

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, 13th October, 2016 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillors: D. Dovey, D. Edwards, B. Hayward, J. Prosser, A. Wintle, R.J.W. Greenland and V. Smith

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mark Hand	Head of Planning, Housing and Place-Shaping
Nicola Edwards	Strategic Food and Tourism Manager
Deb Hill-Howells	Head of Community Led Delivery
Dan Davies	Events Coordinator
Rachel Lewis	Principal Planning Policy Officer
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors: S. White and D. Evans

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

2. Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the Economy and Development Select Committee meeting dated 27th September 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Velothon 2016 Debrief

Context:

To provide feedback on Velothon Wales 2016.

Key Issues:

- On Thursday 19 November 2015, Council agreed to support the 2016 Velothon to enable the route to travel through Monmouthshire having received assurances that the route would be amended and that extensive consultation and communication with those affected will be at the centre of their work leading up to the event.
- An operational delivery steering group was established to oversee the planning of this year's event. The group had representation from all five Local Authorities, emergency services, Welsh Government, British Cycling, Run4Wales and key delivery partners. Additional subgroups were established to look specifically at Marketing and Communication, Race Logistics and Event Logistics.

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- Monmouthshire also established an additional 'Internal Service Disruption' group that developed arrangements for use by County Council representatives at the Velothon 2016 Event Control. The group prepared a document which detailed the County Council services disrupted by the Velothon, arrangements agreed in relation to service continuity, event 'Command and Control' structures, ELAPS points, key contact details and how these would dovetail into existing major incident arrangements if a significant event occurred.
- In order to ensure that lessons from the Velothon Wales 2016 are fully captured and that actions are implemented to help improve organisational planning and event management, Monmouthshire County Council compiled feedback from its stakeholders and partners to provide feedback to the organisers.
- The event organisation for 2016 was a significant improvement on the previous year. However, concerns still remain around the length of the road closures, lack of toilet facilities, litter and the benefits of hosting the race to our County. These issues have been discussed at Council at both its July and September 2016 meetings. As a result, it was agreed that the Council would only support next year's event if the roads were reopened following the mass participation race and a rolling road closure was put in place for the pro race. In addition the organisers would need to reinforce with participants that they must not urinate on the sides of roads and provide sufficient facilities to ensure that this behaviour would not be necessary. Officers are working with the Velothon organisers to deliver these requirements.

Member Scrutiny

Having considered the report, the following points were raised:

- A Member asked what benefits the Velothon brought to Monmouthshire constituents. The Head of Community Led Delivery explained that this point was highlighted as a concern in the report. It was noted that Cardiff mainly benefits as it is the race start and finish point. It was added that there are less tangible benefits in Monmouthshire. The example was provided that race participants practice in the area and may stop for breaks potentially using local businesses. They may return to the area as visitors but there is no hard evidence to support economic benefit. The importance of obtaining evidence of economic benefit was emphasised to support the Council's decision to continue involvement with the event.
- In response to a question, it was confirmed that rolling road closures will be operated for the 2017 event. An update was also provided that a shortened route will be available for those participants who wish to avoid The Tumble or the Blorenge. Members were advised of the amended route. It was reported that the Local Member agrees with the plans for the shortened route. The organisers have been requested to engage in early talks with any businesses that may be affected, and assurances have also been sought that the road is reopened as soon as the mass participant race goes through. It was noted that the organisers

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have met the requirements imposed by Council so the race will proceed through the County in 2017, and all Members will be informed.

- A Member commented that the report deals with problems and solutions, and queried why the event, and developing the County as a cycling destination, was being supported. The Strategic Food and Tourism Manager explained that cycling tourism is recognised as a growth market and the County has been identified as a popular destination for cycling evidenced by the number of cyclists visible on our roads. It was explained that there is a Strategic Cycling Group that discusses opportunities to develop the product offer to provide cyclists with a positive experience. It was added that work has been undertaken as part of a regional project to develop a toolkit to identify opportunities to progress cyclist tourism within businesses including identification of any barriers. It was repeated that it is essential to establish proof of economic benefit to support development of the County as a high quality cycling destination. It was agreed that a report on the topic of developing cycling tourism in South East Wales would be circulated. The report explores opportunities for the future and how we can facilitate market growth.
- It was suggested that it was insufficient to solely acknowledge feedback as recommended in the report. The Chair clarified the scrutiny role of the committee and its ability to add value, suggestions and recommendations. It was commented that there was not enough data to provide reassurance and of the need to consider return on investment, the impact on resources, and future benefits being brought back to the County. It was agreed to request that Welsh Government and Run4Wales conduct economic analysis of the event to provide data to be included at a future meeting. It was also agreed to consider the report on the development of cycling tourism at the next meeting to enable a cost benefit analysis to be undertaken.
- A Member raised concerns about the growth in cycling and motorcycling in the County, and some of the negative effects on residents. It was commented that, whilst supporting both activities, and appreciating the benefits for businesses in the County, information on the cost benefits of activities and events is required to provide justification to those inconvenienced.
- The Cabinet Member explained that it will be difficult to compile anything other than anecdotal evidence of economic benefit and that, for the Velothon to continue beyond 2017, there will be a requirement for the organisers to provide substantial evidence of the return from the event in future.
- It was commented that the health benefits of cycling, and the event inspiring young people to participate, were important aspects to consider.
- A Member commented that television coverage showcasing the Monmouthshire countryside was good advertising but added that not all of the County (e.g. Monmouth) receives benefits from the event.
- The work of Officers involved in the event was recognised.

