

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

PRESENT: County Councillor S. White (Chair)

County Councillors: D. Blakebrough, G.C. Burrows, P.R. Clarke,
R.M. Edwards, E.J. Hacket Pain, P. Jones, R.J.C. Hayward, B.
Strong and A.M. Wintle

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. R. Hoggins - Head of Operations
Mrs. A. Perrin - Car Park Manager
Mr. R. Pritchard - Assistant Engineer
Mrs. S. Hughes - Community Development Officer
Mrs. D. McCarty - Area Services Officer
Ms. R. Rawlings - Democratic Services Officer

OTHER ATTENDEES:

Mr. R.G. Nicholas - Llangattock Vibon Avel Community Council
Mrs. J. Hall - Monmouth Town Council
Mrs. A. Dewhurst - Monmouth Town Council
Mr. A. Owen - Monmouth Town Council
Mr. R. Dagger - Trellech United Community Council
Mr. D. Pollitt - Llantrisant Fawr Community Council
Mr. A. Leathwood - Usk Town Council
Mr. T. Christopher - Visually Impaired Group
Mr. D. Hoyle - Visually Impaired Group

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor V.E. Smith.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. There were no interests declared by Members at the meeting.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

3. The Chairman invited members of the public present to put questions to the Area Committee, or to raise issues of concern which had occurred since the previous meeting.

The following items were raised:

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

- Mr. R.G. Nicholas, Clerk to Llangattock Vibon Avel Community Council, raised the following items:

Highways

At the Community Council's recent meeting the main topic was criticism of MCC Highways handling of highway diversions with particular reference to problems caused by the closure at the northern junction of the B4521 with the B4347 leading towards Grosmont.

At the junction there was a road closed sign indicating that the B4347 was closed, and it was considered more useful if the signage indicated at what point the road was closed to avoid motorists having to travel miles unnecessarily.

The construction of the 'road closed' and 'diversion pointer' signs were too light in weight to withstand even mild winds during the winter and members of the Community Council had raised that it would be preferable to work alongside Highways to monitor this signage, especially during long periods of road closures.

The Head of Operations informed Members that the issue with regard to signage at the Grosmont Diversion had been raised by County Councillors and residents and as a result the signage had been reviewed and improved to increase the amount of signage at the location. Following discussions with the local County Councillor, it had been agreed to add additional further signage to emphasise that Grosmont was open due to the unfortunate fact that the diversion would be in place for several weeks following land slippage onto the road.

Proposal to Close Llangattock Vibon Avel Community Area and Llantilio Crossenny Community Area and to create two new Community Councils

Mr. Nicholas informed Members that MCC had submitted a proposal based on the assumption that the electorate of the two community councils moved east/west, whereas in reality their movements were north/south.

The Clerks of the two community councils had not been informed regarding the proposals of the group prior to published consultation and no community councillors had been consulted.

It was considered that until MCC removed the proposal in its entirety, they were unable to lay the blame with the Boundary Commission for

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

Wales, and there would be no faith in the Authority's values of openness, fairness, flexibility and teamwork.

Mr. Nicholas intended writing to the Assembly Member to complain about this issue in what he considered to be a travesty of local democracy.

Members raised the following points in response to Mr. Nicholas:

- Every Parish Council had been sent a letter on 12th September 2012 when the group was first formed to ensure that Community Councils had an opportunity to input information, 13 responses had been received.
 - The group had moved forward, devising a system to comply with the rules given, in that each community council area would be responsible for a certain amount of electorate. This was still a matter under consultation and correspondence was welcomed from community councils.
 - It was raised that there had been open evenings, and following problems in Raglan which were raised at one of these evenings, the proposals there had been reversed.
 - Councillors had attended the meetings with regard to their respective areas and had received responses to issues raised.
 - Public hearings were held in order for the public to raise issues which then reported back to the full Member Working Group.
- Mrs. Jeanna Hall, Monmouth Town Council, referred to an item within the minutes of the previous meeting with regard to the kerb edge which had been extended on Hereford Road and was a danger and causing damage to cars that were driving over it due to its position.

We were informed that Mrs. Hall had written to the Authority but had received no response.

