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Neuadd y Sir
Y Rhadyr
Brynbuga
NP15 1GA

County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Thursday, 25 May 2017

Notice of meeting / Hysbysiad o gyfarfod:

Democratic Services Committee

**Monday, 5th June, 2017 at 2.00 pm,
Council Chamber - Council Chamber**

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	To note the appointment of Chairman	
2.	To appoint a Vice-Chairman	
3.	Apologies for absence	
4.	Declarations of interest	
5.	Public open forum	
6.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 6
7.	Cabinet Member introduction and priorities	
8.	Our Monmouthshire - what matters to our communities	7 - 12
9.	Discussion item and paper on New Directions in Democracy	13 - 16
10.	Review of Member induction process and feedback/ input	
11.	Future Work Programme	
12.	To note the date and time of next meeting as Monday 4th September 2017 at 2.00pm	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive / Prif Weithredwr

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillors:

D. Dovey
L.Dymock
M.Groucutt
G. Howard
L.Jones
T.Thomas
N.Treharne
Woodhouse
D. Evans
P. Clarke
F. Taylor
J.Watkins

Public Information

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Watch this meeting online

This meeting can be viewed online either live or following the meeting by visiting www.monmouthshire.gov.uk or by visiting our Youtube page by searching MonmouthshireCC.

Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Outcomes we are working towards

Nobody Is Left Behind

- Older people are able to live their good life
- People have access to appropriate and affordable housing
- People have good access and mobility

People Are Confident, Capable and Involved

- People's lives are not affected by alcohol and drug misuse
- Families are supported
- People feel safe

Our County Thrives

- Business and enterprise
- People have access to practical and flexible learning
- People protect and enhance the environment

Our priorities

- Schools
- Protection of vulnerable people
- Supporting Business and Job Creation
- Maintaining locally accessible services

Our Values

- **Openness:** we aspire to be open and honest to develop trusting relationships.
- **Fairness:** we aspire to provide fair choice, opportunities and experiences and become an organisation built on mutual respect.
- **Flexibility:** we aspire to be flexible in our thinking and action to become an effective and efficient organisation.
- **Teamwork:** we aspire to work together to share our successes and failures by building on our strengths and supporting one another to achieve our goals.

Nodau a Gwerthoedd Cyngor Sir Fynwy

Cymunedau Cynaliadwy a Chryf

Canlyniadau y gweithiwn i'w cyflawni

Neb yn cael ei adael ar ôl

- Gall pobl hŷn fyw bywyd da
- Pobl â mynediad i dai addas a fforddiadwy
- Pobl â mynediad a symudedd da

Pobl yn hyderus, galluog ac yn cymryd rhan

- Camddefnyddio alcohol a chyffuriau ddim yn effeithio ar fywydau pobl
- Teuluoedd yn cael eu cefnogi
- Pobl yn teimlo'n ddiogel

Ein sir yn ffynnu

- Busnes a menter
- Pobl â mynediad i ddysgu ymarferol a hyblyg
- Pobl yn diogelu ac yn cyfoethogi'r amgylchedd

Ein blaenoriaethau

- Ysgolion
- Diogelu pobl agored i niwed
- Cefnogi busnes a chreu swyddi
- Cynnal gwasanaethau sy'n hygyrch yn lleol

Ein gwerthoedd

- **Bod yn agored:** anelwn fod yn agored ac onest i ddatblygu perthnasoedd ymddiriedus
- **Tegwch:** anelwn ddarparu dewis teg, cyfleoedd a phrofiadau a dod yn sefydliad a adeiladwyd ar barch un at y llall.
- **Hyblygrwydd:** anelwn fod yn hyblyg yn ein syniadau a'n gweithredoedd i ddod yn sefydliad effeithlon ac effeithiol.
- **Gwaith tîm:** anelwn gydweithio i rannu ein llwyddiannau a'n methiannau drwy adeiladu ar ein cryfderau a chefnogi ein gilydd i gyflawni ein nodau.