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Chair's Summary

- The Chair summarised that it was the role of the Committee to scrutinise return on investment and to identify benefits to the County from the event. To do so, the organisers will be asked to provide measurable financial reports to show the return and benefits for the County from this year's event.
- It was agreed to consider the report on developing cycling tourism in South East Wales at the next meeting.
- It was agreed to revisit our own methodology to identify economic benefit including anecdotal evidence to provide reassurance to residents through provision of full information.

4. Monmouthshire Tourism Performance 2015

Context:

To provide Members with a report card that considers Monmouthshire Tourism Performance for 2015 against the objectives and outcomes set out in the Council's Improvement Plan.

Key Issues:

This report card highlights performance against key performance indicators for 2015. In a climate of increasingly stretched resources it has been vital to focus firmly on priorities and to maximise partnership working and opportunities to access external funding.

The Strategic Food and Tourism Manager presented the report.

Member Scrutiny

A Member questioned how the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) budget of £42,358 is broken down and the effect on the various TICs in the County. It was clarified that the figure queried was last year's budget and that there is a reduced contribution of £18,000 to TICs for the current year. In view of the operational costs for the Chepstow TIC of £65,000 (for which a £5000 contribution from Chepstow Town Council is received), it has been necessary to make a reduced contribution to Abergavenny TIC this year whilst steps are taken to move Chepstow TIC to the Abergavenny partnership model. Information on the full costs of Abergavenny TIC was requested and an agenda item and report will be added to the work programme accordingly.

Members appreciated the value of local information and welcome provided by TICs in addition to digital resources. It was emphasised that the reduction of visitor numbers recorded could be attributed to the restricted opening hours in response to budget cuts.

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The commitment to identify suitable partners and progress partnership working for the Chepstow TIC was agreed.

It was agreed to consider the feasibility of becoming a Tourism Business Improvement District. A Member explained that work has been undertaken to circulate to traders in Abergavenny, in the absence of a trade association, to promote tourism opportunities.

The Chair queried the external funding received, in particular, if local authorities can bid into the Tourism Investment Support Scheme (TISS). The Officer advised that local authorities can apply to any relevant funding source according to its tourism objectives, and provided examples of funding secured from e.g. Regional Tourism Engagement Fund, Active Travel Quick Wins and the Rural Development Plan. It was clarified that there are elements of the TISS that public sector can apply for that are not currently open but this will be monitored. Members were informed that a review of the Destination Plan has been commissioned and that the priorities and opportunities in the new plan will inform the next round of funding applications.

The Chair queried timescales for the development of the new Destination Plan and was informed that it must be completed by 31st March 2017. It was advocated that Members are consulted on priorities at the earliest opportunity.

Members and Officers were reminded of the purdah period prior to the elections in May 2017. It was agreed to consult Members, in a possible workshop format, following engagement with key stakeholders.

A Member welcomed the volume of data in the report and forecasted that visitor numbers should grow in future taking account of the National Eisteddfod this year, and the new Premier Inn in Monmouth next year emphasising the importance of tourism and continued support for TICs to the County's economy.

In response to a query, the Officer explained that the occupancy data compiled is anonymised and overall that serviced accommodation in the County is performing on a par or better than the rest of Wales, noting that there are capacity issues when large events are held.

Members were reminded of the role of Scrutiny Committees to be impartial and add value to the democratic process.

A Member highlighted the importance of taking appropriate actions within budgets whilst the current economic climate encourages visitors from outside the United Kingdom and also to make plans to ensure that the improvements made are maintained when the economic conditions improve.

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Chair's Summary

The Chair noted that the main focus of discussion had been Tourist Information Centres (TICs) and it was agreed to request a further report to consider resourcing and the future of TICs.

It was agreed that Members would hold a workshop to consider the Destination Plan after feedback from key stakeholders has been received.

