

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 6th June, 2019 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor L.Dymock (Chairman)

County Councillors: A. Easson, L. Guppy, R. Harris, V. Smith and
J.Treharne

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Alan Burkitt	Policy Officer Equalities and Welsh Language
Hannah Jones	Youth and Community Officer
Carl Touhig	Head of Waste and Street Scene

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Peter Jackman	Chair, Crucorney Environmental Group
Andrea Jackman	Secretary, Crucorney Environmental Group

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors P. Clarke and A. Webb

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Open Public Forum

No members of the public were present.

3. Crucorney Litter Scheme: Update

Purpose:

To receive an update on the Crucorney Litter Project from the Crucorney Environmental Group (CEG), represented by Peter Jackman, Chairman and Andrea Jackman, Secretary.

Key Issues:

- CEG is a small group based in Llanvihangel Crucorney focussed on litter picking and litter prevention with the help of 30-40 volunteers.
- There is an annual Spring Clean event and litter picking is otherwise on an ad hoc basis by the volunteers.
- A report was presented to the Strong Communities Select Committee in November that contained some challenges for the council to help prevent littering and tackle causes.
- The project has a purpose of preventing roadside litter through the use of bins and signage, to change behaviour and support the volunteers.

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- Results show that the residents have mainly welcomed or accepted the trial, with a limited number of objections. It is concluded that the trial will continue, removed signs will be replaced and the campaign widened.

Member scrutiny:

Following the presentation, Members were invited to ask questions:

- A Member asked if there was a community central point (large wheelie bin) where full bags can be stored until collected and was informed that there is no such facility at present.
- It was questioned if local campsites have you been visited to check their waste disposal arrangements and responded that a community councillor has started this process but it was noted that not all campsites are licensed.
- A Member raise health and safety concerns about unauthorised campsites and also queried the Council's responsibility for removing rubbish from them. The Head of Waste and Street Scene advised that authorised campsites are obliged to provide a point for waste collection. If an informal campsite is discovered, the landlord is advised of the need for a trade waste agreement. Campers may drop black bags by bins in laybys believing that is the appropriate place and may encourage further fly tipping. Campers and campsites can use the Llanfoist Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) to dispose of waste. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the permit system will cause issues but added that businesses should have a trade waste permit. Changeover days for holiday lets are also problematic as bags can be left out for up to two weeks. The authority works with businesses to encourage weekly or daily trade waste collection in such cases.
- A Member confirmed that authorised campsites are regulated and licensed by Environmental Health. Planning permission is also required. It was agreed that unauthorised sites should be subject to enforcement.
- The CEG will share its findings with the Community Council as a first step.
- Whilst commending the Group's efforts, a Member condemned the concept of having to clear up after people adding that placing bins in rural areas attracts waste from residents of other authorities.
- The Chair thanked the representatives of the CEG for the update. It was suggested that this time of year is popular with school leavers camping and that there was a need to change attitudes through more interaction with schools.
- The Head of Waste and Street Scene provided an update on progress with the Litter Strategy. The Select Committee was reminded that the draft litter strategy was presented in November 2018 with lots of views expressed and shortly afterwards it was announced that the funding for local environmental quality was being removed. Welsh Government suggested more collaborative work on litter and work with Keep Wales Tidy started. All Welsh authorities have signed up to a programme of work. A reduced amount of funding will be available and work will be branded "Caru Cymru" (Love Wales). The authority needs to work within the national strategy. It was noted that national enforcement such as litter from cars is a priority. A further priority is a national campaign to support community groups to stop litter occurring in the first place. Verge side litter, dog fouling and fly-tipping are also priorities. The authority's priorities will be aligned to national priorities.
- The representative of the CEG asked about training for enforcement officers, and also questioned if there had been any progress on sponsorship with businesses. It was responded that training has been provided for enforcement officers mainly for parking, but moving on to environmental quality issues. The presence of a uniform and visibility on the street is having an effect already. This is mainly in towns not rural areas however.

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- Keep Wales Tidy is planning to approach businesses on a national level and any funding received would be shared out locally and equally.
- The Head of Operations explained that six Civil Enforcement Officers have been appointed funded by the income from fines. In time, it is intended to develop a wider enforcement role to include environmental quality. Initially, priority will be given to on and off street parking offences. It was also confirmed that enforcement officers are in radio contact with the service manager. It was agreed that a report on civil parking enforcement will be presented to a future meeting.
- It was confirmed that the Welsh Government Strategy is expected in July. It was agreed to invite CEG to a future meeting to review the strategy. It was also agreed to review the success of the permit scheme at the same meeting.
- It was agreed that the issue of unauthorised campsites will be discussed with the Community Council as part of wider discussion on the trial.

Committee Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the Crucorney Environmental Group for their contribution to the meeting.

It was agreed that the group would be invited to a future meeting to review the Litter Strategy and to also review the success of the permit scheme at the same meeting if possible.

