

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Strong Communities Select Committee
held at County Hall, Usk on
Monday 24th November 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**

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

County Councillors: A. Easson, D. Dovey, R. Edwards, P. Jordan, M. Powell, V.E. Smith, S. White and K. Williams

County Councillors P. Farley, R. Harris, P. Murphy and P. Hobson attended the meeting by invitation of the Chairman.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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| Ms. K. Beirne | - Chief Officer, Enterprise |
| Ms. D. Hill-Howells | - Head of Community Delivery |
| Mr. I. Saunders | - Head of Leisure, Tourism and Heritage |
| Mr. P. Davies | - Head of Commercial and People Development |
| Mrs. T. Harry | - Head of Democracy and Regulatory Services |
| Miss H. Ilett | - Scrutiny Manager |
| Mrs. N. Perry | - Democratic Services Officer |

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors S. Jones.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. There were no declarations of interest.

CALL-IN OF CABINET DECISION REGARDING 'BUILDING THE ESTABLISHMENT AND CAPACITY FOR ENTERPRISE'

3. 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 5th November 2014 regarding the 'To Support Building the Establishment and Capacity for Enterprise'.

The purpose of the meeting was to consider the appropriateness of the decision that had already been taken by the Council's Executive.

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

- Reasons for the restructure were flawed. No or little emphasis had been made to retain or improve front line resource, opposed to a heavy reliance on creating a top level management structure.

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Strong Communities Select Committee
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Monday 24th November 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**

The Chairman invited the members who had called in the Cabinet decision to provide reasons for doing so.

The Chairman invited officers to address the Select Committee and the Members who had called in the Cabinet decision. Members were informed of the following:

- The report dealt with more than just the libraries and One Stop Shops.
- Resources were needed in the necessary places to ensure that the required savings could be made.
- The aim was to develop a different service delivery, and creating the capacity.
- Talks were held with the Town Team to develop the best solution.
- Managers were the front line staff, each manager was operational.

The Chairman invited Members of the Committee to ask questions. We noted the following:

- Members felt ill-informed regarding the decisions in the report. Over the course of the past year Strong Communities had a sub group for libraries until the officer had left the Authority.
- The Chair suggested that a separate discussion was needed to clarify the situation with the libraries and One Stop Shops.
- The One Stop Shop in Abergavenny had presented a paper on alternative ways of working, to be taken into consideration.
- A Member felt that combining libraries and One Stop Shops would be a difficult process resulting in the loss of experienced staff.

The Chairman invited Cabinet Members to address the committee, we heard the following:

- The Cabinet Member for Resources explained that the current structure was too expensive and if the process was delayed it would result in more closures. It was stressed that we needed to consider the proposals in terms of survival or closure of the services.
- The Cabinet Member for Community Development agreed that in the financial climate services needed to be reconfigured to make savings. If the services of libraries and One Stop Shops did not combine it was feared that the service would suffer. By agreeing to a hub system there would be a better chance of saving as many jobs as possible.

We heard from the Head of Community Delivery who explained that the structure would not be implemented until the budget mandate had been scrutinised. The items were included in the report to provide a likely scenario. We were told that a strong team of staff were capable of providing the services of libraries and one stop shops.

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Strong Communities Select Committee
held at County Hall, Usk on
Monday 24th November 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**

It was stressed that even though the concept of hub systems were new to Monmouthshire they were working effectively in other authorities and businesses.

Further clarity was requested in regards to the details of increasing and decreasing numbers of posts

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 to remove (f) and (g) of the report from this decision, the Committee would then agree the report. Items (f) and (g) should be subject to a separate report when the options for Libraries and One Stop Shops had been through the Budget Mandate and Consultation processes.

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

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|----------------------|---|---|
| For the proposal | - | 7 |
| Against the proposal | - | 1 |
| Abstentions | - | 0 |

The proposition was carried.

The Committee were asked to receive a report deferred from the meeting of Strong Communities on Thursday 20th November 2014.

**QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT: IMPROVEMNET OBJECTIVE AND
OUTCOME AGREEMENT**

The purpose of the report was to present the quarter 2 performance data for the Improvement Objective and Outcome Agreement Objectives which were under the remit of Strong Communities Select Committee. It was recommended that Members scrutinise the performance achieved and the impact made, and to assess progress and performance against the objectives

We noted the following:

- Page 12 of the report: the percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill – the figure would be adjusted regarding Project Gwyrdd.
- Integration with businesses within the communities was a developing and emerging piece of work.

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Strong Communities Select Committee
held at County Hall, Usk on
Monday 24th November 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**

- Members required further information on an ongoing basis with regards to the sale of assets.
- The number of days to issue a Disabled Facilities Grant was thought to be a high figure but was said to be in the top quartile in Wales.
- Members requested that a new staff directory should be issued. This would be followed up with the Democratic Services Committee.

The meeting terminated at 12.00 noon.