The Head of Operations informed Members that the matter had been raised with the Transport Policy and Compliance Manager. An email had been received from him which outlined that the pavement at the junction of Hereford Road and Osbaston Road was widened to provide a better crossing facility in response to requests over a number of years by many residents, and children attending local schools and other residents wanting to walk in the area. The build out was supported by new signage along Hereford Road, and white lane marking to denote the verge.

However following comments and observations received, along with officers from the Traffic Section, the Authority were looking at a number

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

of measures to re-iterate to road users the road layout and following full consideration any updates would be fed back.

- Mrs. Anthea Dewhurst, Monmouth Town Council raised the issue of A Boards within the town and made reference to correspondence to Mr. Pritchard on the control of goods on the public highway, the previous policy and requested whether this summary and the advertising commission had been taken into account during preparation of a new policy. The Environment Committee of the Town Council were concerned that the situation was currently dangerous.

This matter would be responded to as part of the presentation on A Boards within the town.

MINUTES

4. The minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting dated 11th December 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MANAGING OUR PUBLIC HIGHWAYS – CONSULTATION PROGRESS

5. We received a report from the Head of Operations updating Members on the consultation work undertaken to date into options for the future management of street furniture which included A boards, displays, tables, chairs, flower displays and any other furniture placed on the public highway.

We were informed that:

- There had been representations received from various interested groups asking the Authority why it had not been imposing the current policy on this matter. Similarly, there had been feedback from commercial outlets expressing that the policy was draconian and limited the ability to advertise during times when town centres were under many economic pressures.
- The current policy had not been fully enforced. Whilst the current policy stated that an A board or display must be within 1 metre of a retail outlet, and that any display must have 1.5 metres unimpeded walkway to the kerb or gutter, this would suggest that in Monmouth and Usk many of the present displays would have to be removed.
- It had become apparent that the policy needed to be reviewed within this context and a number of options were reported to the Strong Communities Select Committee. Following research of alternative schemes, a proposal was put together by a member and officer

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

working group, which it was agreed would be circulated to towns as part of the consultation/discussion paper on the options and proposals that could be presented to the Strong Communities Select Committee at a future meeting but was not currently an agenda item.

- The matter was still at a relatively early stage, however, it was considered appropriate to put a discussion paper together with some proposals to ensure that clear feedback was received.
- The scheme being proposed was used by other Authorities and was conducted via licensing establishments individually. This would be an agreement with each individual outlet rather than a blanket policy for all. Within the agreement they would be provided with a license and a plan which would show what could be acceptably displayed and how it could be located. The role of the County Council would be one of maintaining safe passageway for all who had a right of safe route and took into account the needs of specific groups such as the disabled, visually impaired and those with pushchairs.
- The scheme put forward options which tried to balance the needs of the customer, the displays and opportunity for the outlets which created the street scene but which also balanced the needs of those using the public highway for safe passage.
- Feedback had been received that outlined that there was recognition that the commercial sector needed to balance their needs against that of the highway user but also asking for help to maintain advertising and retail opportunities which had been the intention of the scheme.
- Another aspect of feedback received had been the concern that there would be a charge imposed, in that for an A Board there would be an initial fee charged of £75 for the agreement and a further annual fee of £50. There was a series of charges which had been set according to the square metres that a commercial outlet may take up, which ranged from up to 6 metres, 6-12 metres and 12-18 metres.

Members debated the following issues:

- It was intended to regulate individual outlets and the best estimate would be that this would take up two to three officer days for the whole county to manage this regulation. An officer would visit an outlet to prepare a plan prior to creating the license for that business and thereafter it would fall to the highways department to manage that.

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

- Concerns were expressed that businesses were feeling over regulated with increasing Council tax and to incur a further charge via this policy would add increasing pressures on businesses.
- The key issues with the current policy was the lack of enforcement and it was considered that if premises were licensed this would become more difficult to implement in that if a business had paid a license fee they would expect to have their A Boards displayed.
- Not all A Boards in the town were a nuisance, the ones which were considered to be the most problematic were those in Church Street, the ones off the Town Hall and those at Oldbury Centre which advertised businesses 60-70 yards away from the Board. It was queried why these A Board could not be removed and the current policy enforced. We were informed that if businesses could be consistently enforced under the current policy that would be ideal, however, some boards at Church Street could be considered to be of great benefit to the whole street, however, others that fall within the same policy could be considered unacceptable. As officers the policy would have to be complied in that the boards would have to fall 1.5m away from the gutter or kerb line, with one down the centre no businesses would be allowed to advertise by the use of A Boards.
- When asked whether it was only possible to enforce the businesses where complaints were received it was highlighted that such a system would be difficult to manage as people would complain about different businesses and this would be an untenable situation to work in. There was a need for a policy which could be complied consistently or an arrangement whereby arrangements were in place which were acceptable to all those involved.
- The idea of working with businesses on an individual basis would allow an opportunity to work with the retailer to come to an arrangement for them to erect their displays, to maintain their retail outlets.
- Information was requested as to who would be responsible for making the decision in what was acceptable and fair in granting a licence as it could be against the wishes of the county councillor and town council.