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 6

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Monday, 3rd April, 2017 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor F. Taylor (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Edwards, J. Higginson, P. Jones, S. Jones,
J. Prosser and V. Smith

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

County Councillor A. Easson – as a substitute for County Councillor R. Harris

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Kellie Beirne	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Judith Langdon	Whole Place Officer
Owen Wilce	Programme Lead - A County That Serves
Paula Harris	Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies of absence

County Councillor Roger Harris.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members agreed to declare interests under the relevant item.

3. Public Open Forum

There were no items for the public open forum.

4. To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2017

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

It was noted that on page 2 reference was made to Purdah and it was asked that this was change to pre-election period.

Actions:

The Chair commented on the quality of sound in the chamber and commented that all members had been asked to check their microphones were working whilst in a meeting and to speak directly and clearly into the microphones.

Feedback is required as to whether we could live stream the meetings on the television in the reception area.

The Chair commented that during the recent changes to the Head of Democracy post, it was felt that actions and their subsequent follow up had been lost. The Chief Officer for

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Enterprise commented that she would ensure that Democratic Services collate and follow up the action list.

5. Independent Remuneration Panel - Final Report 2017/18

The Committee received the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales annual report 2017/18.

Specific changes to the determinations include a very modest increase to the basic salary for elected members with consequential increases for National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities. This increase of 0.75% is the first for 3 years and follows the slight easing of restraint in the pay of public sector employees.

They are introducing arrangements to recognise the implications of long term sickness of senior salary holders and have also made changes to provide more flexibility for authorities without undermining the principle of prescribing payments which still has continuing support.

The Local Government (Wales) Act 2015 widened the remit of the Panel to give consideration to proposed changes to the salaries of chief officers of principal councils, effectively an extension of their role in respect of the heads of paid service of councils and Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Member's comments:

A key point of the report was that the average Welsh earnings and Councillor Allowances had been broken for some time and it was asked if the figure is not based on the average Welsh earnings – what is it based on.

A point since 2012 has been the concerns raised over the constancy of support provided to Members, as different authorities have different arrangements and it has been asked that examples of best practice are brought to committee for review.

A change to the 'care allowance' as it recognises that this is a reimbursement of the cost of care already paid out by a Councillor rather than money which is claimed.

A provision for members of town and community councillors to be paid per member up to £150 per year for items such as telephone, IT and consumables. Up to three members of a Community Council can be paid up to £500 per year in recognition of their responsibilities. Is this at the discretion of the Council involved.

When there is a new Council – county, town or community it was stressed that members are made aware of the whole package on offer to them as often new members struggle to find relevant information.

There is an increase in the Members salary of £100.

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6. Welsh Government White Paper: Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed

The Chief Executive spoke to the Committee regarding the Welsh Government White Paper, Reforming Local Government: Resilient and renewed.

The White Paper 'Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed' is the Welsh Government's statement of intent about the future of Local Government in Wales. The proposals in this White Paper set out arrangements for regional working; describe a strengthened role for councils and councillors; provide a framework for any future voluntary mergers; and sets out the role of community councils.

Member's comments:

Concerns were raised regarding the reference in the white paper to remote voting and using digital technology to improve services and participation as currently the broadband infrastructure in Monmouthshire is insufficient to enable residents to access these services.

A Member asked for faster progress with Community Councils cluster working. This was supported by Members of the Committee and felt that the merger of community councils would serve the residents better than the fragmented model currently in place.

The white paper reference to the voting age was commented on and lowering the age to sixteen.

The Chair observed that there was a lack of pace regarding the review of Town and Community Councils. The joining up what the authority, other public service bodies and town & community councils act in a cohesive way so that citizens are at the heart of what we do is essential.

The Chair reiterated the point regarding digital framework & democracy and spoke of the need for greater provision as current arcane local provision inhibits this ability at present.

In summing up the Chair asked that the Chief Executive circulate his response to the white paper to all members ahead of the closing date of the 14th April 2017.

