

**Minutes of the Strong Communities Select Committee meeting
held in the Steve Greenslade Conference Room, County Hall, Usk on
Thursday 20th November 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 and V.E. Smith.

Also in attendance: County Councillor R.G. Harris and G. Howard

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. D. Jones	- Head of Regulatory Services
Mr. G. Ashworth	- Head of Planning
Mr. M. Davies	- Development Plans Manager
Ms. S. Wiggam	- Senior Strategy & Policy Officer
Mr. G. Perry	- Public Protection Manager
Mr. M. Lewis	- Countryside Manager
Ms. R. Rourke	- Principal Countryside Access Officer
Miss H. Ilett	- Scrutiny Manager
Mr. R. Williams	- Democratic Services Officer

1. REVIEW OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE PUBLIC PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

We scrutinised the report regarding the review of service delivery in the Public Protection Department, noting the budget reduction implemented since April 2014.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Trading Standards was currently standing alone but was liaising with other local Authorities regarding partnership working. Investigations were being undertaken regarding the provision of a Gwent Trading Standards Service.
- Foot and Mouth funding has been reducing year on year since the outbreak in 2001.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the Department's ability to cope with a public protection issue, it was noted that the Department had the capacity to react in most situations. Should an emergency be of a larger scale, the department would utilise support from other nearby local authorities, together with other relevant agencies, for example Public Health Wales.
- The report referred to concerns regarding the Authority's capacity to progress its Contaminated Land Strategy. It was noted developers

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must have due regard to former use of brownfield sites, and Environmental Health check developer's land surveys. Although potential sites had been identified, further clarity is sought from Welsh Government regarding funding. This would warrant a future report to cabinet for decision on how this Authority progresses this issue.

- A number of successful prosecutions were noted in the report. However, it was acknowledged that budget pressures could impact on the Department's performance in future.
- Demands on the Department's services were increasing putting pressure on staff, so managers would need to manage their teams effectively and provide support.
- Public Health Bill - Future issues for the department included the increase in the use of E cigarettes and proposed minimum unit pricing for alcohol.
- In 2015 the Landlord Accreditation Scheme will be introduced.
- The Select Committee will receive the next report regarding the review of Service Delivery in the Public Protection Department in six months' time.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors R.P. Jordan, S. White and K. Williams.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor V.E. Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of minutes 7 and 8, as she is a member of Monmouthshire Housing Association Melin Housing.

4. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

The Select Committee welcomed Mary Barker who informed the Committee that she was concerned regarding the proposed changes to the library service in Abergavenny with the potential for a contraction in the service being provided.

The Chairman stated that there were no proposals to close libraries within Monmouthshire but the Authority was investigating ways to deliver its services more effectively. A Cabinet report entitled 'Building the Establishment and Capacity for Enterprise' has been called in which makes reference to library

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provision. This report will be scrutinised by the Strong Communities Select Committee at a special meeting on 24th November 2014.

5. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Strong Communities Select Committee meeting held on Thursday 16th October 2014 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

Page 8, change sub heading to – **Fly Posting Policy**

In considering the minutes, the following points were noted:

- A response had been received from the Assistant Head of Finance regarding budget issues. The Scrutiny Manager would email the response to the Select Committee.
- Public toilets would be added to the Select Committee Work programme.

6. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS - ITEM DEFERRED FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

We scrutinised the report regarding Countryside Access.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The replacement of Llangua Bridge was estimated to cost in the region of £250,000 to £500,000. Removal of the bridge will cost in the region of £10,000 to £15,000.
- Community Councils were being contacted informing them that there was a volunteer toolkit on line whereby anyone interested in rights of ways could use this tool to share skills with a view to engaging with the community. Maps were available on line for surveying / walking.
- The Authority was beginning to request Section 106 funding regarding bridge repair / removal. However, these bridges were located in remote places far from any development. It was noted that funding could also be obtained for bridge repair / removal via Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- Officers were also looking into Section 106 funding for solar parks within the authority.
- There was a backlog of maintenance work which was being prioritised due to lack of resources to undertake this work.

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- The total number of volunteers has increased which were covered by the Council's insurance policy.
- The Definitive Map was being digitised but work was required to bring the records up to date.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding Nethern Bridge, it was noted that the bridge did not currently require repair / maintenance. However, it will require some work in due course.
- It was considered that the volunteer sector was important. The retention of the post of part time Volunteer Coordinator will be known in December 2014. The retention of this post was key to maintaining the link with the volunteer sector. If funding was not available for this post it was considered that options needed to be investigated to identify a way of funding the post as a priority matter.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

7. MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

We scrutinised the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Affordable Housing to support the policies of the Monmouthshire Local Development Plan (LDP).

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question regarding Monmouthshire's LDP, if the Authority merges with another Authority in the future, it was noted that Monmouthshire was a rural County and it was hoped that the rural aspect would be retained should such a merger occur in the coming years.
- The Welsh Government was investigating the prospect of creating a regional policy with the first review being undertaken in October 2015.
- The Draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance was also being presented to Planning Committee and Cabinet. If approved a period of consultation would be established.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

8. AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMUNITED SUMS

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We scrutinised the report regarding Affordable Housing Commuted Sums in which Select Committee Members were provided with information in respect of the proposed mechanism for the utilisation of any commuted sums received for affordable housing from Section 106 Agreements attached to planning consents.

We resolved to agree the recommendation in the report that the proposed mechanism for the utilisation of commuted sums received in lieu of affordable housing and for the final decision on allocation of the monies to be delegated to the Head of Housing & Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Public Services and Housing.

9. QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT: IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOME AGREEMENT

We resolved to defer consideration of the Quarter 2 Performance Report: Improvement Objective and Outcome Agreement to the next meeting of the Strong Communities Select Committee on 24th November 2014.

10. STRONG COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014 – 15

We received the Work Programme for the Strong Communities Select Committee. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- Public toilets would be added to the work programme.
- Special Meeting - 11th December 2014 to discuss the Mandates / savings proposals and the Whole Authority Risk Log.
- Ordinary Meeting - 29th January 2015 to scrutinise the Risk Management report.

We resolved to receive the work programme and noted its content.

11. CABINET FORWARD WORK PLANNER

We resolved to receive the Cabinet Forward Work Planner and noted its content.

12. NEXT MEETINGS

We noted future meetings of Strong Communities Select Committee as:

- Special Meeting – 11th December 2014 at 10.00am.
- Ordinary Meeting – 29th January 2015 at 10.00am.

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The meeting terminated at 4.36pm.