It was noted that there was wider discussion of funding issues and acknowledgment that external economic factors should be taken account of in current and future plans. The figures and data provided were welcomed and the Officers were thanked for attending and providing comprehensive information.

5. Local Development Plan Tourism Policies Update

Context:

To receive an updated review of tourism-related planning policies to enable consideration of the extent to which the Local Development Plan (LDP) supports the Council's objectives for growing our tourism economy.

Key Issues:

To aid consideration of this topic, the report is divided into two sections. The first part of the report identifies tourism-related planning applications determined during the second LDP monitoring period to determine the effectiveness of the existing policy framework in enabling tourism-related development. This section utilises details from the LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to investigate planning approvals and identify any refusals.

The second part of the report updates the findings previously reported to the Select Committee. It reviews how LDP policies should be interpreted in relation to sustainable forms of tourist accommodation and reconsiders the extent to which the policies support such development.

Development Management Decisions

The findings of the 2015-16 AMR demonstrate that 10 applications were approved for tourism uses during the monitoring period, eight of which were for tourist accommodation facilities. These included six holiday lets (all conversions) in various settlements, an extension to an existing holiday lodge site at St Pierre Country Park for five lodges and a new build 60 bed hotel in Monmouth (Premier Inn). Collectively, these provide over 70 new bed spaces and will provide a further boost to the visitor accommodation available in Monmouthshire. A further two applications were approved for other tourism related uses – a walkers' café at Llanddewi Skirrid and new play area at Llandegfedd Visitor Centre. The number of tourism facilities approved is comparable to those approved during the last monitoring period (10 applications) which indicates

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that the LDP tourism policy framework is operating effectively to enable tourism development in the County.

It is notable that there were no applications permitted which involved the loss of tourism facilities during the 2015-16 monitoring period. Similarly, no applications relating to tourism-related uses were refused. This compares favourably to the previous AMR when five applications were approved involving the loss of tourist facilities and two tourism-related applications were refused. This, together with the number of tourist facilities approved over the 2015-16 monitoring period and cumulatively since the Plan's adoption, indicates that the relevant Plan policies are operating effectively allowing such developments to take place in Monmouthshire.

LDP Tourism Policy Framework

New forms of visitor accommodation have emerged in recent years including yurts, tepees and wooden pods i.e. 'glamping'. Given that such forms of accommodation are a relatively recent innovation, they are not defined in legislation and not explicitly referred to in current LDP policies. Accordingly, there is a need to consider how such proposals should be assessed against the existing policy framework and to determine whether policy interpretation / implementation could be clarified through the production of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). Although this matter was considered in the previous report to Select Committee, it was considered appropriate to review this work in light of an increasing number of enquiries regarding these new forms of visitor accommodation.

An Officer Working Group was established to review the interpretation of LDP policies in relation to new forms of visitor accommodation and to reconsider the extent to which the LDP is supporting this growing area of sustainable tourism.

Key policy considerations and relevant LDP policies are set out for each type of tourist accommodation. Within settlement boundaries, development is generally acceptable in principle subject to normal amenity considerations and policy matters such as flood risk.

In summary, the starting point is Policy S11 which supports sustainable forms of tourism, as does Policy S8. Such proposals are acceptable in principle unless ruled out by Policies T1, T2 or T3. Proposals would be assessed against other policies for example landscape harm (LC5) or highway safety objections etc.

T1 allows for touring caravans and tents.

T2 allows new build self-catering accommodation in specific circumstances:

- Ancillary to establish medium or large hotels.
- Re-use or conversion of existing buildings in countryside subject to H4.
- Substantial rebuild within the curtilage of a farm where it complies with RE3 agricultural diversification.

T3 allows visitor accommodation on golf courses where it supports the tourism economy, subject to detailed planning considerations.

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Amenity blocks are also covered by S11 and S8 subject to landscape harm.

Generally speaking, proposals such as yurts / shepherd's huts should be taken down or relocated into storage out of season. However, the necessity for this needs to be considered on a case by case basis depending upon landscape harm and visual impact. Consideration needs to be given to planning conditions to control the number of units, siting, appearance / type of unit, and occupancy.

Contrary to some of the findings reported in the previous Select Report on this issue, the review found that the LDP policy framework is in fact generally supportive of sustainable forms of tourist accommodation, including 'glamping'. Such proposals would still be subject to other relevant policy considerations (landscape, highways, natural / historic environment.). However, the starting point for assessing such proposals is Strategic Policy S11 (Visitor Economy) which supports and seeks to enable the provision of sustainable tourism development in Monmouthshire.

However, the review also determined that the preparation of SPG would be beneficial in order to provide clarification for officers and customers on the interpretation / implementation of the existing policy framework in relation to such proposals.