7. Devo-Mon / Localism

The Committee received a presentation regarding Future Monmouthshire – Communities.

We were told that evidence shows us that connected, cohesive communities comprised of confident citizens are good for everybody.

We have a duty to create the conditions that will allow the communities of Monmouthshire to realise the full potential that exists within them and to empower our citizens to lead the lives that they want.

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So what does they mean in practice;

We believe that citizenship of a place comes with both rights and responsibilities and that everyone has a part to play in helping our county to thrive.

- ▶ Developing and unlocking social capital
- ▶ Growing community leadership
- ▶ Proportionate and enabling governance
- ▶ Knowing our communities
- ▶ Changing culture, changing mind-set– redefining the relationship between the citizen and the public service

Some key actions and projects;

- ▶ Community Leadership Academy
- ▶ Support for town and community council cluster areas to develop meaningful local wellbeing plans with clear opportunities for citizen/community delivery
- ▶ Promoting participation in local democracy
- ▶ Programme of specific community initiatives to promote 'togetherness' and community cohesion (e.g. 'playing out', 'Big Lunch', 'Good Gym')
- ▶ Create substantial role for community participation in implementing Monmouthshire Wellbeing Plan
- ▶ 'Creative Communities' Toolkit

It was asked how success would be measured to ensure we are on the right track and we were told that measurements of social capital were notoriously hard to pin down, however there are a range of measures available to support this.

A Member asked how it was proposed that Members could become community leaders and asked what training would be provided. In response we were told that elected members were already community leaders and member development should not stop after the first four months induction but be an ongoing process focusing on the requirements of the individual member.

A Member spoke of the need to support new County Councillors as the scope of the work can come as a shock to the system.

Community leadership has always been part of a County Councillor's role, however this feels like a new style of leadership. If people want to take part we should ensure that bureaucratic situations don't occur and that people feel encouraged. Members were interested in how this would led into participatory budgeting in a locality, both for town and community budgets and also for pooled local budgets.

8. Recording and Monitoring Motions & Petitions

We received an update on procedures for processing Notices of Motion and Petitions presented to Council.

Motions

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1. Any member of the Council can submit a motion to be considered by full Council by giving written notice of the motion, delivered to the Head of Democratic Services, no later than midnight on the seventh working day before the Council meeting.
2. Submitted motions must be about matters for which the Council has responsibility or which affect the wellbeing of the administrative area.
3. Any motions agreed by Full Council, including any amendments made to the motion at the meeting, will be recorded by the Head of Democratic Services on the form overleaf and stored within the Members Area on The Hub for future reference.
4. The Head of Democratic Services will forward the proforma to the responsible officer and ensure that the form is updated as a log of the actions taken as a result of the motion that has been agreed.

Petitions

1. At a meeting of the full Council, any member may present a petition which is relevant to some matter in relation to which the Council or Cabinet have functions or which affects the area, or part area, of the Council. It is up to the member presenting the petition to satisfy themselves that the petition is proper to be received.
2. The member must give notice to the Chief Executive prior to the meeting at which the petition is to be presented and shall be presented in the order that notice is received.
3. The presentation shall be limited to not more than three minutes, and shall be confined to reading out, or summarising, the prayer of the petition, indicating the number and description of the signatories.
4. Any petitions submitted to a meeting of the Full Council shall be given to the Head of Democratic Services. They will ensure that the petition is delivered to the responsible officer within the authority to respond to the petition.
5. In addition, the Head of Democratic Services will ensure that the proforma overleaf is completed and stored on The Hub within the member's area. The proforma will be forwarded to the relevant officer to record the actions taken as a result of receiving the petition for members to refer back to follow up if required.

Member comments:

A Member commented that he felt the system was unclear as he had previously had a motion turned down due to the wording.

The Chair commented that the Proper Officer will make a recommendation as to whether a motion is taken to Council, this can then be taken to the Chair of the meeting to use their discretion in whether to introduce the item for discussion.

