

Public Document Pack



County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Wednesday, 21 April 2021

Notice of meeting

Strong Communities Select Committee

Thursday, 29th April, 2021 at 10.00 am
Remote Meeting

Please note that a pre meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting for members of the committee.

AGENDA

| Item No | Item | Pages |
|--|---|---------|
| PART A: SCRUTINY AND CRIME DISORDER MATTERS | | |
| No matters to discuss. | | |
| PART B STRONG COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE | | |
| 1. | Apologies for absence. | |
| 2. | Declarations of Interest. | |
| 3. | Open Public Forum. | |
| 4. | To scrutinise progress on implementing Monmouthshire's Local Toilet Strategy prior to updating Welsh Government (report to follow). Please see link below to Individual Cabinet Member Decision report relating to the Monmouthshire Local Toilet Strategy dated 12th June 2019. https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=147&MIId=3900 | |
| 5. | Strong Communities Select Committee Forward Work Programme. | 1 - 2 |
| 6. | Cabinet & Council Forward Work Programme. | 3 - 12 |
| 7. | To confirm minutes of the previous meeting. | 13 - 20 |

8.

Next Meeting: Thursday 17th June 2021 at 10.00am.

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| County Councillor Lisa Dymock | The Elms; | Welsh Conservative Party |
| County Councillor Dimitri Batrouni | St. Christophers; | Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru |
| County Councillor Peter Clarke | Llangybi Fawr; | Welsh Conservative Party |
| County Councillor Tony Easson | Dewstow; | Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru |
| County Councillor Linda Guppy | Rogiet; | Liberal Democrats |
| County Councillor Val Smith | Llanbadoc; | Independent Group |
| County Councillor Jamie Treharne | Overmonnow; | Welsh Conservative Party |
| County Councillor Ann Webb | St Arvans; | Welsh Conservative Party |

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

A copy of this agenda and relevant reports can be made available to members of the public attending a meeting by requesting a copy from Democratic Services on 01633 644219. Please note that we must receive 24 hours notice prior to the meeting in order to provide you with a hard copy of this agenda.

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

Our purpose

Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Objectives we are working towards

- Giving people the best possible start in life
- A thriving and connected county
- Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment
- Lifelong well-being
- A future focused council

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Monmouthshire Scrutiny Committee Guide

Role of the Pre-meeting

1. Why is the Committee scrutinising this? (background, key issues)
2. What is the Committee's role?
3. What outcome do Members want to achieve?
4. Is there sufficient information to achieve this? If not, who could provide this?
5. Discuss the committee's approach:
 - Agree the order of questioning and which Members will lead
 - Agree questions for officers and questions for the Cabinet Member

Questions for the Meeting

Scrutinising Performance

1. How does performance compare with previous years? Is it better/worse? Why?
2. How does performance compare with other councils/other service providers? Is it better/worse? Why?
3. How does performance compare with set targets? Is it better/worse? Why?
4. How were performance targets set? Are they challenging enough/realistic?
5. How do service users/the public/partners view the performance of the service?
6. Have there been any recent audit and inspections? What were the findings?
7. How does the service contribute to the achievement of corporate objectives?
8. Is improvement/decline in performance linked to an increase/reduction in resource? What capacity is there to improve?

Scrutinising Policy

1. Who does the policy affect ~ directly and indirectly? Who will benefit most/least?
2. What is the view of service users/stakeholders? Do they believe it will achieve the desired outcome?
3. What is the view of the community as a whole - the 'taxpayer' perspective?
4. What methods were used to consult with stakeholders? Did the process enable all those with a stake to have their say?
5. What practice and options have been considered in developing/reviewing this policy? What evidence is there to inform what works?
6. Have all relevant sustainable development, equalities and safeguarding implications been taken into consideration? For example, what are the procedures that need to be in place to protect children?
7. How much will this cost to implement and what funding source has been identified?
8. How will performance of the policy be measured and the impact evaluated.

Questions for the Committee to conclude...

Do we have the necessary information to form conclusions/make recommendations to the executive, council, other partners? If not, do we need to:

- (i) Investigate the issue in more detail?
- (ii) Obtain further information from other witnesses – Executive Member, independent expert, members of the local community, service users, regulatory bodies...

(iii) Agree further actions to be undertaken within a timescale/future monitoring report...

