

Minutes of the Special meeting of the Strong Communities Select Committee held in the Steve Greenslade Conference Room, County Hall, Usk on Thursday 16th October 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

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

County Councillors: D.L.S. Dovey, A. Easson, R. Edwards, S. Jones, V.E. Smith, S. White and K. Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. K. Beirne	- Chief Officer, Enterprise
Mr. P. Davies	- Head of Commercial and People Development
Mr. R. Hoggins	- Head of Operations
Mr B. Winstanley	- Estates and Sustainability
Ms. L. Knight-Davies	- Innovation Officer
Mr. M. Howcroft	- Assistant Head of Finance
Mr. S. Lane	- Area Engineer
Miss H. Ilett	- Scrutiny Manager
Mr. R. Williams	- Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors P.A.D. Hobson and R.P. Jordan.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest are identified under the relevant minute.

3. PROPOSED ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

We undertook pre-decision scrutiny in respect of the proposed Asset Management Plan.

In doing so, the following points were noted:

- One Voice Wales should be added to the list of consultees.
- In response to a Members question, it was noted that safeguards had been established, i.e., the right of pre-emption had been built into the disposal of freehold properties.
- The District Valuer was responsible for undertaking the valuation of properties to be sold.
- £1.2 million had been generated from the sale of two holdings.

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- A rent review was undertaken every three years and was reviewed externally on an annual basis.
- Rents were determined by the amount of profit generated.
- Succession rights have been removed. However, in some cases tenants have requested to buy the farms that they rent from the Authority at the full commercial rate in order for their children to continue to farm the land.
- Affordable homes were sold at the commercial value.
- There had been no further update regarding the sale of the public toilets at Raglan.

We resolved that:

- (i) One Voice Wales would be added to the list of consultees.
- (ii) The Select Committee receives an update regarding the sale of the public toilets at Raglan.

**4. PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DRAFT STRATEGY
2014-17**

We received a report and presentation by the Chief Officer, Regeneration regarding the draft People and Organisational Development Strategy 2014-17.

It was noted that that the Strategy had been approved by Cabinet on 15th October 2014. The next stage would be to present the Strategy to partners with a view to creating a dynamic, living document.

Members were informed of the following:

Purpose of the Strategy

- Connects, binds and aligns key components of people and organisational development.
- Means our people development is linked to, and supports, core purpose & business approach.
- Cultivates the capacity to develop solutions to problems and improve performance.

Some key principles

- 'People' – on & off payroll.
- Driving change through people.

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- Not about 'Employee Services'.
- Creating conditions in & out.
- Competitive advantage.
- From sound / solid public administration to nimble, light footed social business.
- Right skills to meet changing demands of organisation and society.

Opportunities the Strategy will provide

- Enable us to focus on 'what will good look like'.
- Enable us to connect people to purpose to improve performance.
- Give us a greater ability to adapt.
- Provide our workforce with the right skills to meet the changing demands of our organisation and society.
- Forge stronger relationships with those people off our payroll to unlock new ideas, opportunities and resources.
- Shared understanding across the whole authority.
- Shared ownership across the whole authority.
- An approach that belongs to the whole authority.

Barriers and issues

- Risk.
- Perceptions.
- Failure and low tolerance in times of austerity.
- Lack of shared ownership / delivery.
- 'Waste of time / money / resources / space'.
- Efficiency kills effectiveness.

How will we know?

- Transitioning the gap:
 - Improvement Plan tells us 'on course'.
 - Medium Term Financial Plan tells us 'on course'
 - Feedback: (staff survey, evaluation of initiatives, customer insights) – confidence, trust and participation increases.
 - ROI of People Services.
 - Numbers of new ideas (& into action).
 - Happiness and wellbeing rated highly.
 - Closer integration of performance & culture.
 - Improvements in absence rates.
 - Decision making is data-led.
 - Culture – intrinsic ability to adapt.

