note the report.

11. RE-ADMISSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

We readmitted the press and public.

12. STRONG COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014 – 15 & CABINET FORWARD WORK PLANNER

We received the Work Programme for the Strong Communities Select Committee and the Forward Work Planner for Cabinet and Council Business.

- A date would be arranged for a member seminar regarding street lighting.
- It was clarified that issues had been presented regarding switching off of lights in some areas and these had been addressed.
- Items for the next meeting 16th October:
 - Rights of Way
 - A-board and advertising
 - People Strategy and Finance report (deferred)
- A joint meeting of all selects would be held on 9th October 2014 and the Single Integrated Plan would be scrutinised.

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- Recycling Review – Special meeting Tuesday 18th
- Joint select committee with adults on 9th October
- Items for the meeting dated 20th November:
 - Crime and disorder public protection update
 - Affordable Housing
 - Pollinator policy
- Additional items to be considered:
 - Update from Local Area Coordinators
 - Sustainable Energy

We resolved to note the Committee work programme and Cabinet Forward Work Planner for information.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

We noted future meetings of Strong Communities Select Committee as:

- Special Joint with Adults – Thursday 9th October 2014 at 2pm
- Special – Thursday 16th October 2014 at 2pm
- Thursday 20th November 2014 at 2.30pm

The meeting terminated at 12.40pm.