This page is intentionally left blank

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2021

| Strong Communities Select Committee | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------|------------------------|
| Meeting Date | Subject | Purpose of Scrutiny | Responsibility | Type of Scrutiny |
| 29 th April 2021 | Monmouthshire's Local Toilet Strategy | To scrutinise progress on implementing Monmouthshire's Local Toilet Strategy prior to updating Welsh Government. | David Jones | Performance Monitoring |
| | Burials and Cremations Member Report | To consider a report produced by Councillor Val Smith in relation to burials and cremations. | Councillor Val Smith | Member Report |
| 17 th June 2021 | Welsh Language | To consider the annual report of the council's performance in embedding Welsh language. | Alan Burkitt | Performance Monitoring |
| | | | | |
| 29 th July 2021 | | | | |
| 30 th September 2021 | | | | |
| 18 th November 2021 | | | | |
| 6 th January 2022 | | | | |
| 10 th February 2022 | | | | |
| 24 th March 2022 | | | | |
| 19 th May 2022 | | | | |

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2021

Future Agreed Work Programme Items: Dates to be determined

- × Annual monitoring of Public Protection in May, a half year exception report, highlighting any gaps in service delivery, to be scheduled in November of each year.
- × Registrars Service ~ annual monitoring in May
- × Air Pollution Monitoring Report
- × Social Justice Policy
- × Open Space Review
- × Cremations and Burials

Emerging issues/topics to be raised with the committee before inclusion ~ some reports to be received by email for comment rather than in-depth scrutiny

Cabinet, Council and Individual Cabinet Member Decisions (ICMD) Forward Plan

Monmouthshire County Council is required to publish a forward plan of all key decisions to be taken. Council and Cabinet items will only be considered for decision if they have been included on the planner no later than the month preceding the meeting, unless the item is considered urgent.

