

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Economy and Development Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 7th September, 2017 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor P. Pavia (Chairman)

County Councillors: J. Becker, A. Davies, D. Dovey, M. Feakins, R. Roden and B. Strong

Also in attendance County Councillors: S. Jones and V. Smith

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Kellie Beirne	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Mark Hand	Head of Planning, Housing and Place-Shaping
Philip Thomas	Development Services Manager
Rachel Lewis	Planning Policy Manager
Mark Howcroft	Assistant Head of Finance
Paula Harris	Democratic Services Officer
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors D. Blakebrough and P. Clarke

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

2. Public Open Forum

There were no members of the public present.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Economy and Development Select Committee meeting dated 13th July 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Monmouthshire Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report

Context:

To scrutinise the purpose, key findings and conclusions of the Local Development Plan (LDP) third Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

Key issues:

The Head of Planning, Housing and Place Shaping provided the Select Committee with a presentation on the Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017. In doing so, the following points were noted:

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- There was a statutory requirement to produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).
- To be submitted to Welsh Government by 31 October 2017 and cover the preceding financial year from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.
- The Monmouthshire Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted on 27th February 2014.
- The third AMR covers the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.
- It is the basis for monitoring effectiveness of the LDP – demonstrate whether the LDP strategy and objectives are being achieved and whether the Plan's policies are functioning effectively.
- Determine whether any revisions to the Plan are necessary.
- Allow the Council to assess the impact the LDP is having on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the County.
- Identify any significant contextual changes that may influence plan implementation or review.

The conclusions of the AMR:

- Good progress continues to be made in implementing many of the Plan's policies and overall the strategy remains sound.
- However, a number of the LDP's key housing provision policy targets are not being met, indicating that these policies are not functioning as intended.
- Continued lack of a five year housing land supply remains a matter of concern that needs to be addressed if the Plan's housing requirements are to be met.
- The position remains that an early review of the LDP is considered necessary to address the housing land supply shortfall.

Recommendations of the AMR:

- Continue with an early review of the Monmouthshire LDP as a result of the need to address the shortfall in the housing land supply and facilitate the identification / allocation of additional housing land. This will involve the production of a Review Report which will set out and explain the scope of the Plan revision required.
- Submit the third AMR to the Welsh Government by 31 October 2017 in accordance with statutory requirements. Publish the AMR on the Council's website.

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- Continue to monitor the Plan through the preparation of successive AMRs.

Next steps:

- A full statutory review of the LDP is required to commence in February 2018. It is considered appropriate to continue with a full review of the Plan to consider all aspects of the LDP at this stage in order to fully assess the nature and scale of revisions that might be required. This will also assist in meeting the 2021 deadline for having an adopted revised LDP in place to avoid the local policy vacuum that the new Regulations threaten to create.

Member Scrutiny:

- In response to a question raised regarding whether a short term review would be able to take into account significant issues such as the issues relating to the Severn Bridge tolls, it was noted that this could be achieved but would have to be in the context of the current plan strategy which is where developments are being focussed.
- The current LDP is not fit for future purpose. With the guidance changes and the probable move to a Strategic Development Plan for the region a balance needs to be struck in which the long term strategy needs to be identified but doing this quick enough to allow the Authority to aid in shaping and forming a regional strategy rather than being directed by it.
- The knowledge sector is one of the fastest growing industries in the County and there is a need to ensure that young people remain in the County.
- Currently, in the Severnside area, the percentage aim of achieving new affordable houses equates to 25%. With the removal of the Severn Bridge tolls this area might need to be brought into line with the remainder of the County with affordable housing targets being raised to 35%. A more qualitative approach needs to be undertaken with a view to housing developments being located where there is a need.
- The provision of affordable housing is a challenge. The 25% in the south of the County and the 35% in the north of the County, affordable housing provision is based on viability evidence on the previous LDP but this could be reviewed. Figures are indicating that the Authority is achieving in the region of 19% affordable housing provision.
- A reduction in the Severn Bridge tolls may lead to an increase in house prices in the south of the County as well as potentially leading to an increase in land values. There are a number of challenges to be faced when the tolls are reduced / ended.
- In response to a question raised by a Select Committee Member regarding the delay in the LDP review, it was noted that much discussion has been undertaken

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during the previous 12 months regarding what the Authority is looking to do on a regional basis. Debate has been undertaken at officer level with a view to achieving a Strategic Development Plan at some point in the near future.

