

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 6th April, 2017 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor S. Howarth (Chairman)
County Councillor A. Easson (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: V. Smith, D. Dovey and A. Webb

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Sally Thomas	Interim HR Manager
Alan Burkitt	Policy Officer Equalities and Welsh Language
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Paula Harris	Democratic Services Officer

The Chair took the opportunity to thank Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager, for all of her hard work preparing items for the committee and Paula Harris, the committee clerk for her work collating information for agendas, minutes and actions.

The Chair also thanked the members of the Committee for their time and hard work during their term.

1. Apologies for absence

County Councillors P. Watts and S. White.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Open Public Forum

There were no members of the public wishing to address the committee.

The Scrutiny Manager introduced colleagues from Caerphilly and Newport Council who were in the public gallery observing the meeting as part of a scrutiny peer review.

4. An update on the Road Safety Task and Finish Group

The Chair gave the committee an overview of the work being done by the Road Safety Task and Finish Group.

Committee was advised that;

- The group have held 3 meetings to date
- The purpose of the group is to look at a criteria for making future decisions in relation to the policy

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- It is a multi-agency task group, working with the police, fire authority and go-safe
- The group is currently reviewing the speed management policies of other authorities
- There will be public evidence sessions
- The group is reviewing the existing policy
- The date of the next meeting is Monday 24th April and after the election in May there will be a workshop for Members.

5. Confirm the following minutes:

5.1. Strong Communities Select Committee dated 2nd March 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd March 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

6. Joint Select Committee dated 27th February 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on the 27th February 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

7. Employee Wellbeing

Context:

The purpose of this report is to provide a revised Attendance Management Policy which is applicable to all employees including those based in schools.

This revised policy will replace the current Attendance Management policies for corporate staff and those staff employed in schools.

Key Issues:

Monmouthshire County Council is committed to providing a high quality range of services to all service users, through a healthy, motivated and committed workforce. The health and well-being of employees is important to Monmouthshire County Council and the purpose of the Management of Attendance Policy and procedure is to ensure that employees are treated fairly and in a timely, effective and consistent manner which enables them to achieve and maintain good health and high levels of attendance at work.

At the present time, MCC has a Management of Attendance Policy for schools and a separate Attendance Management Policy for corporate employees. The documents share the same self-certification/return to work form. The corporate policy devotes many pages to transactional issues around pay and conditions and only two pages to management of attendance good practice. It makes sense to have one policy which provides effective advice and guidance for all employees, including those who have line management responsibility.

The cost of absence has an impact in terms of the following:

- Absence places a considerable burden on work colleagues, with increased workload
- Lost productivity
- Detrimental effect on service delivery;

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- Time and money required to bring in supply cover

The revised draft policy is based largely upon the headings and much of the content of the existing school policy and maintains all the good practice references within the document whilst additionally reflecting the progression established by the introduction of the Attendance Management Protocol/Workflow – Managers/Head-teachers.

The revised policy sets out roles and responsibilities and provides a framework for managers and head teachers to provide consistent support and guidance to their employees. It enable employees to have a clear understanding of employer expectations and the support mechanisms in place to facilitate a successful return to work. The sick pay arrangements and references to conditions of service are now included in an appendix. Additional information based upon the headings or references in the policy and procedure to support attendance mismanagement, including the self-certification/return to work form have been made available as links.

Member Scrutiny:

Members felt that contacting staff while on sickness leave would be an imposition which would increase employee stress.

It was asked who undertakes the Occupational Health reviews and we were told that Belleview Surgery in Newport is the provider.

Members felt that a flexible arrangement would be suitable when contacting staff who are absent due to ill health.

Concerns were raised for the availability of sick pay for staff who have flexible contracts.

It was asked how external HR provision in schools would impact the authority.

Committee's Conclusion:

The Committee accepted the revised Attendance Management Policy and asked that it was circulated to all staff and commended to governing bodies for adoption as soon as possible.

8. Public Toilets

Context:

To provide members with an update on the provision of public conveniences within Monmouthshire.

Key Issues:

1. On the 21st July 2010 MCC Cabinet received a report titled 'Provision of Public Conveniences in the Future'. This included recommendations from the Strong Communities Select Committee arrived at following a detailed review of the service by

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members. (Appendix 1 is an extract from that report and provides a summary of the recommendations for the future management of MCC public conveniences at that time).

2. Since those proposals were approved some further adjustments to provision have been agreed through the budget setting process, in particular in 2016/17 when proposals relating to local services included further changes.

3. On the 10th November 2016 the Strong Communities Select Committee received an update on the provision of public conveniences in Monmouthshire provided by either the County Council or community or town councils. The appendix provided to that committee is replicated as Appendix 2 to this report but the following updates will be of interest:

3.1 Abergavenny Town Council has contributed £58,000 to the public convenience budget in 2016/17 to allow for the four public conveniences within the town to remain open whilst the town council reviews how the service might be arranged for the future. MCC officers are working with the town council to review options which may be adopted by the town council in the future. In the meantime officers anticipate the town council continuing to support the service financially in 2017/18 until such time as decisions are taken and implemented.