The issue of waste from unauthorised campsites will initially be discussed with the Community Council as part of the wider discussion of the trial

4. Apprentice, Graduate and Intern Strategy

Purpose:

To present the draft Apprentice, Graduate and Intern (AGI) Strategy (2019-22) and the priorities contained within. To inform members of the proposed creation of an AGI Coordinator post to oversee the implementation of the AGI Strategy.

Recommendations:

- The committee to scrutinise the draft Apprentice, Graduate and Intern Strategy and make recommendations accordingly.
- Subject to any recommendations made, Committee to endorse the draft Apprentice, Graduate and Intern Strategy for submission to Cabinet for approval on 3rd July 2019.

Key issues:

1. The Council does not currently have a strategy in place to develop and support apprenticeship, graduate jobs and internships across the local authority. Apprentices, Graduates and Interns (AGI) are an asset to any organisation and can bring significant benefits to the business and existing workforce.
2. A need has been identified for a coordination role to support the Youth Enterprise Manager in delivering on the priorities of the Apprentice, Graduate and Intern Strategy (appendix 5 – AGI Coordinator Job Description). The AGI Coordinator will monitor and support delivery of the AGI Strategy and action plan, and will have a responsibility to;
 - Support identification and creation of apprentice, graduate and intern opportunities across the organisation to support current and future skills needs.

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- set up and manage a comprehensive quality monitoring system for AGI opportunities to ensure a positive experience for all involved
- increase accessibility to higher level and more diverse training opportunities for new and existing employees
- promote the value of apprentice, graduate and intern recruitment opportunities within the local authority

3. There are currently fifteen apprentices (April 2019) within the Council in the following service areas: Schools, Property services, Highways, Partnerships and Community Development, Youth Enterprise. The number of graduate officers or internships is not currently recorded.

4. The variety of apprenticeship posts within the council at present is limited and tend to be in the fields of Business Administration, Information Technology and Teaching Assistants. Expanding training opportunities and the range of higher-level qualifications will support current and future skills needs and succession planning.

Member scrutiny:

The report was presented by the Youth Enterprise Manager. Following presentation of the report, questions were invited from Select Committee Members as follows:

- A Member asked how many applicants or approaches are made to the Council about Apprentices, Graduate and Internships. It was responded that numbers can vary and can be in response to adverts or sometimes students make contact via e mail requests e.g. for placements. This can amount to approximately 30 individual approaches on an annual basis.
- A Select Committee Member was unaware of internships and expressed concern about the potential for exploitation. Further concern was expressed that it was not known how many, or where internships are within the organisation. It was confirmed that Service Managers know but the information is not easy to compile. The Member was concerned that individuals completing work experience don't have a formal salary, it is at the discretion of the Manager if travel expenses are paid. It was suggested that a policy was required. The Member asked how many graduate jobs are in place. Referring to these points, it was thought unwise for the report to proceed to Cabinet without some further information. It was responded that for internships, payment of travel expenses was a point that could be covered by the volunteer policy and that an amendment is needed. Regarding the number of graduates, it was agreed that the definition requires greater clarity as these individuals can work in various sectors of the organisation. Figures can be provided for the report once there is clearer information.
- It was questioned if there are records of interns' progress and success and confirmed that this is available at the end of their period of internship. It was explained that this aspect requires careful management, a clear offer and expectations through discussion with service managers.
- A Member asked if the 15 apprentices are within the authority or with other bodies, if they are paid the appropriate rate for their age and if the internship scheme would fit into a similar scheme. It was added that interns should receive some form of recompense and shouldn't be viewed as free labour. It was suggested that the matter is deferred to return for further scrutiny to proceed to Cabinet at the end of July or in September. It was also suggested that feedback should be sought from the Head of Law/Monitoring Officer on the legal aspects of the scheme.
- A Member welcomed the policy and requested that the application timeline can be as short as possible.
- It was queried if delaying the report through the summer would have a detrimental effect on further adverts. It was responded that all posts advertised in the authority have the same timeline. It was added that service areas can continue to be supported with

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recruitment in the meantime. The development area is for graduates and internships and it is important to ensure all aspects are correct before proceeding. There is a toolkit in the document that was devised following meetings with current apprentices to explore their experiences with a view to considering how best to provide support from the point of entry and career pathways going forward. The strategy will provide a clear pathway of direction.

- The Member expressed the importance of stipulating a finishing point, what individuals can expect to be paid and when the individual will move to a new post. It was confirmed that the level of pay and qualification details are made clear from the outset; the investment in a post will strengthen this aspect, provide robust quality assurance and suitable progression for the apprentice. This information would also be valuable for the line manager.
- It was queried if there is liaison with Coleg Gwent, and confirmed that work will be revisited through the strategy to provide a more co-ordinated approach and pathways for

Committee Conclusion:

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Officer for attending the meeting and explained that the Select Committee, following scrutiny, asked for some more information and amendments to be made to the report before it proceeds to Cabinet. It was agreed that the report should return to Strong Communities Select Committee on 11th July 2019 for further scrutiny then to Cabinet on either 31st July or 4th September 2019.

students. It was added that there will also be more engagement with schools.