It was asked for clarity that a petition cannot relate to another member's ward.

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Clarification was sought regarding the term 'Proper Officer' and the correct officer to submit petitions and motions to. **(ACTION-DEMOCRATIC SERVICES)**

It was requested that the outcomes from all motions and petitions are reported to all members. It was asked if this could be presented to Members in a report format at the end of each council year.

9. New Directions in Democracy

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

10. To note the date and time of next meeting as Monday 5th June 2017 at 2.00pm

The Chair thanked the Committee for their attendance and contributions during the last twelve months and wished County Councillor Doug Edwards best wishes on his retirement.

County Councillor Doug Edwards thanked County Councillor Francis Taylor for her hard work during her year as Chair of the Committee

The meeting ended at 3.59 pm

SUBJECT: Our Monmouthshire: What Matters Communities

MEETING: Democratic Services Committee

DATE: 5th June 2017

DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To highlight issues raised by communities during the engagement work that informed the development of the Well-being Assessment.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, by taking action in accordance with the sustainable development principle aimed at achieving well-being goals. One of the responsibilities the Act places on the Public Service Board is to prepare and publish a local Well-being Assessment within twelve months of the Assembly elections.
- 2.2 Monmouthshire's Well-being Assessment was endorsed by Council and approved by the Public Service Board prior to the election. It is now being used to help shape a Well-being Plan for our county and will contribute to the evidence base for the development of the authority's strategy and the Future Monmouthshire programme.

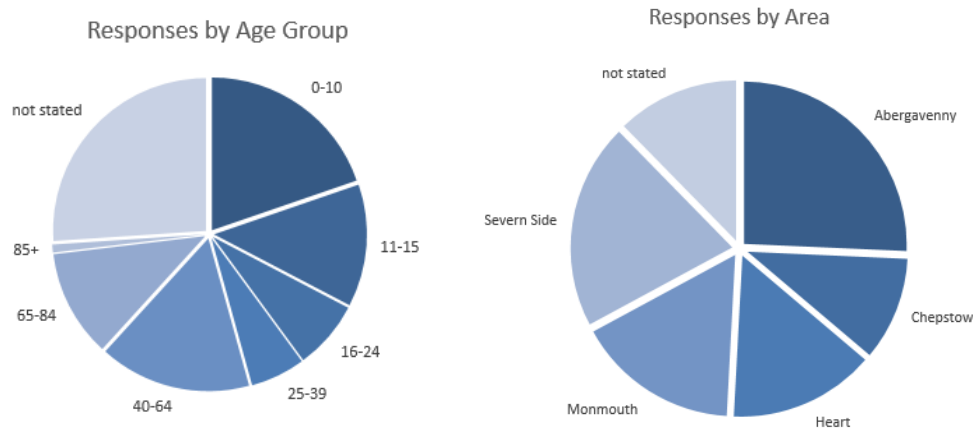
3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are invited to consider how the approach used to produce the Well-being Assessment can inform the development of a more participative approach to local democracy.
- 3.2 Members are invited to consider how the subsequent analysis can be used alongside information gathered during canvassing and from ward surgeries to develop business insights that can be taken forward by public services and communities working together.