Themes and Priorities

1. Our work environment – composition of workforce, agile, accommodation, tools to do job, social media, the Hub, IT & creative spaces.

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2. **Engaging our people** – networks / groups, Monmouthshire Engages, employee engagement, induction, employee volunteering, staff survey & dialogue with leadership.
3. **Training, coaching and development** – RESULT, ILM, NVQs, ideas sessions, inspirational speakers.
4. **Systems leadership** – service reviews, invest to redesign, systems thinking & commercial development
5. **People development policies, procedures**
6. **Building careers** – recruitment, work experience, mentoring, apprenticeships (Y-Prentis, Ways into Work, Jobs Growth Wales).
7. **Diversity inclusion and wellbeing** – equalities, health and safety, employee welfare, sickness and absence, Time to Change Wales Pledge.
8. **Driving improvement and performance** – check-in check-out appraisal, budget link, 121s, connected planning to purpose, self-evaluation & future-proofing.

Next 12 months?

- Scheduled approach to delivery and penetration of strategy.
- Evaluation of agile working & ROI.
- People Toolkit / Handbook.
- Monmouthshire Engages 2.0.
- Recruitment Drive: 'Information Days'.
- Additions to policy suite – employee volunteering, work experience, talent management.
- Leadership Development Programme.
- Data – quality, reporting, systems, infrastructure and people.
- Staff survey.
- Continue roll-out of Check-in Check-out.
- Continue mandatory roll-out of RESULT.
- Work experience and mentor programme.
- Embed self-evaluation.

Having received the report and presentation, the following points were noted:

- In response to a Member's question, it was acknowledged that staff stress was evident.
- Staff were given the opportunity to attend the Intrapreneurship School to embrace a new skills set.
- Staff have identified the majority of savings that the Council has had to make.
- A need to recognise when the authority does not have the particular expertise and therefore knows when to bring in specialist services to work with staff and to launch ideas.

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- External expertise advises on how vulnerable services might be protected.
- Grow and develop ideas quickly via pilots to full implementation.
- Working with the community.
- In response to a Member's question regarding duty of care to staff, the Committee was informed that the County Council's Human Resources Team and Occupational Health were available to support staff. Staff could also access the Check in Check out Staff Appraisal System.
- Currently working with colleagues in the Children and Young People Directorate, Head Teachers and school clusters to deliver significant savings. Schools were being offered training to further develop their skills.
- A Member of the Committee considered that the Authority should follow Torfaen County Borough Council's example by providing residents with a magazine similar to the 'Torfaen Talks' in order to better engage with Monmouthshire residents.
- Public meetings and road shows have been held to engage with the public. Online platforms and the use of the one stop shops and libraries have also been used.
- The Authority has been identifying and making savings for the previous four years. In this time it has overcome short term challenges but it was recognised that the Authority needed to do things differently, embrace change and adapt to new ways of thinking.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

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

County Councillor A. Easson declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as he was a governor at Ysgol Y Ffin and his grandson was a part of Y-Prentis.

We received a report by the Assistant Head of Finance in which the Committee received information on the forecast outturn position of the Authority at the end of month 3 for the 2014/15 financial year.

Members were informed that a potential £219,000 overspend has been mitigated significantly by anticipated Council Tax receipts and treasury considerations. Therefore, net cost of services exhibits an overspend of £1,029,000. Whilst still a significant challenge, this was a favourable position