3.2 In Chepstow (Welsh St Car Park) and Monmouth (Blestium St) planned maintenance has been carried out as a precursor to finalizing transfer of the asset. All transfers have included a clause whereby MCC may buy back individual toilet blocks (or receive 50% of the sale value) where a decision has been taken by the relevant local council that building is no longer to be used for a public toilet.

3.3 The provision of opening/closing and cleaning of the public toilets in the Cottage at Tintern Abbey was advertised by Tintern CC on behalf of MCC. MCC officers are now finalizing an agreement with a local private business to manage the toilets on behalf of MCC.

Member Scrutiny:

A Member asked if the toilet at White Horse Lane will be kept open and maintained, in answer we were told that due to a decision made by this administration at the time of the budget setting that in the case of the Town Council not supporting the service MCC would only maintain one public toilet in Abergavenny town, that to be agreed with the local members. Rather than allow this to happen Abergavenny Town Council funded the four toilets. Currently MCC are working with Abergavenny Town Council to discuss their options. The Member asked that this was reviewed during the next administration.

A Member voiced their dissatisfaction with the review of toilets and commented that the ongoing work should have been scrutinised and asked that in future Select committee meetings the policy decisions should be reviewed regularly to ensure that policies are implemented correctly

It was asked when the issue would be concluded and we were told that a decision will be made by September 2017.

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Committee's Conclusion:

Members noted the contents of the report.

It was proposed that during the new administration the committee would undertake a tour of all of the public toilets.

Frustrations were raised by the perceived lack of progress on this issue and stressed that decisive action needs to be taken.

9. Street Lighting

Context:

To provide members with an update on the street lighting service, in particular the installation of remote control management equipment and LED lanterns.

Key Issues:

1. For several years a remote management system has gradually been installed at various locations within the county. The system provides facilities to switch individual lights on and off, dimming, and energy consumption and fault reporting.

2. As LED lanterns have become more affordable the authority has also started a programme of renewing older lanterns with LED lanterns. The benefit is reduced energy consumption plus greater reliability from the lanterns. The introduction of new lanterns has also allowed for a reduction in the maintenance budget as well as the energy budget.

3.3 The authority has funded the introduction of remote management technology and LED lanterns through SALIX and WG interest free loans.

3.4 For some months the authority has been receiving reports and complaints of street lights being on during the day. The problem is associated with the remote control management system. The manufacturer has been advised of the ongoing problems and has allocated an engineer exclusively to the county to resolve the ongoing problems with 'dayburners' and any other remote management/communications issues. Whilst the authority does not incur costs due to increased energy consumption from dayburners the situation is unsatisfactory. This has been emphasized to the equipment supplier and the introduction of an engineer is gradually resolving the problems. This remedial work is at no cost to the Council.

Member Scrutiny:

Members questioned the cost to the authority and we were told as we are not metered the authority have not been charged for the lights which are on during the daytime.

It was questioned if there was a total figure of faulty day burners. The Head of Operations will update the committee with a figure. **(ACTION R.H.)**

The guarantee period for the bulbs was questioned. **(ACTION R.H.)**

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A Member questioned how the lights were controlled and we were told that Roger Joy controls the system from his laptop via a web based system.

Members were advised that Trellech Community Council had approached the authority in regard to a dark skies policy.

Committee's Conclusion:

Members received the update on the street lighting service, in particular the installation of remote control management equipment and LED lanterns.

The committee expressed their frustrations at the costs involved and the fact that the system is not working correctly.

The Committee felt that inviting Roger Joy to address the committee would help members understand the street light system.

10. Strategic Equality Plan Monitoring Report

Context:

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced in April 2011. Within the Specific duties is the requirement to publish an annual report on the progress made by the Council in its compliance with its Strategic Equality Plan, equality objectives and action Plan. The Act's principles and processes ensure that the Council remains true to its corporate values of Openness, Fairness, Flexibility and Teamwork.

Key Issues:

One of the specific duties in the Equality Act 2010 requires Public Bodies to publish an Annual Report detailing the progress on achievement of the actions outlined in the plan covering the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

Member Scrutiny:

A Member asked if projects such as Young Carers and the Stoke Association would be incorporated into the next report.

Members asked if the Comms team attended meetings and promoted the work of the Select Committees.

A Member raised the point that Monmouthshire County Council were the first authority to sign the Time to Change pledge and stressed the importance of raising the profile of mental health and wellbeing.

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Committee's Conclusion:

Members of the Committee endorsed the progress made by the Council in the fifth year of the Strategic Equality Plan as detailed in its fifth annual monitoring report.

11. Action List

Members noted that they were still waiting for updates on the following;

Raglan Market ROGER HOGGINS
The Borough Theatre, Abergavenny MARK HOWCROFT
Budget Mandate B11 MARK HOWCROFT

12. Strong Communities forward work programme

Members discussed the Work Programme for the Strong Communities Select Committee. In doing so it was decided by members that some items discussed in today's meeting would be added to the work programme.

13. Cabinet & Council forward work programme

The Chair commented that the Cabinet and Council planner was not working as items have been moved or added with short notice.

The Chair stressed that as a council it was essential that the Members ensure that the planner is kept up to date and Members are notified of any changes.

14. Confirm the date and time of next meeting as 15th June 2017 10am (pre-meeting at 9.30am)

The meeting ended at 12.31 pm