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

- There should be a common sense balance and the safety aspect as to what was acceptable should be paramount. The safety aspect should be considered by the select committee.
- In terms of legal responsibility for the current apparatus on the public highway, this could fall to either the owner or the Authority if unsafe equipment was placed on the highway and not enforced.

The Head of Operations was thanked for presenting the information and comments were encouraged to be submitted during the consultation prior to agreeing a policy to progress in the future.

MCC CAR PARK REVIEW

6. We received a presentation from the Head of Operations on the Car Park Review in order to consider the future management of car parking which had been referred from the Economy and Development Select Committee.

The presentation outlined:

- Consultants Parsons Brinkerhoff had reviewed the current arrangements and prepared research and options which were currently out for consultation and had reported to the Economy and Development Select Committee on 20th February 2014. The Select Committee had requested that Area Committees be consulted in relation to their respective areas as some aspects of the review were town specific.
- Previously the Authority had considered imposing a uniform policy across the whole county and Members had decided that each town should be considered individually which had now become more relevant.
- Some issues highlighted by the review which were generic were that the machines were old and as they were no longer manufactured it was problematic when repairs were required, the car parks were poorly maintained and signage was not adequate, the issue of short versus long stay was an issue where people were feeding the metres and car parks were being tied up all day and this was a particular problem in the Glendower Street car park where there was not enough turnover to utilise the car park effectively due to there being little difference in the charging of short and long stay parking.
- Whilst Chepstow and Abergavenny had fed back information that there should be an hour free parking promoted, feedback for Monmouth had

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

been that there was a need for additional parking and that there was not necessarily a need for promotion of a free hour.

- There was a need to update and simplify the charging regime currently in place, the metres did not currently give change and charging had not been updated over the previous seven years. There was a proposal that visitors to car parks could pay by various means, by phone, card or cash and that there should be better security with barrier controlled car parks, however this would not be considered due to the extra manpower required in the need for an attendant to be on site. It was highlighted that season tickets were available but that there had been little uptake of this option and it was challenged whether this option was advertised and promoted adequately.
- Some car parks required improved maintenance arrangements with renewed surfacing, marking and lighting.
- No view had been put forward with regard to Sunday and evening charging and issues with regard to blue badge holders had been discussed and Members feedback was welcomed. When the review had been commissioned it had not considered the issue of HGV parking and feedback from the select committee had been that there was a need for this to be considered as it had become a particular issue in all of the towns.
- In terms of Central Monmouthshire, there was a recommendation to create some free short term spaces at Glendower Street and also to create a short stay car park with no return within two hours, there would not be an option to continually feed the metre for longer periods. There would also be the introduction of charging at Cinderhill Car Park and charging at a new car park opposite the Ambulance Station on Rockfield Road. There was also a recommendation to introduce Sunday and evening parking charges, however, Old Dixton Road and the Rowing Club would remain free. In relation to Usk the recommendation would be to introduce charging, to create some free spaces but with permutations on what the charge would look like, which could be a standard charge as in other towns or something different which could be an hour free and then a flat rate of £1. Funding from that would then be invested back into the car parks in the town and would contribute to the maintenance and resurfacing required at the car park opposite the prison as well as the introduction of adequate lighting. Consultation had produced strong feedback from the Town Council in that they considered this would adversely impact on the trade in the town.

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

- In terms of the funding used for car parking, the overall budget created a gross income of £1.3m., which contributed to the direct cost of managing and maintaining car parks which was around £600,000, the remainder then would cover some overheads and would contribute to the overall budget spent on transport and highways related matters for traffic management. The Authority's budget over the previous 3-4 years had been in deficit and was currently £120,000 deficit and there was an assumption that this would raise every year.

Following the presentation the following points were raised:

- The Local Member for Usk was opposed to charging for parking within the town and supported the Town Council's view that the town would find it difficult to be sustainable with a limited range of shops within the town. It was raised that the consultants had compared the town to Monmouth and it was not considered that this was a fair or accurate comparison as were some of the other comparisons made within the report. It was considered that people would travel to Cwmbran where there were a large range of shops and free parking was available and the town should remain exempt from charging based on this, in line with the previous decision.
- Whilst it was recognised that officers were looking at bespoke solutions and that each town had different characteristics a Member was opposed to car parking as visitors should be encouraged to the towns and given time to meander through the high streets as well as being given the time to support local trade and food outlets. If an expense was incurred in order to do this it would encourage people to shop on-line or visit towns with free parking. This had been evidenced at Newport and Cwmbran and it would be interesting to see if all car parking charges were removed, how much revenue would be brought to the towns in terms of visitor spending.
- It was raised that Sunday and evening charging was opposed and that the evening economy in the towns with people visiting for meals would be detrimentally affected. All car parks in Monmouth were close to churches and tourists should be encouraged into the towns. It was also queried how this could be monitored in terms of checking tickets and lone working at night in a potentially unsafe environment.

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

- It was raised that the maintenance of car parks required resources and it was queried whether there could be a free hour for short visits to collect prescriptions etc. but that an example of a £1 charge could be refunded via a ticket at retail establishments given a proportional spend at that outlet. Whilst the principle of this was acknowledged, this would create another tax on the traders and it was suggested that Chambers be consulted on whether businesses would be willing to support this.
- It was raised that the consultants had not taken into account the different aspects of the towns, with Monmouth having a number of on-street parking which was mostly occupied and not enforced. If a policy was in place there was a need for greater enforcement as it was not feasible to enforce within the car parks when there was no on-street enforcement and this would create an untenable situation for on-street parking.
- HGV and Coach parking had become a problem in Monmouth and these vehicles were taking up spaces on streets.
- In terms of additional parking for Monmouth, we were informed that there had been approval to fund additional parking at Granville Street by the Queens Head although the relevant air quality assessment had not been conducted. Proposals included improving the area by the Riverside and an in principle proposal to create car parking off Rockfield Road for cars only adjacent to another proposal to create a skate park on an informal play area opposite the ambulance station. This was likely to create two separate applications and the funding was not currently available to create the skate park. An example of introducing a £1 charge at Cinderhill Street would create funding for this additional car park. There had been an overwhelming result of consultation that there was a need for additional car parking and this could be achieved by charging elsewhere.
- We were informed that with no charging all of the best parking spaces would be taken and there would be no movement to support commerce, a charging regime allowed some creation of movement and this was particularly relevant to the car park at the top end of Monmouth.

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

- There was a need for better signage to access the car park at the back of Dorothy Perkins which was currently blocked with vehicles queuing to Waitrose. It was raised that planning had been passed and preparatory work had commenced with regard to this matter.

Members were asked by reference to the report what comments and recommendations they wished to provide the Economy and Development Select Committee in relation to the consultation proposals that may impact on Central Monmouthshire. The following proposals were submitted based on the debate:

- No charges be introduced at Usk.
- No charges be introduced on Sundays and evenings.

Officers were thanked for their informative presentation and for attending the Area Committee to inform and update Members and public attendees.

UPDATE ON AREA ISSUES

7. We received a report updating Members on issues previously raised before the committee together with issues that had arisen since the previous meeting, as follows:

CSAT

The sale of shed alarms and family safety packs at the shows and the Christmas Fayre had proved successful. Group members talked to hundreds of people raising their awareness of shed and garage burglaries. They also raised over £600 to put up as match funding for future projects.

Work continued on a safety campaign regarding theft and safety of cycles.

S106 Monies Monmouth

There were twenty-four applications requesting funding for double the amount available. The Panel would be meeting to view the applications in the near future.

Gateway Project

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

This project was moving forward and funding was being sought to fund the scheme.

New Groups

Two new groups had been formed in Monmouth by the community. Gateway Action Group, campaigning about the proposed development off the main roundabout at Monmouth and the A40 Group, campaigning about several issues in relation to air quality, the riverbank parking, Queens Head parking and the proposed third lane on the A40.