4 KEY ISSUES

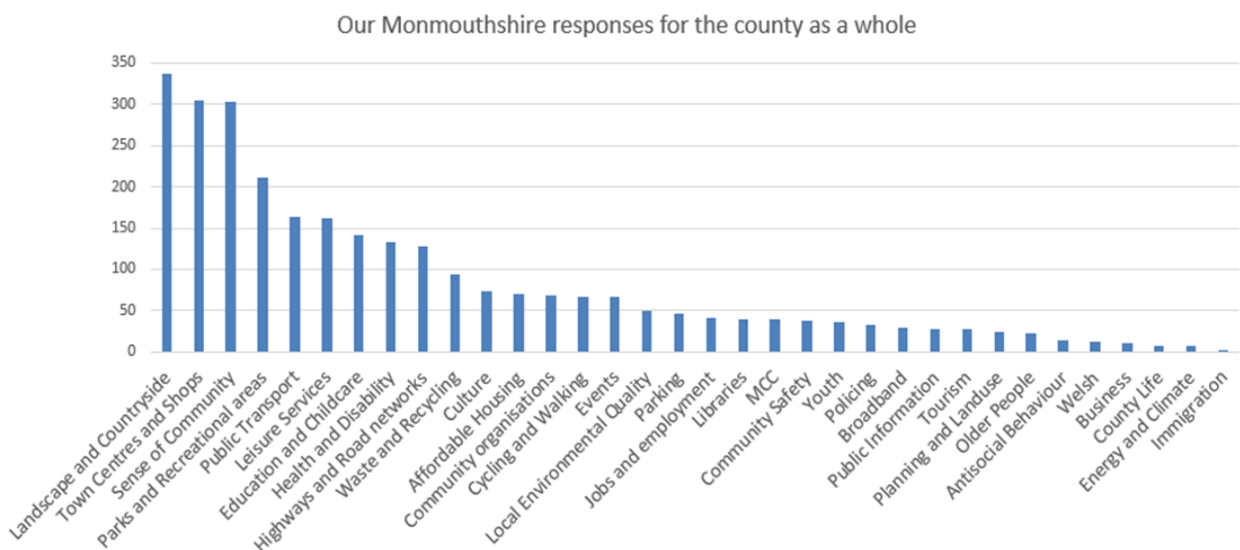
- 4.1 During the production of the well-being assessment colleagues from the local authority and other partners from the Public Service Board carried out extensive engagement within communities under the banner of *Our Monmouthshire*. They attended over 80 events and invited contributions on postcards, social media and the Monmouthshire Made Open digital engagement platform. Over a thousand people contributed and shared their thoughts on what was good about the area and what would make it better. This was placed alongside data, research and an analysis of future trends.

4.2 The engagement took place throughout the county over four months and targeted people of all ages and characteristics. The following charts give an indication of the age ranges and geographical coverage of respondents:



4.3 Monmouthshire’s assessment is based on areas, loosely clustered around our five largest towns. Looking below county level helps us understand some of the differences within and between communities.

4.4 The responses were tagged retrospectively to help identify themes. The following chart shows how often things were mentioned. The topic that generated by far the most comments was landscape and countryside, with these comments being overwhelmingly positive about how the beautiful area and landscape benefit both residents and visitors. The next largest category of comments was about town centres and shops. These comments vary to some extent on where people come from. Some people are happy with their town centres and shopping provision, others are unhappy about empty shops, particularly in Caldicot. A lot of people also commented on the strong sense of community where they live.



4.5 The comments were looked at alongside a wide range of data highlighting issues such as journey times of over 2 hours on public transport from the heart of the county to

leisure centres, the large ratio between house prices and earnings, rising levels of obesity and increases in the proportion of older people in Monmouthshire.

- 4.6 The quantitative and qualitative information was used to identify key challenges and opportunities facing the county, these are shown as appendix 1 of this report. There will be a short presentation to the committee highlighting some of the findings and giving some more detail about the process that produced it. Members who wish to look at the full assessment can download it from monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire.

5. REASONS

- 5.1 To ensure that members understand the findings of the Well-being Assessment and how this can be used to inform the work of the committee.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None at this stage. Any new specific projects brought forward to deliver the council's Well-being Objectives will be subject to separate decisions in accordance with the council's constitution.

7. FUTURE GENERATIONS ASSESSEMENT INCLUDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 This report does not propose any change in policy or service and so no assessment has been completed.

8. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

None

9. AUTHOR

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matthewgatehouse@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Challenges and Opportunities Identified in the Well-being Assessment

Short-term

- Monmouthshire has high levels of social capital and volunteering. By taking an asset and placed based approach there is an opportunity to improve well-being.