| Committee / Decision Maker | Meeting date / Decision due | Subject | Purpose | Author | Date item added to the planner | Date item originally scheduled for decision |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Council | 01/10/23 | LDP for Adoption | | Mark Hand | 23/01/20 | |
| Council | 01/02/23 | LDP submission for examination | | Mark Hand | 23/01/20 | |
| Council | 01/07/22 | LDP Deposit Plan endorsement for consultation | Endorsement of Deposit Plan | Mark Hand | 23/01/20 | |
| Cabinet | 01/12/21 | Review of Monmouthshire's Destination Management Plan 2017-2020 | Purpose: to approve the revised Destination Development Plan | Matthew Lewis | 22/09/20 | |
| Cabinet | 01/09/21 | LDP Preferred Strategy endorsement post consultation | | Mark Hand | 20/05/20 | |
| Cabinet | 07/07/21 | Active Travel Network Maps | | Paul Sullivan | 13/11/20 | |
| Council | 24/06/21 | LDP Preferred Strategy endorsement for consultation | | Mark Hand | 21/09/20 | |
| Cabinet | 09/06/21 | Budget Monitoring outturn report | The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the forecast outturn position of the Authority at end of month reporting for 2020/21 financial year | Peter Davies/Jon Davies | 02/04/20 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|----------|---|--|-----------------------------------|----------|--|
| Cabinet | 09/06/21 | Gilwern Site Developments | | Marie Bartlett | 23/05/21 | |
| Cabinet | 09/06/21 | Shire Hall / Monmouth Museum – to consider the outcome of the feasibility study | To seek approval for Monmouthshire to play its part in accommodating and supporting a small number of asylum seekers as part of the vision for Wales as a nation of sanctuary | Matthew Lewis/Ian Saunders | 05/02/21 | |
| Cabinet | 09/06/21 | Abergavenny CRC (Racecourse Farm) | CM | Mike Moran | 14/10/20 | |
| Council | 13/05/21 | Climate and Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan | | Hazel Clatworthy | 14/04/21 | |
| ICMD | 12/05/21 | A Nation of Sanctuary - Asylum Dispersal Scheme | To provide Council with an progress update on the Climate and Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan which was developed following the passing of a motion to declare a climate emergency. | Matt Gatehouse | 19/04/21 | |
| ICMD | 12/05/21 | Play Action Plan | Cabinet Member Richard John Report originally on Cabi | Matthew Lewis/Mike Moran/Ian Saun | 16/03/21 | |
| Cabinet | 14/04/21 | Leisure Centre Investments | | Marie Bartlett | 22/03/21 | |
| Cabinet | 14/04/21 | Statutory Consultation to establish 4-19 school in Abergavenny | | Cath Saunders | 03/03/21 | |
| Cabinet | 14/04/21 | Welsh Church Fund Working Group meeting | The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 6 held on 11th March 2021 | Dave Jarrett | 02/04/20 | |
| Cabinet | 14/04/21 | Whole Authority Strategic Risk Assessment | | Richard Jones | 02/03/21 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|----------|--|--|----------------------------|----------|--|
| ICMD | 07/04/21 | Strategic Procurement | | Cath Fallon/P Murphy | 09/03/21 | |
| ICMD | 24/03/21 | SPG S106 Supplementary Planning Guidance | To Clarify how S106 contributions are calculated/ deferred from 13/1/21 and 24/02/21 deferred UFN | Phil Thomas/Mark Hand | 01/05/19 | |
| Council | 11/03/21 | Appointments to outside bodies | To appoint a representative to the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee | Matt Gatehouse | 08/02/21 | |
| Council | 11/03/21 | Council Tax Resolution Report | | Ruth Donovan | 02/04/20 | |
| Council | 11/03/21 | Treasury Strategy report | | Jon Davies | 15/12/20 | |
| Council | 11/03/21 | Constitution Review | | Matt Phillips | 14/08/19 | |
| Council | 11/03/21 | The Annual Pay Policy | | Sally Thomas | 11/02/21 | |
| ICMD | 10/03/21 | disposal of land for consideration | Awaiting notification re inclusion DEFERRED UFN | by Cllr Murphy/ Ben Thorpe | 09/02/21 | |
| ICMD | 10/03/21 | Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-26 | | Matthew Lewis/Richard John | 10/02/21 | |
| Cabinet | 03/03/21 | •EAS Business Plan | | Sharon Randall Smith | 21/09/20 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|----------|---|--|----------------|----------|----------|
| Cabinet | 03/03/21 | Final revenue and capital budget proposals | | Peter Davies | 21/09/20 | |
| Cabinet | 03/03/21 | Social Justice Strategy Update | | Cath Fallon | 17/09/20 | |
| Cabinet | 03/02/21 | Welsh Church Fund Working Group meeting | The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 5 held on 14th January 2021 | Dave Jarrett | 02/04/20 | |
| Cabinet | 03/02/21 | Apprenticeship Pay Rates | | Gareth James | 08/01/21 | |
| Cabinet | 03/02/21 | Outdoor Adventure Provision at Gilwern | | Marie Bartlett | 30/11/20 | 30/11/20 |
| Cabinet | 03/02/21 | Proposed Disposal of MCC Cottages | | Nicola Howells | 15/12/20 | |
| ICMD | 27/01/21 | Approval on Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 - The Local Authorities (Precepts) (Wales) Regulations 1995 | Deferred from 13/1 to 27/1 | Jon Davies | | |
| Cabinet | 20/01/21 | •Draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation | | Peter Davies | 21/09/20 | |
| Cabinet | 20/01/21 | Chippenham Mead Play Area, Monmouth | | Mike Moran | 15/12/20 | |
| Cabinet | 20/01/21 | Play Area Assessments and Future Play Area Policy | to advise members of play area assessments carried out last year and suggest a rationalisation of provision | Matthew Lewis | 22/09/20 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|----------|--|--|------------------------------|----------|--|
| Cabinet | 20/01/21 | BUS EMERGENCY SCHEME (BES) – REQUEST TO ALL COUNCILS TO SIGN UP TO THE BES2 SCHEME | | Roger Hoggins | 24/12/20 | |
| Council | 14/01/21 | Council Diary 2021/22 | | Nicola Perry | | |
| Council | 14/01/21 | Council Tax Reduction Scheme | | Ruth Donovan | 07/04/20 | |
| Council | 14/01/21 | Annual Safeguarding Report | | Jane Rodgers | 21/09/20 | |
| ICMD | 13/01/21 | Minerals Regional Technical Statement Second Revision (RTS2) | | Rachel Lewis | 17/12/20 | |
| ICMD | 13/01/21 | Museum Service Collection Review | To propose the deaccessioning of and disposal actions for the proposed items in line with Section 4 of the Museums Association Disposal Toolkit | Matthew Lewis/Rachael Rogers | 22/09/20 | |
| ICMD | 13/01/21 | Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in the Private Rented Sector | | Gareth Walters | 15/12/21 | |
| ICMD | 13/01/21 | Staffing Changes: Business Support | To seek approval for the voluntary redundancy of the Chief Executive's Personal Assistant, reducing the cost of administrative support arrangements for the senior management team and contribute to budget savings during the 2021-22 financial year./Paul Jordan | Matt Gatehouse | 15/12/21 | |
