

**Minutes of the Strong Communities Select Committee meeting
held in the Steve Greenslade Conference Room, County Hall, Usk on
Thursday 29th January 2015 at 10.00 a.m.**

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

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

Also in attendance: County Councillors D.L. Edwards, R.J.W. Greenland and S.B. Jones

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. K. Beirne	- Chief Officer, Enterprise
Mr. R. Hoggins	- Head of Operations
Mr. P. Davies	- Head of Commercial & People Development
Mr. W. McLean	- Head of Policy and Partnerships
Mrs. D. Hill-Howells	- Head of Community Lead Delivery
Mr. P. Keeble	- Traffic and Network Manager
Mr. R. Jones	- Policy and Performance
Miss H. Ilett	- Scrutiny Manager
Mr. R. Williams	- Democratic Services Officer

SCRUTINY OF CRIME AND DISORDER MATTERS

1. There were no matters to discuss.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors R. Edwards, J. Prosser K. Williams and A. Wintle.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor A. Easson declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of minute 7 – Wales Audit Review of Whole Place, reference to Y Prentis, as his grandson is sponsored by Y Prentis.

4. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

The local Member for Llanbadoc made reference to a request for the County Council to take on the legal responsibility for the provision of a cycleway / footpath along the old railway line. A local cycling group had written to the Chief Executive requesting support for the creation of the route with a view to the Authority putting together such an initiative. The Principal of Coleg Gwent was in support of this proposal. It was hoped that the cycleway would be established before the Velothon in June 2015.

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The Traffic and Network Manager stated that the Welsh Government had established an active travel initiative which mapped all existing and future cycling routes. Work was also being undertaken with Sustrans with potential funding being available.

We resolved that this matter be added to the Strong Communities Select Committee Work Programme with a view to a report being brought to a future Select Committee meeting.

5. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Strong Communities Select Committee meeting held on Thursday 11th December 2014 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

In doing so the following points were noted:

- The Select Committee would keep the Highways Mandate on the Select Committee Work Programme in order to review any potential issues that might arise.
- Concern was expressed regarding the use of zero hour's contracts.

6. CALL IN REQUEST – PROPOSED 50MPH MAXIMUM SPEED LIMIT B4598 – PENPERGWM – USK AND R64 LLANVIHANGEL GOBION - RAGLAN

We received a call in request in respect of the decision taken by Cabinet on 7th January 2015 regarding the Proposed 50mph Maximum Speed Limit B4598 – Penpergwm – Usk and R64 Llanvihangel Gobion – Raglan.

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:

'Concerned with objections. Local Member feels that one of the orders is not sufficient. Not been through the Select and also not placed on the work Planner in advance for Select to even consider'.

The Chairman outlined the reasons for the call in and noted that the item had not been placed on the Select Committee Work Programme and it had been difficult to find on the Cabinet Forward Work Planner. Officers had been requested in April 2014 to undertake a piece of work in respect of this matter with a view to a report being presented to the Select Committee for scrutiny. However, the Select Committee had not received a report.

In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding timescales, the Traffic and Network Manager stated that by introducing a slower speed limit this would create a dis-benefit in timescales for motorists but would be

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better for residents in terms of safety. Speed limits were based on Welsh Government guidelines.

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

- The local Member for Llanover stated that residents had been campaigning for many years for a reduction in the speed limit along this stretch of road. However, she did not want to jeopardise the progress that had been made via the Cabinet decision. It would be better to accept the decision with a view to addressing the other highways issues in the future.
- The local Member for Llanbadoc stated that her comments regarding the Chainbridge to Weir Cottage section had not been included in the report that she had made during the consultation period. The Traffic and Network Manager apologised for the omission of the Member's comments.
- It was considered that the Craft Renaissance and local Golf Club should have been consulted. However, it was noted that notices had been posted and the community councils had been notified of the proposed orders.
- The Head of Operations stated that after the order has been implemented it would be possible to re-visit it in due course and review if required.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question, the Traffic and Network Manager stated that there were no specific accident 'black spots' along the route but accidents had occurred along this route.
- The Head of Operations stated that it was the intention to bring the report to the Select Committee for scrutiny and apologised for not doing so. The Chairman stated that the Cabinet Planner and the Select Committee Work Programme needed to be kept up to date in order to keep Members up to date on proposed work for the Council year.
- Councillor G. Thomas, a community councillor representing Llanfair Kilgeddin, stated that it had taken 15 years to obtain this order and would prefer to see it approved with a view to exploring the other highways issues at a later date.
- Appropriate signing would be required.