Medium-term

- Wage levels available for local jobs are lower than the average for Wales and the UK. When coupled with high property prices and limited land for future housing development this makes it difficult for young people to live and work locally.
- The signing of the £1.2 billion City Deal by the ten local authorities in South East Wales brings an opportunity to leverage around £4 billion of private sector investment creating jobs and boosting economic prosperity across the whole of the region.
- Limited public transport, particularly in rural areas, makes it harder for people to access jobs, services and facilities. There are also future opportunities from investment in public transport through the City Deal and advances in technology such as automated vehicles.
- Employment patterns are changing with more zero hours, casual contracts and freelance work emerging. Meanwhile technological advances such as automation, robotics and the advance of artificial intelligence could result in around a third of existing UK jobs disappearing meaning tomorrow's workforce will need a very different skillset to those of today's school leavers.
- There is a need to increase healthy behaviours and with increasing evidence that what happens during the first thousand days of a child's life from conception to their second birthday can have a big impact on how healthy and happy they are as they grow up.
- An ageing population brings many opportunities, however there are also challenges for service provision and increases in the number of people living with long term conditions which will create pressures on health and social care services.
- There are many vulnerable people in our society, this can arise from many things such as mental or physical disability or factors such as age, rural isolation and loneliness. Identifying preventative activity and integrated approaches can protect people from serious harm and improve well-being.
- Arts and culture can have a positive impact on emotional health and well-being providing opportunities for expression and social contact. However funding for the arts can come under pressure and there is a need to increase accessibility of arts, culture and heritage to maximise their contribution to well-being.
- Monmouthshire has experienced a growth in the demand for Welsh medium education and if this trend continues there will be a need to ensure adequate provision
- Air pollution causes significant problems for people's health and is a major contributor to premature deaths in Wales. In Monmouthshire the greatest problems are caused by vehicle emissions and this is particularly apparent in Usk and Chepstow.
- Water pollution is a concern, especially from changing agricultural practices

Long-term

- There is inequality between communities and within communities. This includes in educational attainment, wage levels and health outcomes. Research shows that inequality has a negative impact on many aspects of well-being with more equal societies experiencing better outcomes.
- Children who experience stressful and poor quality childhoods are more likely to adopt health-harming behaviours during adolescence which can themselves lead to illnesses and diseases later in life. This can be perpetuated through the generations.
- Reducing levels of physical activity which along with dietary changes are leading to growing levels of obesity. This is likely to lead to an increase in long-term conditions associated with it such as type 2 diabetes
- Development, climate change and pollution all present risks to the natural and built environment. These are central to our well-being and need to be protected and preserved for future generations.
- Climate change is likely to increase the risk of flooding, as well as many other risks, so mitigating climate change and building resilience will be crucial for communities

The assessment can be downloaded from [monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire](https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire)



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New Directions in Democracy – a think piece

The 2016-17 Democratic Services Committee expressed a desire to reinvigorate their agenda through understanding new perspectives and ideas in democratic development. At the last meeting of the Committee, colleagues from the Community Engagement team delivered a presentation on a concept named Collective Impact – which was focussed around how we engage more meaningfully with communities to unlock their creative rather than reactive component. Discussion emerged about the power of collective problem sharing and solving approaches and interest was sparked in how we might take forward experiential learning in these areas. The debate alighted on how we might better help people and communities think more purposefully about the power they can exercise. How we might bring some of the characteristics associated with small-group face to face democracy and new structures of representation which traditionally, has tended to focus on larger scale collective movements. There was a keenness to get beyond merely talking good practice and good governance to understanding what it means now and in the future to our citizens.

This paper aims to help stimulate future discussions and provide some information and insight to the debate around new directions in democracy and potential ‘best fits’ for the county and our council. With a new statutory requirement to look ahead and apply foresight with the introduction of the Wellbeing of Future Generations and indeed, the publication of our own Wellbeing Objectives – there are opportunities to explore and develop. We have clear potential to better connect and reinforce the twin aims of service improvement and citizen engagement – both of which underpin the entirety of our purpose to deliver sustainable and resilient communities. The need to be more relevant, efficient and responsive is inescapable, but we must also focus equally on improving how citizens engage in governance. ***In essence the question is how do we improve the democratic character of our organisation and the quality of public dialogue?***

Practice from elsewhere

Plenty of information, evidence and case studies exist on the efficiency and effectiveness with which the democratic services function is exercised – but beyond administrative processes and governmental approaches – it is harder to find examples of democratic re-purposing.