| Cabinet | 06/01/21 | Budget Monitoring Report - month 7 (period 2) | The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the forecast outturn position of the Authority at end of month reporting for 2020/21 financial year. | Peter Davies/Jon Davies | 02/04/20 | |
| Cabinet | 06/01/21 | RIPA Policy | | Matt Phillips | 21/10/20 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|----------|---|--|------------------|---------------------|--|
| Cabinet | 06/01/21 | Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2020 | | Mark Hand | 23/06/20 | |
| ICMD | 23/12/20 | Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 | To approve the review of the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 Deferred awaiting new date | Matthew Lewis | 22/09/2020/ | |
| Cabinet | 16/12/20 | Welsh Church Fund Working Group meeting | The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 7 held on 3rd December 2020 | Dave Jarrett | 02/04/20 | |
| Cabinet | 16/12/20 | Proposal to pause work on a proposed Development Company | | Deb Hill Howells | 21/10/20 | |
| Cabinet | 16/12/20 | Local Housing Market Assessment Update | | Mark Hand | 04/11/20 | |
| Cabinet | 16/12/20 | Growth Options to Cabinet for endorsement for non-statutory consultation | | Mark Hand | 21/09/20 | |
| Cabinet | 16/12/20 | Review of school places in Caldicot town | | Matthew Jones | 21/10/20 | |
| ICMD | 09/12/20 | Shire Hall/Monmouth Museum | Paul Jordan | Matthew Lewis | deferred from 11/11 | |
| IMCD | 09/12/20 | Consultation on Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 - The Local Authorities (Precepts) (Wales) Regulations 1995 | To seek Member approval of the proposals for consultation purposes regarding payments to precepting authorities during the 2021/22 financial year as required by statute. | Jon Davies | | |
| IMCD | 09/12/20 | Council Tax base and associated matters | To agree the Council Tax Base figure for submission to the Welsh Government, together with the collection rate to be applied for 2021/22 and to make other necessary related statutory decisions | Ruth Donovan | 02/04/20 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|----------|--|---|-----------------------------|----------|--|
| Council | 03/12/20 | Corporate Joint Committee: Consultation Response' | To discuss and endorse a council response to consultation about draft regulations which will create four regional Corporate Joint Committees. These are a statutory mechanism for regional collaboration by local government. | Matt Gatehouse | 16/10/20 | |
| Council | 03/12/20 | Updated Asset Investment Policy | | Peter Davies | 21/09/20 | |
| Council | 03/12/20 | Statutory Director of Social Services annual report | | Julie Boothroyd | 14/08/20 | |
| Cabinet | 02/12/20 | InFuSe | | Cath Fallon | 10/11/20 | |
| Cabinet | 02/12/20 | Clydach Ironworks Enhancement Scheme Revision/S106 Funding, Cae Meldon | | Matthew Lewis | 22/09/20 | |
| ICMD | 25/11/20 | Homeseach Allocations Policy and Amendments | INCLUDED ON 11/11 AGENDA | Louise Corbett | 22/10/20 | |
| ICMD | 11/11/20 | WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER'S MONITORING WORK 2019-20 | | Matt Gatehouse | | |
| ICMD | 11/11/20 | LDP Annual Monitoring Report/ and Annual Performance Report for Planning Service | | Rachel Lewis/Phil Thomas | 19/10/20 | |
| ICMD | 11/11/20 | Housing Register Review | | Mark Hand | 23/06/20 | |
| Cabinet | 04/11/20 | Outdoor Adventure Service | | Marie Bartlett/Ian Saunders | 13/10/20 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|----------|---|--|-------------------------|----------|--|
| Cabinet | 04/11/20 | Public Service Ombudsman's annual letter | To provide Cabinet with a copy of the Public Service Ombudsman's annual letter to inform understanding of the council's performance in handling complaints | Matt Gatehouse | 09/09/20 | |
| Cabinet | 04/11/20 | Welsh Church Fund working group | The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 4 held on 22nd October 2020 | Dave Jarrett | 02/04/20 | |
| Cabinet | 04/11/20 | Three Fields Site Magor – Lease Arrangements | | Mike Moran | 14/10/20 | |
| Cabinet | 04/11/20 | Coronavirus Strategic Aims: Progress and Next Steps | To provide an overview of progress against the strategic aims set by Cabinet in July, and communicate an updated version of the plan on a page | Matt Gatehouse | 26/08/20 | |
| Cabinet | 04/11/20 | Section 106 Funding – The Hill, Abergavenny | | Mike Moran | 20/02/19 | |
| Council | 22/10/20 | Corporate Plan Annual Report 2019/20 | | Richard Jones | 25/08/20 | |
| Council | 22/10/20 | MCC Audited Accounts (formal approval) | To notify Council of completed Audit process and resultant accounts - To go to Audit Committee | Peter Davies/Jon Davies | 02/04/20 | |
| Council | 22/10/20 | ISA 260 report - MCC Accounts - attachment above | Deferred from september | Peter Davies/Jon Davies | 02/04/20 | |
| Council | 22/10/20 | Future Data Hall and Data Hosting Arrangements | | Peter Davies | 16/09/20 | |
| Council | 22/10/20 | LDP revised Delivery Agreement including LDP timetable and community involvement strategy | | Craig O'Connor | 03/07/20 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|----------|---|---|---------------|----------|--|
| Cabinet | 21/10/20 | Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2020/21 Forecast Outturn Statement – Month 5 | | Peter Davies | 16/09/20 | |
| Cabinet | 21/10/20 | MTEP and Budget Process 2021/22 to 2024/25 | | Peter Davies | 16/09/20 | |
| Cabinet | 21/10/20 | Review of Garden Waste Service | | Laura Carter | 23/07/20 | |
| ICMD | 14/10/20 | PUBLIC TOILET PROVISION - GRANTS TO LOCAL COUNCILS AND FUTURE PROVISION IN ABERGAVENTNY | DEFERRED | Roger Hoggins | 25/09/20 | |
| ICMD | 14/10/20 | Closure of Capita Gwent Consultancy and distribution of Reserves | | Roger Hoggins | 25/09/20 | |
| ICMD | 14/10/20 | Extension of PSPO | To seek approval to extend three Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) in respect of Bailey Park, | Andrew Mason | 23/09/20 | |
| Cabinet | 07/10/20 | Future Data Hall and Data Hosting Arrangements | | Peter Davies | 16/09/20 | |
| Cabinet | 07/10/20 | Welsh Church Fund Working Group | The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications 2020/21 - meeting 2 held on 28th July 2020 and meeting 3 held on 10th September 2020. | Dave Jarrett | 02/04/20 | |
| Cabinet | 07/10/20 | Future Provision of HWRCs including the closure of Usk recycling centre | | Carl Touhig | 14/09/20 | |
| ICMD | 23/09/20 | SCM Collaboration with TCBC Heritage Services | | Amy Longford | 24/08/20 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|----------|---|--|--------------|----------|--|
| ICMD | 23/09/20 | SCM Collaboration with TCBC Heritage Services | | Amy Longford | 24/08/20 | |
| Council | 10/09/20 | Audit Committee Annual Report | | Philip White | 11/08/20 | |

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at Remote Meeting on Thursday, 4th March, 2021 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor L.Dymock (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Batrouni, V. Smith, R. Edwards, M.Groucutt, M. Powell

Also in attendance County Councillors: J.Pratt, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Services

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Alan Burkitt, Policy Officer Equalities and Welsh Language
Carl Touhig, Head of Neighbourhood Services
Mark Hand, Head of Place-making, Housing, Highways and Flood
Paul Keeble, Group Engineer (Highways and Flood Management)
Steve Lane, County Highways Operations Manager
Sueanne Sandford, Project Engineer - Strategy

APOLOGIES: County Councillors A. Easson, J.Treharne and A. Webb

1. Declarations of Interest.

Councillor Batrouni declared an interest as the Senior Analyst on European Legislation for the Ministry of Justice, and the Citizen's Rights organisation attached to it.

2. Open Public Forum.

No members of the public were present.

3. Scrutiny of the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) Annual Report 2019-20.

Alan Burkitt presented the report and answered the members' questions.

Challenge:

This strategy is linked to 8 others – should they all be condensed and more focussed? Is this plan the overarching one, or is it the Social Justice Strategy? In what way do the two plans 'dovetail'?

Under the Equality Act 2010, we have a responsibility to produce this strategy. A lot of good work is taking place on this agenda, but it is indeed difficult for the work to 'dovetail'; 'overlapping' would be a better description. They could possibly gel more, yes. But we talk together as groups, so there is positive interaction, and the work is discrete. We could work more on linking together, and we should bear that in mind. Perhaps the work isn't structured quite as neatly as it could be, but that reflects how keen we are to do so much work.

The work on Poverty and Inequality seems to happen after finances have been thought through. To what extent does this Strategic Equality Plan, or the Social Justice Strategy, influence the budget-setting process in the beginning?

The assessment document looks at protected characteristics, ensuring that when we make decisions, people with those characteristics aren't disadvantaged. We tend to produce these documents when a report is going to Cabinet or Council, rather than using them to shape the process early on. It shouldn't be that way, as the assessment is then tailored to the decision i.e. at the end of the process, when it is less effective. In terms of the SEP, it's not the plan itself, it's the safeguards within the Equality Act. The EQIA should be the process by which we seek not to disadvantage people. As an organisation, we need to start looking at that document at an earlier stage.

Page 19 refers to the European Union Settlement Scheme. It's become clear that children in care and elderly EU citizens are over-reliant on local authorities to apply for them. How many EU national children are in our care and how many elderly EU nationals are in our care homes?

I don't know. It's a very good question but I don't work closely enough in that level of detail. Shaz Miah (Community Cohesion Officer) might have answers, or would be the person to carry out the necessary work.

Potential overlap is actually important, as most things do overlap and almost nothing can be separated into different compartments.

Yes, it is difficult to separate matters. A lot of good work is happening, with a high level of commitment, and the different groups engage with each other in order to cross over but not double up. The most important thing is for us not to miss anything.

We need to think more about how we present reports – the use of coloured prints is difficult for some people to cope with.

Yes, this is something the Accessibility survey is going to look at. The RNIB says that Arial font, size 12 should be used, and to ensure there are contrasting colours. We will mention this in the upcoming meeting with the website designers.

The Access For All forum initially had a good take-off – what is its current state?

Yes, the late Jenny Barnes' CAIR (Contact, Action, Inform, Represent) was the driving force – this morphed into Access For All because we wanted to get greater engagement. The forum hasn't met for a while but is due to meet shortly, chaired by Tony Crowhurst. There was a well-attended meeting in Torfaen recently. Many members retired from CAIR after Jenny died but there is still a very active disability group in Abergavenny. It is important to have such external scrutiny and input of what we are doing. Online meetings will be beneficial and should encourage attendance.

Chair's Summary:

Councillor Batrouni questioned whether 8 objectives are the most efficient way of working, and how do they fit around the Social Justice strategy, and if plans overlap, whether work is duplicated. He also has concerns around finance, feeling that it might have been an

afterthought, and stated that the budget doesn't reflect our strategic plan. He questioned at what point the Equality and Social Justice plan affects the budget from the start. He also asked a question about the European Settlement Status, and wanted to know how many EU Nationals suffering from cognitive problems are in care homes – the Chair will email Shaz Miah with this question following the meeting.

Councillors Powell and Edwards stated that sometimes overlapping in work can't be avoided. Councillor Smith highlighted some typos in the report and noted that the coloured prints in reports can be difficult for some users. She also requested an update on the status of Access for All. On that point, Councillor Pratt informed members that she attended the meeting chaired by Torfaen yesterday, with Officer Burkitt. She stated that it is very valuable and she would like to engage more, to hear the issues faced by the disabled community. She is keen to build strong communication, and wishes to give it her full support.

4. Update on issues the Highways Maintenance Department has faced during the Covid-19 pandemic and the forward direction for this service (report to follow).

Carl Touhig presented the report and answered the members' questions with Steve Lane and Mark Hand.

Challenge:

The reverse of budget cuts in this area is welcome. Is the problem of people parking on greens and loosening the soil and mud a general one, and how can we stop it?

Yes, parking on verges was a problem in Magor, with mud then pushed across the top of the drains. It is a general problem across the county. Also, larger vehicles use the lanes, pushing mud into the drains – so the problem is both urban and rural. We will speak to Parking Enforcement to see if we can stop parking on the verges, though it is also a matter for police. Parking is becoming increasingly difficult for residents, as the roads weren't designed with so many cars in mind. We need to do more work on education and raising awareness of the problems caused by incorrect parking.

When we cut grass, it goes everywhere – will we now collect it?

Last year, we started 'Cut and Collect' in some areas, to take the goodness out of the grass and support wildflower growth. Historically, we have done 'Cut and Fly' i.e. cutting the grass and leaving it in situ – we recognise that the grass then blows around. The idea with 'C&C' would be that the sweeper would work closely with the gully-sucker and some of our other maintenance issues. So whether we're cutting hedges back or cutting grass, the sweeper could be in the same area to clear it up. We would hope to collect sooner than a week later.

It is good to hear that the drains in Whitehall Lane are being addressed – both sides have been blocked for years, undermining the road surface.