Consideration has also been given to the interpretation of LDP policies in relation to another form of tourist accommodation which are not specifically referenced in LDP policies namely, static caravans. Strategic policy S11 is unlikely to support such proposals as it is doubtful that static caravans could be considered as a sustainable form of tourist accommodation.

Member Scrutiny:

A Member questioned the arrangements for vehicles visiting sites. The Head of Planning, Housing and Place-Shaping explained that approaches vary; some sites have space next to the hired unit and others may have a small landscaped car park discreetly located. Generally, the nature of glamping-type experiences discourage vehicles in order to preserve an open and safe environment. It was confirmed that this is a growth area of tourism business.

A Member queried the market for timber chalets in the County noting that these units are popular in the Forest of Dean. It was confirmed that there is occasional interest as listed in the accompanying report. Policy for this category of unit was debated noting that support for the application can vary. For example, an application would be supported if linked to a medium or large hotel but could not be supported as part of agricultural diversification as this would count as new buildings.

It was queried if policy was too strict in terms of agricultural diversification. It was agreed that whilst it would not be possible to change LDP policy via Supplementary Planning Guidance, it would be possible to clarify interpretation and to look at future policy under the review of the Local Development Plan, and to encourage sympathetically sited tourism opportunities in acceptable locations.

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The Strategic Food and Tourism Manager queried how businesses and potential investors would be made aware of the possibility of flexibility in exceptional circumstances. It was confirmed that this possibility could be considered at the pre-application advice stage which looks at potential applications on a case by case basis whilst retaining control to reject an application. It was agreed that further supplementary planning guidance will be useful and production of a leaflet summarising the main points was supported.

A Member questioned Welsh Government and NRW policy with regard to applications rejected and now subject to ministerial call in due to perceived flood risk. The Member referred to the low flood risk in the summer tourist months, and emphasising the potential loss of economic advantage.

The Head of Planning, Housing and Place-Shaping advised that revised Supplementary Planning Guidance would be presented to Committee in February 2017.

Committee's Conclusion:

The Chair welcomed the planned revision of Supplementary Planning Guidance and also the commitment to engage proactively with businesses to encourage tourism business opportunities. She referred to the proposed production of a leaflet and other initiatives. The Chair commended the positive joint working across departments for the benefit of the County.

6. List of actions arising from the previous meeting

We received the list of actions arising from the Economy and Development Select Committee meeting held on 27th September 2016. In doing so, the following points were noted:

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Planning Department is still working on this matter. If there are substantial changes to the document then it will be re-presented to the Select Committee for scrutiny. However, if there are no substantial changes, the report will be presented to Council in January 2017.

Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing

A report will be presented to a joint scrutiny meeting with the Strong Communities Select Committee and the Adults Select Committee in February 2017.

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Percentage of planning applications delegated to officers for decision

The Head of Planning, Housing and Place Shaping will provide details of the comparative figures with other local authorities following a meeting with Welsh Government which is shortly being held.

7. Economy and Development Select Committee Forward Work Programme

We scrutinised the Economy and Development Select Committee Forward Work Programme. In doing so, the following points were noted:

Agenda items for the Select Committee meeting on 24th November 2016

- Skutrade.
- Eisteddfod report.
- Chief Officer Enterprise Annual Report (To be confirmed).
- CMC2 Performance Report (To be confirmed).
- Velothon - Return on Investment (To be confirmed).

Agenda items for the Select Committee meeting on 5th January 2017

- Budget Scrutiny.

Agenda items for the Select Committee meeting on 9th February 2017

- Supplementary Planning Guidance on Tourism.

Select Committee meeting – 27th April 2017

- This meeting to be cancelled with a view to arranging an earlier meeting at the end of March / early April 2017.

Agenda item for the Select Committee meeting – March / April 2017

- Review of achievements of the Economy and Development Select Committee over the previous five years.

End of November / Early December 2016

- Destinations Management Plan Workshop Event.

8. Council and Cabinet Business Forward Plan

We scrutinised the Council and Cabinet Business Forward Plan.

In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the County Council's budget setting process for the financial year 2017/18, it was noted that this matter had been raised at the Coordinating Board Meeting. This year, there will be a different

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process with regard to the budget setting. Directorates will not be preparing mandates to generate budget savings as these have been undertaken in previous years and have been taken forward as far as possible. For the next financial year, this will be about making savings via the Directorates. It was noted that the budget setting process for 2017/18 has not been publicised in any detail so far. However, the Select Committees will receive details of the draft budget for 2017/18 in the January 2017 cycle of meetings. A joint Select Committee meeting comprising of the four Select Committees could be established to scrutinise the budget as a whole, in addition to the individual Select Committee meetings.

9. Next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 24th November 2016 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 12.37 pm