Interesting larger scale examples exist in the form of organisations such as the UK Open Government Network. The Network exists to support and encourage groups, organisations and individuals who are committed to government work better for people through increased transparency, participation and accountability. The Network collaborates with and challenges governments to develop and implement ambitious governance reforms. Their agenda is structured around:

- Residents needing to be able to find out some basic things from their councils – how to get issues dealt with; easily accessible information and how to navigate the LG system
- Changing role of councillors – with more information being made available and new ways of engaging – there are opportunities for Councillors to look at alternative ways of engaging with the public to look at the systemic problems that often create issues. This means Councillors looking to engage more with residents to seek their ideas, solutions to problems and views on how change might be enacted and the new roles residents might play in this relationship
- Training and capacity building for councillors to support changing context – this could involve a focus on new kinds of capacity building and wider imperatives around whole organisation culture change in order for councils to embrace a keenness for openness

- Empowering councillors to seek out new forms of engagement. Some examples exist of pre-council meetings; councillors engaging with communities and groups to seek and obtain views of specific issues of local relevance prior to decision making. This promotes a sense of councillors and communities making decisions together.
- Open government and open data - promoting data audits, making data available and understanding why people need data to help solve complex social problems
- Scrutiny as a mechanism for increasing transparency – significant untapped potential to involve citizens and improve accountability
- Open local government needs to have more impact – how we might hold a conversation with communities about changing expectations of local government and what they expect today and in the future

Different approaches work in different areas. More conventional-style ‘Citizen Panels’ continue to work effectively in some areas, whilst other councils have more ambitiously developed local problem sharing fora where local social challenges are put to groups of residents wherein detailed explorations take place involving expert witnesses. Other places have focussed on developing effective processes and approaches to support social action through organised volunteering, developing rewards and incentives schemes and increasing cases exist – as they do in Monmouthshire – where residents take part in and/ or run services themselves.

Work led by NESTA on the subject shows how more personally tailored services can empower service users to become more engaged and involved in shaping development and delivery. The key principle is that local problems are best solved through local social public action or so-called ‘double loop democracy’. Democratic innovation in this way is seen as having two main dimensions: renewal of the mandate of the elected and revival of civic virtue and public action amongst citizens generally.

The work Monmouthshire has undertaken in this area to date also merits consideration as a fairly strong base on which to build. Our digital MadeOpen Platform is about facilitating collaboration and demonstrating the impact of ‘together’. The process of developing ‘Our Monmouthshire’ with over 1700 postcard responses received to inform our wellbeing objective and priorities – represented a practice which met with public approval. Town Teams, place-based approaches, community co-ordination and community enterprise development have all contributed to promoting our proximity to residents and improving understandings of ‘what matters’. In addition, the creation of the app, MyMonmouthshire, with over 6,000 users has provided a new and more instantaneous and digital way of sharing and solving problems.

The Local Government White Paper (Wales) 2017

The Paper sets out the key areas pertinent to this discussion:

- How Local Government might re-think its relationship with Town and Community Councils and more to more place-based partnerships
- The potential for more participation in budget making and setting
- The potential for more processes to be digitised, improving efficiency and reach
- Duty placed on Councils to produce a public engagement strategy with specific reference to engagement in local democratic processes
- Remote attendance of meetings
- Councillor correspondence, surgeries and annual reports – with councillors making clear how constituents can access and communicate with them
- Area committees – reviewing flexibility and powers vested in them

- Revisions to electoral arrangements including: reviewing postal voting, electronic voting and counting, voting outside of polling stations and development of a single electronic register for Wales.

