

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held at the Shire Hall, Monmouth
on Wednesday, 11th February 2015 at 2.00 p.m.**

PRESENT: County Councillor S. White (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Blakebrough, P.R. Clarke, R. Edwards,
E. Hacket Pain, P. Jones, V. Smith, and B. Strong.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. D. McCarty - Whole Place Officer
Mr. B. Winstanley - Estates Manager
Mr. R. Hoggins - Head of Operations
Mrs. N. Perry - Democratic Services Officer

OTHER ATTENDEES:

Councillor D. Politt - Llantrisant Fawr Community Council
Councillor J. Hall - Monmouth Town Council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors A. Wintle.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting dated 10th September 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. UPDATE ON THE PORTAL ROAD DEVELOPMENT SITE

We received a report from the Estates Manager, which updated on the Portal Road Site in Monmouth. We were informed that the site owned by Monmouthshire County Council had been allocated by the LDP for hotel use.

Following several failed attempts to bring an operator to Monmouth, Monmouthshire County Council had negotiated a sale, subject to planning, to Premier Inns for the northern part of the site.

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Proposals had been submitted to planning for the development of a 60 bed hotel, licensed restaurant and 59 car parking spaces

The hotel would be similar to the Hampton Hotel at Magor.

We heard that the main focus for the Authority would be to:

- Secure the hotel
- Create coach parking, as part of the proposal.
- To sell the site on a piecemeal basis. The northern part of the site to be sold to Premier Inn, and the southern part of the site would not be placed on the market until the Premier Inn build was confirmed.

The aim was to work on a programme to build the hotel in the next financial year, subject to planning.

Following the report Members were invited to ask questions, during which time the following points were noted:

- Members queried the size of the site, and requested further detail on the acreage of the site. The Estates Manager agreed to calculate the acreage, and also the space for coach parking, and would update at a future meeting.
- A query was raised regarding whether the site would be used for lorry parking, as lorry drivers could complain that there were no overnight facilities in Monmouth. It was confirmed that the space would be used solely for coach parking but a control mechanism would need to be implemented.
- A Member expressed that the site would have been an ideal space for the Fire Authority, with joint use for coach and lorry parking, but accepted that the Authority needed the hotel to promote business and tourism in the area.
- It was noted that Members would have further questions when the application was considered by the Planning Committee.

The Chairman thanked the officer for the report and would welcome further updates.

6. UPDATE ON THE RAGLAN PROJECT

The Chairman had received a written update on the Raglan Project which she read to the Committee. We heard the following:

- Monmouthshire County Council was investing in replacing the existing Raglan Primary School buildings. The new facilities would be located on Station Road, Raglan and would accommodate 210 pupils.

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- The new school would provide a flexible and innovative teaching and learning environment for the pupils, and would assist in raising the already high standards of achievement and attainment.
- The staff had all gained ownership of the proposed facilities which would comprise of creative open spaces to maximise the educational opportunities for pupils.
- The new facilities would open in September and the £4.7 million project was being funded equally by Monmouthshire and Welsh Government as part of the Band A of the 21st Century School Programme.
- Construction was well underway, with the following progress being achieved:
 - Blockwork complete.
 - The roof, internal walls, windows, and doors near completion.
 - The contractors, Morgan Sindall, were now focusing on the cladding and external timber walls.
 - Morgan Sindall would be installing temporary heating into the building to enable the plastering to progress.
 - Landscaping would commence shortly.
 - The colour and furniture schemes had been finalised.
- The school was preparing to vacate the existing buildings. The infant building would need to be vacated 4 weeks prior to the end of the school year. Those pupils would transfer to the junior building for that short term.
- Parents had been consulted and were assured that their children's education would not be compromised during that period.
- Traffic calming would commence in 2 phases. The first phase at the current school entrance would take place over the Easter break, and the second phase on Chepstow Road would be done in agreement with the school and Highways Department.
- The official opening of the new school was scheduled for Friday 4th September 2015.

7. UPDATE ON COMMUNITY HUBS

The Head of Operations provided a verbal update in relation to Community Hubs. We were informed that approval for the capital budget and the principal of creating community hubs and contact centres had been granted by Council on January 22nd 2015.

A report would be going to Cabinet on March 4th 2015 to provide further detail relating to staffing structures, venues for contact centres, venues for community hubs and to decide upon a name for the centres.