We try to be proactive and focus our work, ensuring that we are keeping the road safe. Any material left on the road can end up in the gully. The drains are designed to have a sump so, technically, each drain has a sump at the bottom. The heavy material falls into that sump, and the water goes out of the pipes. The problem is that if we don't empty the sumps quickly and

often enough then the heavy debris gets into the pipes and into the outflows. Highways doesn't put any mud or clippings on the road – that is third parties. The responsibility is on the third party leaving the debris to clear it, though we can help and support by programming our work. Enforcement is a long way off, unfortunately. With this project, after 4 years, we will have a network with which we can target our maintenance i.e. empty the gully at Whitehall Lane more regularly than one in, say, a town centre.

The workforce doesn't seem to be there to address all of these problems – do we take on apprenticeships?

Last year, we took on five new workers with engineering backgrounds, who are all inputting to the work being discussed. It is a financial tightrope: we have to support those staff members by bringing in income from outside e.g. for every pound spent to fill a pothole, we have to bring in a pound of income to pay for that tarmac. 18 months ago, we took on 2 cadets who are going through a 2-year training regime. They are very capable and enthusiastic; we hope to bring them on into the team.

Many problems are on the trunk roads, which are the responsibility of Welsh Government. Do we have any powers to push them to get something done?

We work closely with SWTRA, managing some of the maintenance contracts for them in this area. We will raise these concerns with their officers when we next speak to them. There has been a lot of flooding on the Llanellen bridge and other roads that they maintain, so we know it's an issue, and we hope to do something on those main routes. As we do the maintenance for SWTRA, we have some input to the priority list though, equally, they are struggling as much as we are in financial terms, and they are trying to cover the whole network in Wales, which includes even bigger priority roads. They are looking at a similar programme now of monitoring all of their assets for the same code – perhaps we could trial something between the both of us.

The report attempts to undo the damage done by austerity, returning to the previous position. It says that position is inadequate given climate change etc. Are we planning for the future, and drains that in the longer term are fit for purpose?

It is partly due to a lack of funding and trying to work to the new code of practice and a risk-based assessment. We know that we have had dis-investment in Highways operations and we have had to make savings. At some point, we do need to re-invest in service delivery. I'm not sure we're inadequate in what we deliver but there is now the challenge with increased rainfalls adding to the problems, and making things more difficult for us to keep the network free flowing. The reactive/proactive scheme works very well, but with 3 or 4 storms back-to-back, it is very hard to get on top of this work with the two vehicles that we have. We are asking for additional investment, therefore.

Regarding future planning of drains and flooding, the requirement for all new developments to incorporate sustainable urban drainage schemes (SUDS) is in place. As things come through, you will see some of those things being implemented. It will require something of a culture change because a lot of that is about surface water being dealt with on site, rather than draining off into drains. So gullies, roadside drains and lagoon features will start to appear on development sites. During adverse weather, they will be full of water, which might alarm some

residents, but they will be doing exactly what they are designed to. Those regulations apply to lots of schemes: town centre regeneration, highways, etc. So we are planning for drainage that will work in the longer term.

Is the current drainage system, which can't deal with increasingly bad weather, therefore being written off?

The system is designed to deal with 1-in-10 year floods. We have seen 5 such floods in the last 18 months. Providing we keep on top of the drainage system's maintenance, the system will manage reasonable amounts of rain. I'm not sure that the rivers will cope with the increased rain during larger events – if that's the case, it is unlikely that a culvert or road drain will do so. I'm not sure about dredging the rivers either. What we want to do is to ensure that the systems are working to their optimum, all the time. That should keep the rainwater off the roads in normal events, and when there is a strong rain event, at least we will know that the system is taking everything it can at that point, before possibly overflowing.

If investigations of flood events reveal a problem with a gully or pipe being ineffective, then that would be picked up in the study and recommendations for those improvements to be made. That hasn't been the case so far. One investigation looking at an outfall system is due to be published in a few weeks' time, but the problems up until now have mainly been about the volume of rainfall, and ground being saturated. We do have areas of our settlements and road networks that lie in flood plains, and part of a flood plain's purpose is to flood, so we would have to ensure that any works put in don't prevent the flood plain from operating.

Infrastructure is the most important service, and we have let it go for years. It is correct to prioritise the priority routes but there is the rest of the infrastructure to consider.

The additional machine would be for priority routes, freeing up the other 2 machines for the other routes. The town centres generally do the town centres and more urban areas; the larger machine would do the main roads. We have suggested withdrawing one of the small town sweepers in the south of the county. One of the rationales for this is that we are seeing a reduction in litter complaints, though that litter could in fact be going down the drains. So we need to look at that again, in light of this report.