Collective Impact

As the county's biggest public service provider however, it is clear we are grappling with and face ever more significant challenges. The funds we get from WG have been falling in real terms and we're confronted by a lot of pressures including an ageing population, declining numbers of young people and new legislation as well as wider strategic challenges such as Brexit, climate change and the opportunities of new technology.

Our current ways of doing things have served us well and delivered some really good outcomes. In Monmouthshire we've managed to find savings of £17m over the past four years without our communities experiencing significant decline in front-line services. However, we know that even though the 2017/18 budget settlement was as good as we could have expected we don't think our current way of doing things is sustainable for much longer. People are working incredibly hard and we can't squeeze much more out of the current system. We need to think differently. The Minister for Finance and Local Government has now removed the shadow of local government reorganization so our destiny is once again in our own hands - it's important that we grasp that opportunity.

There is an opportunity to empower and mobilise both people and organisations that care about Monmouthshire's social, economic and environmental fabric; so that together we can tackle deeply entrenched problems that inhibit our otherwise remarkable county. We envisage approaching this in two ways. Firstly, by developing innovative partner collaborations to help counter more difficult times ahead. Secondly, by harnessing available resources, skills and initiatives within Monmouthshire that rewards actionable change. Our end goal, our legacy, will be to endow the collaborations that create the most impact. The potential for the Public Service Board to be key in driving this forward is clear; offering opportunities to fix problems in a connected and collaborative way.

For Collective Impact to succeed, people and organisations in Monmouthshire must fulfil their individual responsibilities as well as those that require collaboration with others. The core message is that together, we can make a difference.

Challenge-driven communities

Monmouthshire Council is a resource of some 4,000 employees. The County of Monmouthshire has a resource of over 90,000 people. So, how might we best connect to and unlock all the talent and ideas out there and promote community-powered problem solving? How do communities connect with us and each other, do this in order to constantly generate new ways of creating value. The answers to such questions could spell a radical departure from approaches that saw procurement of solutions and products from vendors and a 'we have the answers' or 'we can solve your problems' stance. In some circles this concept of working more closely together to create new solutions and opportunities is called 'co-creation'. Whilst questions are posed around which sections of the community to connect with to exploit opportunities; through which platform or with what data and how to expand the network - the opportunity is to make it possible to tackle problems of increasing scope. The organisations that make it possible to tackle problems of increasing scope are the ones which build the most vibrant webs of human interaction. Our Community Hubs and platforms such as MyMonmouthshire offer opportunities to trial challenge-driven working.

Community Governance Review

Our first phase Community Governance Review, commissioned by the previous Cabinet has now concluded and reported. The scope of the review was to examine the viability and relevance of community governance structures such as Area Committees and area panels and the plethora of fora, in the light of newer developments in participatory democracy such as Town Teams. The review concluded that each place and area needed to structure the arrangements which best suited it and optimally serviced its needs. It's reduced the number of groups and structures and sought to move areas towards more integrated and connected structures, supporting peer learning and greater interaction. Whilst this initial work has created more clarity at the local level and created more synergistic benefits – community governance goes beyond re-arrangement of area committees and so it is anticipated that as this agenda is developed and strategic set down by the new Council, a second phase of work to establish not just the 'will' but the 'way' will be necessary.

In conclusion, the appetite to explore new directions in democracy sets out a wide-ranging scope. Should the new Democratic Services committee continue interest in this area, it is suggested that key areas of focus are established and agreed in order that actions and progress can be demonstrated and measured. Democracy goes wider than political advocacy, voting and enjoying and protecting our civil liberties. Democracy is fundamentally about creating the capacity to do things and to choose the important problems we want to work on and then work on them together in just and productive ways. For the growing variety of challenging issues facing communities and its public service organisations – it appears essential to create and put in place the capacity to share and solve problems at a community and placed based level. Fundamentally the problem this paper seeks to pose – is how we might get more people engaged and involved in how to make a difference.