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over that calculated at quarter 1 2013/14 of a £1,700,000 overspend on net cost of services.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Details of the original budget should be included in future reports (additional column required).
- In response to a Member's question regarding the Operations Budget - Waste forecast overspend of £235,000, it was noted that there was likely to be an additional cost from the tendering of the recycling contract.
- The School Meals budget now fell under the remit of the Operations Budget and efforts were being made for this budget to break even.
- It was noted that in the region of £1.4 Million of the Home to School Transport Budget was spent on fuel. Therefore, a 5% increase / decrease in fuel costs would have a significant impact upon this budget. Currently, fuel costs equated to £20,000 of the budget overspend.
- Concern was expressed regarding the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Transport costs. Details were requested.
- Managers throughout the Authority were in the process of identifying ways to balance their budgets. It was noted that savings made in some directorates might need to be made in order to help balance budgets in other directorates.
- Schools Budgets were forecast to be overspent by £375,000 by the end of the financial year.
- The Future Schools (Monmouth and Caldicot) schemes (£751,000) and the proposed new Abergavenny Library scheme (£3,433,000) were forecasted to slip into 2015/16. This slippage will delay the need to call on unsupported borrowing.
- It was noted that the Abergavenny Regeneration (£82,000) and the Caldicot School Drainage scheme (£53,000) was forecast to overspend and that financing needed to be identified to fund this expenditure.
- In response to a Member's question regarding Abergavenny Cattle Market, it was noted that there were still some issues to be addressed and the Authority would not take up ownership until these matters had been resolved.

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We resolved:

- (i) to receive the report and note its content;
- (ii) that future reports include details of the original budget (additional column required);
- (iii) that details of Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport costs be presented to the Committee in the next report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF COMMERCIAL OBSTRUCTION IN THE HIGHWAY POLICY

We received a report by the Area Engineer regarding the management of commercial obstruction on the Highway Policy. The Committee was invited to review the draft revised policy before it was presented to Cabinet.

Having considered the report, the following points were noted:

Static Advertising Policy

- Trunk Roads were not permitted to display advertising boards.
- Advertising boards were placed on straight sections of road but not at junctions or roundabouts.
- The Directorate was looking to manage this policy internally in future but to not burden current staff. Early consultation has indicated that the Authority needs to be mindful not to litter the County with advertising boards.
- All advertising signs have the Monmouthshire County Council logo on the bottom right hand corner of the sign.

A Board Policy

- The majority of A Boards were illegal. The revised policy would introduce charges.
- Some Members considered that the introduction of charging might have a detrimental effect on businesses and consultation with local communities would need to be undertaken if the policy was adopted.
- A Boards had to be placed within a half metre of the frontage of the premises. This was a Monmouthshire wide policy.
- The revised policy did not allow for remote advertising (businesses located along side roads). Therefore, negative feedback was

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anticipated from businesses within these locations. It was considered that town and community councils needed to be made aware of this issue.

Flay Posting Policy

- It was noted that little change had been made to this policy, with the introduction of two sentences.

We noted the remainder of the policies, as identified in the report.

We resolved:

- (i) to receive the report and note its content;
- (ii) that the report be presented to Cabinet for consideration.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Manager updated the Committee on their future workload:

- A special meeting of the Strong Communities Select Committee would be held on 18th November 2014 at 1.30pm (1.00pm pre-meeting). The items for scrutiny would be:
 - The Recycling Review.
 - Community Hubs and One Stop Shops.
 - The Rights of Way Policy.
- The ordinary meeting of the Strong Communities Select Committee had been postponed to the 20th November 2014 at 2.00pm (1.30pm pre-meeting). The items for scrutiny would be:
 - Performance Review of Public Protection.
 - Monmouthshire Local Development Plan.
 - Supplementary Planning Guidance - Affordable Housing (considered jointly with the above item)
 - Improvement Plan and Outcome Agreements.
- Due to excessive workload pressure and frequent scrutiny having taken place in respect of the Pollinator Policy, it was agreed that Alison Howard would be asked to provide an update on the progress of the Policy, which would be circulated to the committee via email rather than tabled as a future agenda item.
- The Head of Operations would check on progress regarding the sale of the public toilets at Raglan.

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- The Scrutiny Manager would check with Democratic Services that a letter had been sent to the Cabinet Member in respect of the Park Street Project, as an action arising from the previous meeting which discussed this matter.

The meeting ended at 5.20pm.