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STAFFING STRUCTURES

Following of consultation exercise in November 2014 it was apparent that the staffing structure was top heavy, with a shortage of frontline staff. The management had since been reduced from 4 managers to 2 with a senior officer or assistant placed in each hub to provide day to day supervision.

It was noted that creating the new staffing structures was challenging but, within the context of the budget savings, the balance of staffing was the best mix.

The contact centre for Abergavenny had caused debate as it was felt that should the contact centre be created within the existing library it would create significant extra travelling. Therefore a more central site was needed.

VENUES

- Chepstow - The library and one stop shop to share building.
- Caldicot - Preferred location would be within the village centre, however no capital available at present so may be a long term plan. Plan to situate in Caldicot Library.
- Abergavenny - Possibility of creating hub within the Town Hall. The architect responsible for creating the theatre had been commissioned for design work. Other ideas for the Abergavenny venue were Richards at the bottom of Frogmore Street and the old Farm Foods building.
- Monmouth - Options available were Market Hall and Rolls Hall. In order to allow hubs to move forward Rolls Hall was recommended as the preferred site, with the minimum expenditure.

The Chairman expressed thanks on behalf of the committee to all staff that had given their free time in developing ideas and suggestions for the new centres, especially with the knowledge that there may be a reduction in staff.

NAMES

Feedback from groups and individuals proved that 'library' should remain in the name. Suggestions would be issued to Members for review.

During discussion Members were invited to ask questions, during which time the following points were noted

A Member raised a concern that there had been no mention of Usk. The Head of Operations explained that a concept had been agreed but did not form part of the savings. During the Capital Budget 2016/17 works would be

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undertaken in Caldicot, Chepstow, Monmouth and Usk, of which Usk would have the majority of the budget.

It was noted that Usk Library would need to vacate the current premises by the end of June 2015 and would need to relocate. It was confirmed that a meeting was to be held with the design team, and works were hoping to start at the beginning April 2015.

A Member requested further information on the management structure. We heard that the amount of staff under the management for each area would be:

- Caldicot 5
- Chepstow 7
- Abergavenny 7
- Monmouth 5
- Usk Unsure

On each site there would be a senior assistant to manage day to day enquiries. The contact centre would have 1 manager and 1 assistant. 8 staff would be taken from the one stop shops or libraries, also 1 from the central telephony service and 1 from the operations administrative team.

We heard that the opening times of the hubs would include 1 late evening and a Saturday morning. Recommendations for this would go to Cabinet. However there may be a need for different patterns in different towns, which could be developed to suit local preferences.

The contact centre opening times would be 9 to 5 initially, until there was sufficient confidence in staffing levels, and the ability to manage calls.

A Member requested that the Committee should see the designs for the proposals.

A Member expressed that Richards in Abergavenny would not be an appropriate site for the contact centre as it could not provide sufficient car parking.

A Member questioned the opening times for the hub in Usk. It was confirmed that the opening hours in Usk may not be the same as in other areas, and would be based on suitability for the community.

A Member requested clarification on the number of redundancies that would be expected. It was confirmed that there would be a reduction of 13 full time staff. This may not necessarily be redundancies as voluntary redundancies or redeployment would be a possibility.

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A Member queried if there were Whole Place Plans for Monmouth. We were told that Whole Place would be going into Lower Wye in the first instance. It was expected that Whole Place would be in Monmouth at this time in 2016.

AREA UPDATES

We received update information regarding a cyclist group in Usk. We noted that discussions had been held at a recent Strong Communities Select Committee. The group were progressing and the cycling offer was encouraged. Members recognised that the post of transport officer post was currently vacant but was noted that the cycle routes should be in place before the Velothon in June 2015.

The Authority had been relieved of the air quality pressures in Usk, as this issue was now being considered by the Environment Agency.

It was noted that cars parking in the main street of Usk remained a problem. Suggestions for improvements included:

- Pinch points in the street.
- Setting delivery times.
- Police monitoring the double yellow lines.

We heard that there were no issues regarding allotments at the current time. It was noted that Markets, Allotments and Cemeteries would come under Estates in the future.

At a previous cabinet meeting it was agreed that the issue of burial space would be included on the Strong Communities Select Committee work programme.

WORK PROGRAMME

We received and noted the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee Work Programme.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

5. We noted the future date of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting to be Wednesday 29th April 2015, to be held at Hilston Park.

The meeting terminated at 3.15 pm.