- Reference was made to a number of indicator targets that were either 'amber' or 'red' and that there did not seem to be reference to any action plans in place to address these issues, which indicated that areas of the LDP were not performing as it should. In response, it was noted that the conclusion of the report indicated that the action required is to undertake the review report and commence revision of the LDP.
- In the short to medium term, there will be the challenge of the five year land supply and unallocated sites running in tandem whilst the new plan is being established.
- In terms of the short form revision, if the Authority decides to undertake this revision, this would be as a pragmatic solution to keep the Authority having planned coverage until there is a regional plan. However, it was noted that this was not necessarily the preferred option.
- In response to a question raised regarding the shortfall in housing provision (797 dwellings) it was noted that there is progress being made on the Crick Road Site. In the next plan, if sites do not come forward then they will be removed from the plan. Communities will be encouraged to put forward potential sites for development.
- Cross boundary discussions with English authorities take place but more could be done to establish ways of working more closely to achieve better outcomes. This has impacts on education and local issues to that region. Similarly, there are cross border issues regarding the Health Board and discussions will need to be undertaken as part of the new LDP. Allocation of smaller sites could be considered with a view to engaging with smaller local builders on both sides of the border.
- The Authority has a positive working relationship with the three affordable homes providers in Monmouthshire and is working with them. These developers are keen to build in Monmouthshire but land supply is currently short.
- In response to a question raised regarding a short form revision of the LDP it was noted that the extent of what can be achieved via a short form revision is limited.
- In terms of education provision, this can be factored into new developments proposed within the LDP as live birth records are known and pupil numbers can be predicted from data already available.
- With regard to the additional doctors' surgeries, this is an area where improvements could be made. Planning Committee has recently agreed that

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consultation will be undertaken with the Health Boards regarding planning applications where there are to be more than 10 dwellings.

- A Future Monmouthshire Workshop will be held in due course.

Committee's Conclusion

- The Chair thanked officers for presenting the Monmouthshire Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring report.
- A Future Monmouthshire Workshop will be held in due course. All Members are encouraged to attend.

5. Revenue & Capital Monitoring 2017/18 Outturn Statement

Context:

To receive information on the revenue and capital outturn positions of the Authority based on activity data at month 2.

Recommendations proposed to Cabinet:

- That Members consider a net revenue outturn overspend of £164,000.
- Members consider a capital outturn spend, forecast by service managers to agree with budget.
- Members note that the low level of earmarked reserves, which will severely reduce the flexibility the Council has in meeting the financial challenges of reducing settlements and consequent need to re-design services.
- Members note the significant forecast reduction in the overall school balance at the end of 2017/18 and supports the continuing work with schools to ensure that the Council's Fairer Funding Scheme requirements are met and that the overall schools balance reverts to a positive position at the earliest opportunity.

Member Scrutiny:

- In response to a question raised regarding the Authority's procurement and potential savings that might be made through the establishment of a team to investigate this matter, it was noted that £91 million of the Authority's spend annually goes through procurement books in terms of outside supply contractors. One of the review pieces of work being looked at under Future Monmouthshire is around procurement which suits the needs of the Authority and whether it is cost

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effective. For example, under open data, the Authority's external supplier information has been put on the County Council's website every month outlining expenditure. Developers have taken this information and reorganised it. The Authority's local spend now is much lower than in previous years.

- Automated systems are being investigated with a view to freeing up officer time to undertake higher value work.
- Part of the role of the procurement section is to ensure that the Authority does not fall foul of regional and national procurement requirements.
- There is a new post that has been established specifically to look at business opportunities. The focus of this post will be to look at the detail and depth required to ensure that there is continuous progress in place.
- Currently, the Authority does not have the dedicated resources or the reserves to have a dedicated unit to look specifically at procurement. The new post holder will be able to mobilise some resource to have a whole programme of activity. Therefore, procurement will be one of the issues being looked at.
- The Select Committee considered that a letter should be sent to the Cabinet Member with a view to consideration being given to the establishment of a team to investigate the Council's procurement mechanisms. It was considered that such a team could pay for itself via the savings that it will likely identify.
- The Authority does have marketable skills and these skills have been sold over previous years. However, it was noted that the budget for the Enterprise Directorate has been significantly reduced over the previous five years whilst still being able to generate steady sources of income. The Directorate is now at the point where a boost of additional resource is required in order to tackle the big issues facing the Authority.
- Future Monmouthshire – Teams and departments are undertaking challenge sessions looking at data, unit costs, best practice, etc. Currently, this is undertaken by officers. This could be opened up to Members, business and the community in order to obtain some fresh perspectives.

Committee's Conclusion

- To support the recommendations proposed to Cabinet.
- That a letter be sent to the Cabinet Member with a view to consideration being given to the establishment of a Procurement Development and Efficiency Team to investigate the Council's procurement mechanisms and establish savings in the coming years.

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6. List of actions arising from the previous meeting

We noted the list of actions arising from the previous meeting.

7. Economy and Development Select Committee Forward Work Programme

We resolved to receive and note the Economy and Development Select Committee Forward Work Programme. In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Future Monmouthshire Workshop will be held on 17th October 2017 at 2.00pm.
- Cross border scrutiny – contact has been made with Gloucestershire County Council and Bristol City Council. Officers will meet with representatives of the Councils prior to a formal meeting taking place.
- Select Committee Meeting – 19th October 2017 agenda items:
 - Tourism Performance and Destination Management Plan Review.
 - Tourism Supplementary Planning Guidance.
 - Annual Planning Report.
- October / November 2017 – A Seminar will be held, led by the Head of Planning Housing and Place Shaping regarding Education Contributions / Capacity / Section 106 Funding.

8. Council and Cabinet Business Forward Plan

We resolved to receive and note the Council and Cabinet Business Forward Plan.

9. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 19th October 2017 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 1.42 pm.