Will you work with town and community councils to identify where problems are?

We are more than happy to attend Town and Community councils to discuss matters. We know where the 25,000 drains are across the county; plotting them with the machinery allows us to pinpoint everything, and which works need to be done in the future. The code of practice is about scheduling works for the future on a risk-based assessment. By plotting the drains, we can overlap them with flooding detail, and other information.

Can we use mulching machines?

We bought 2 additional mulchers in the grounds maintenance section to mulch the grass back in, along with 2 additional collection mowers to take out grass and encourage wild flower growth.

When we look at potholes, do we double task i.e. the report comes in, then someone goes out to assess it, before dealing with it?

We try to keep on top of all the potholes and drains but it is a difficult challenge with our resources. Currently, unless there has been an accident, we react by sending a team to deal with the issue and are able to repair the pothole. If the team is concerned about the overall condition of the road, they report that back and we go out to make that more general assessment. So we react first, then step back and consider what else we can do. If the work will be too expensive or take too long, we speak to Strategy for them to programme and identify the need in greater detail.

We currently have a lot of advertisements for road closures in the local paper – are these always necessary, and what do they cost?

We have to advertise traffic regulation orders, such as road closures, in the press, bilingually. Welsh Government has waived that if we have to do emergency actions, but overall we are required to do those notices. We will have to check on the exact cost to us of placing the adverts.

Litter is a big problem. What is the answer to it?

We have a big education programme now running for litter that came through this committee around 18 months ago. We have joined with the campaign being run by Keep Wales Tidy to tackle vergeside litter – this is now recognised across the UK as being one of the main problems. Hopefully some additional legislation can come in for us to fine drivers who litter. It is a big problem for drains, as it doesn't take a lot of litter to cause a blockage. The additional sweeper will make a difference, though it shouldn't have to be the case that it is used to deal with litter.

There are many upset residents in Undy, regarding the closure of Elms Lane. Do road closure permits always have to be for 18 months?

The Highways team would be better placed to answer this.

What is the fuel for the proposed new vehicles?

We have trialled electric on the larger vehicles but they haven't been quite at the standard required. We are also continuing work into hydrogen. It is likely that the next fleet we have will be diesel-powered but for smaller vehicles like vans, we are bringing in a lot of electric. We are about to procure Welsh Government funding for electric refuse vehicles – they seem to be on the market more than sweepers and gully-suckers. We have looked at electric vehicles for the Jetter: at the moment, everything is focussed on cityscapes, where a Jetter can empty a lot of gullies in a small radius from the depot. We greatly exceed the current limit of these machines of 17 miles for 7 hours.

Chair's Summary:

Councillor Batrouni agreed with the report. He questioned whether parking on greens, and the resultant loosening of mud, contributes to blocked drains, and how we could stop it. He has received a number of complaints that we do not collect grass cuttings in spring and summer.

Councillor Edwards also raised concerns about long grass in drains and recommended that grass be cut more often. She also highlighted that improved programming of hedge cutting and

road-sweeping scheduling would be a huge benefit, especially in the countryside. She highlighted issues in Whitehall Lane and questioned whether we recruit apprentices to the team; Carl Touhig confirmed that there are 5 new starters with engineering backgrounds. The Councillor noted that it would be good to encourage women into this area. She raised concerns about out-of-county people littering the countryside with excessive signage.

Councillor Powell asked if we have any power to encourage Welsh Government to carry out maintenance on trunk roads. Councillor Groucott suggested that the previous systems were inadequate and asked if we are planning adequate ones for the future.

Councillor Smith, with regard to Recommendation 2.4 (identifying drainage), suggested that we work with town and community councils, including contacting local councils directly with a map, asking for problem drains to be located. She also questioned why we don't use mulching machines and asked, regarding potholes, whether we double-task with inspections and executing the work. She raised a point about better communication with landowners regarding hedge removals, and questioned the cost of notices in the papers informing the public about road closures; officers will come back to the committee with precise costs. She also asked about the fuel for the new vehicles, and suggested that a note be put in the report explaining why, so the public knows we are still considering the climate.

5. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes for 28th January 2021 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

6. Strong Communities Select Committee Forward Work Programme.

Public Toilet Strategy will be considered at the next meeting in April.

7. Cabinet & Council Forward Work Programme.

8. Next Meeting: Thursday 29th April 2021 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at **11.43 am**

This page is intentionally left blank