Monmouth Partnership Forum

At the December meeting Will McLean, Strategic Partnership Lead attended the Forum to discuss how work had progressed on the Single Integrated Plan.

Priory Street Railings

The railings in Priory Street are now finished.

Wye River Festival

As previously reported this Festival would be taking place in the Monmouth area on 6th to 10th May 2014. The Festival mainly focussed on the river. It was hoped to attract many new people to the area increasing spend whilst giving local communities the opportunity to join in celebrating the Wye River and the communities that lie alongside it. It is hoped to connect people and landscapes, and people from the past to the future.

Kymin Dash

The Kymin Dash would take place on Sunday 27th April 2014 at 11.00 a.m. This would be the second year on this course that is a 7.1 mile race straight to the top of the Kymin. It is organised by the Spirit of Monmouth Running Club.

Monmouth Festival

Monmouth Festival would again be held at the bottom of town, between Friday, 25th July and Saturday, 2nd August 2014.

Monmouth Food Market

A new Food Market would be running at the Shire Hall every fortnight from 28th February 2014.

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

Rural Forum

The Welsh Language and Equalities Officer attended the last Forum meeting to discuss the benefits, rules and regulations around the Welsh Language. Members understood what needed to be delivered and what was required under the Welsh Language Act.

MOD Community Covenant

The next applications had to be submitted by 11th April 2014, Members could obtain further information from the Area Services Officer or the web page <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-community-covenant-grant-scheme>

Charter Liaison Group

The Charter Liaison Group met on 6th February, officers had reported that they were meeting with Service Heads to discuss the Charter Action Plan. Councillors P.A.D. Hobson and R.G. Harris talked about the new boundaries review and answered questions on the process and outcomes. Will McLean had discussed the outcomes of the community consultations on the budget.

Usk Cycle Route

The Usk Cycle Route Group had been active in meeting with landowners to get permissions to use the proposed route from Usk to Pontypool with an aim to create a safe cycle route from Usk to Pontypool which would join up with the canal.

Usk Chamber

A new Chamber of Commerce had been formed for Usk Town which would help and assist the Authority when consulting and engaging on items which could affect businesses within the town.

National Road Cycling Championships

Monmouthshire won the opportunity to host the championships that would be taking place between 23rd and 29th June 2014. The Area Services Officer had been working with community groups who wanted to get involved with the event. It would be passing through all the towns. The Champions Event would be on Sunday 29th June 2014 but members of the community could take part in their own event on Saturday, 28th June 2014. This event would be called the Sportif.

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

Community Led Plans

Raglan – Following the Open Meeting held in December to disseminate the findings of the Community Questionnaires, two members of the steering group had met on two occasions to write the Action Plan, but now, new people had come forward to assist in completing this task. It was hoped to be completed by end of March.

Llanygybi Fawr – 172 Questionnaires were completed by adult residents and 17 children and young people. These have been analysed and the first meeting to write the action plan would be held on Monday, 3rd March 2014.

Coed y Paen – Questionnaires were picked up by members of the Steering Group over the Christmas period, with an 83% return rate. The Group would now meet to start the process of the Action Plan.

Llandogo – The Steering Group had met to look at their results and a small sub group of the Steering Group had met once to write the Action Points and were due to meet again on 10th March. The Draft Community Action Plan would then be presented to the Community at an open meeting on 25th March in the Village Hall.

Llantilio Crossenny – Following a presentation in January to the Community Council, they pledged their support for proceeding with a Community Led Plan, and an open meeting would be held on Monday, 17th March 2014 in Llanvapley Sports Pavilion.

River Flooding

A Member requested information on when NRW would finish clearing debris from the under the Wye and Monnow Bridges created by the amount of rainfall and flooding that had been experienced over recent months. Whilst the Wye had been cleared the previous week, there remained debris at the site and it was understood that under the Monnow Bridge would be completed this week.

Officers were liaising with NRW and had been made aware that they would be cleared of debris.

COORDINATING BOARD

8. We received the minutes of the Coordinating Board meeting held on 21st January 2014 which we resolved to note for information.

WORK PROGRAMME

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held in The Community Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 12th March 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

9. We received the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee Work Programme which we resolved to note for information.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10. We noted the date of the next meeting of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee as Wednesday, 11th June 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

The meeting terminated at 3.50 p.m.