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

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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.

Having considered the views expressed, it was proposed that the Select Committee accepts the Cabinet decision.

Upon being put to the vote the proposition was carried unanimously.

We resolved to accept the Cabinet's decision.

7. WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW OF WHOLE PLACE

We scrutinised a report on progress of the Whole Place agenda following the Wales Audit Office (WAO) review reported to Strong Communities Select Committee on 10th July 2014. In doing so, the Select Committee received a presentation on progress to date. The Economy and Development Select Committee had been invited to attend the meeting to scrutinise the report with the Strong Communities Select Committee.

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

- The Town Team and Abergavenny Town Council were keen to work together and discussions were progressing.
- The Market Hall could be used as the venue for the Community Hub. However, other options were being considered.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding calculating the return on investment, it was noted that there had been 40,000 visitors for the National Road Race generating income in the sum of £715,000 for one day.
- Vibrant and Viable Places funding – A bid had been submitted to the Welsh Government. Officers had expressed disappointment as it had been felt that the Authority had met the requirements with community strength being a key aspect of the bid. A change in ministerial portfolios had occurred during the bid process. Now, successful schemes needed to be identified that will work via loan funding. A report would be presented to Cabinet in February 2015 regarding loan funding with a view to commence engagement with some local businesses.
- The Welsh Government had offered a £1.25M loan which the Authority needed to agree to accept by the end of February 2015. Therefore, due to tight timescales this matter had been presented straight to

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Cabinet for consideration and had not been presented for scrutiny via the Select Committee.

- The Abergavenny Business Club had been re-launched which was a key component of the Town Team.
- Business Improvement Development (BID) – The BID could bring on-going revenue into Abergavenny Town.
- Eisteddfod 2016 – Whole Place Officers were trying to ensure £300,000 was available. Meetings were being held. Also fund raising was being undertaken led by the community developing investments programme.
- The Abergavenny Fund Raising Committee has been established and had recently met for the first time.
- A Members' briefing session outlining progress will be held in due course.
- Whole Place was being established in two pilot areas. Progress in these areas was being evaluated before moving on to the other two areas, in order to ensure that it was working.
- There will be no additional costs as a result of the creation of the Whole Place Team. It was a retention on investment.
- The Council's financial investment into the Whole Place agenda has been small.
- The Town Councils (Abergavenny and Caldicot) were becoming involved in their respective Whole Place activities, e.g., Abergavenny Town Council had been involved in the development of the Town Team. There were two Town Council representatives serving on the Town Team and the Clerk to the Town Council was providing clerking services.
- The support of the community councils within the Bryn y Cwm area was being sought.
- A report on Community Led Plans should be added to the Work Programme later in the year and that the Economy and Development Select Committee would be invited to attend the meeting when that matter is to be scrutinised.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

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8. STRATEGIC RISK ASSESSMENT

We scrutinised a report in which Select Committee Members were provided with an overview of the current strategic risks facing the Authority.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The decision not to pursue the early voluntary merger following the Williams Commission recommendation could impact on some funding opportunities. It was noted that the merger offers had been turned down.
- There was clear uncertainty regarding core funding. Therefore, balancing future budgets will become increasingly difficult.
- Reference 3a – Potential that the authority is unable to deliver its new schools capital programme due to capital receipts not generating the required income – Risk level to remain as medium but the Select Committee would continue to review it.
- Reference 3b – Pressure on capital budget from 21st Century Schools Programme will impact on other areas requiring capital investment – Risk Level to remain as medium but the Select Committee would monitor the risk.
- Waste / recycling needed to be included in the Corporate Risk Assessment in future.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

**9. 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:

- The Community Safety Report to be added to the Select Committee Work Programme for April 2015.
- Postpone the Special Strong Communities Select Committee Meeting dated 10th February 2015.
- Raglan Toilets to be added to the Select Committee Work Programme for the meeting being held on 12th March 2015.
- A report regarding the provision of a cycleway / footpath along the old railway line be added to the Select Committee Work Programme.

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

10. CABINET FORWARD WORK PLANNER

It was noted that a number of items had been added to the Cabinet Forward Work Planner since the agenda for this meeting had been despatched.

The Chairman informed the Select Committee that he would contact the Senior Democratic Services Officer to discuss this matter further.

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

11. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Strong Communities Select Committee will be held on 12th March 2015 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 2.55pm.