5. Welsh Language Monitoring Report

Purpose:

To provide a performance overview of our compliance and recording systems in relation to the Welsh Language Standards that were allocated in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Recommendations:

Members are invited to conduct performance monitoring scrutiny, highlighting any areas of concern in relation to performance to the Cabinet Member. The report is a record of the Council's activities over the last financial year in respect of compliance with its allocated Welsh Language Standards. The report will then be forwarded to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office by the 30th June 2019 for their scrutiny, a response and formal approval. It will also be posted on the council's English and Welsh websites for public scrutiny.

Key issues:

1. The Monitoring report details information recorded in relation to specific areas of the Welsh Language Standards allocated to this council. The Welsh Language Commissioner requests this information annually in order to be able measure our progress in terms of compliance with the Standards.
2. The report will be forwarded to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office by the 30th June 2018. Once the report has been read and analysed by the Commissioner the Council meets with the Commissioners' Office to discuss any areas of good practice and any areas of concern that require improvement. It will also be posted on the council's English and Welsh web sites to allow for public scrutiny.

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3. Fundamentally the Council is doing well in terms of compliance with these challenging standards. One continuing area of concern though is the low numbers of fluent Welsh speakers that are employed by the Council (31) potentially making us susceptible to challenge as a result of our inability to provide or proactively offer any kind of frontline services to the Welsh speaking members of the public of Monmouthshire. The Workforce Planning process that was developed and led by the Welsh Language and Equality Officer and Human Resources has been underway for at least 2 years. The process involves auditing the Welsh Language skills that exist in divisions, looking for any gaps and then designating posts as Welsh Essential when they become vacant. This process has worked well and posts have been designated as Welsh Essential. Unfortunately when some of these have been advertised there has been a lack of applicants but it is anticipated that the numbers of fluent Welsh speakers in the council will increase gradually but that will take some time to have the desired effect.

Member Scrutiny:

The Policy Officer Equalities and Welsh Language presented the report and questions were invited.

- A Member commented that line managers are not always in a position to commit staff to attend or continue courses. This point was agreed and is common across all authorities. It was questioned if Learn Welsh courses are given equal priority to other training courses provided to staff. The authority was requested to regard Welsh Language courses the same as other professional courses. The Officer is working with Coleg Gwent to improve numbers on courses by including members of the public to sustain numbers on the courses. It was confirmed that volunteers take up courses for a variety of reasons and no one is required to do it.
- It was also confirmed that the numbers of Welsh speakers recorded does not include school based staff and that there are varying levels of fluency and confidence. Some staff members do not disclose their ability to speak the language. It was suggested that HR should have a process to gather this information on appointment.
- The Chair asked if the information is gathered when staff are recruited. It was thought that this information is gathered on a separate confidential form and that there may be an opportunity to ask new starters if they are willing to divulge this information. A Member also suggested that managers could send out an e mail to ask their staff if they are Welsh speakers. The officer agreed to make further enquires with HR. It was responded that there is no obligation for staff members to disclose Welsh Language skills as this is a protected characteristic. The Chair felt that the way the question is asked could influence a staff member's likelihood of responding.
- A Member asked if the change in the demographic in the county due to an influx of residents from Bristol has impacted on schools, and asked how this demand would be monitored. It was responded that students in Wales have to learn Welsh as part of the curriculum. Older pupils arriving from England may require extra assistance to reach the required standard.

Committee Conclusion:

The Chair summarised the views of the Select Committee that

- 1) There are concerns about employees not getting support to attend courses from line managers; and
- 2) There is a need to gather better quality data on Welsh speakers in the organisation.

6. To confirm minutes of the previous meeting

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The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record.

7. Action list

The Action List from the last meeting was noted.

An update was provided that an annual performance report from Registrar service will be scheduled for later in the year.

8. Strong Communities Forward Work Programme

The Forward Work Programme was updated as follows

11th July 2019:

It was estimated that the meeting would be longer to give sufficient time to adequately scrutinise four items to include:

- Apprentice, Graduate and Intern strategy
- Modern Day Slavery Protocol
- Corporate Plan and Annual Report
- Revenue and Capital Outturn Report

Special meeting in September to be arranged:

- Road safety and traffic strategy (Reports were requested well in advance of the meeting to facilitate thorough scrutiny)

26th September 2019:

- Rights of way improvement plan
- Budget monitoring

Special meeting October:

- Litter Strategy – invite Crucorney Environmental Group
- Waste Collections Policy

Suggestion for a Members' Seminar:

- Civil Enforcement

9. Cabinet & Council forward work programme

The Council and Cabinet Forward Planner was noted.

Regarding burials and cremations, it was confirmed that a working party of Councillors is working on a report.

10. Date and time of next meeting

11th July 2019 at 10.00am (pre-meeting at 9.30am).

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm