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Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

**Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Usk, NP15 1GA
and remote attendance on Wednesday, 20th July, 2022 at 10.00 am**

Councillors Present

County Councillor Sue Riley (Chairman)
County Councillor Angela Sandles (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: Fay Bromfield,
Jayne McKenna, Maureen Powell, Maria Stevens,
Jackie Strong and Penny Jones

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Frances O'Brien, Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Ian Bakewell, Housing & Regeneration Manager
Mark Hand, Head of Place-making, Housing, Highways and Flood
Craig O'Connor, Head of Planning

APOLOGIES: County Councillors Christopher Edwards and David Jones

1. Election of Chair

Councillor Sue Riley, nominated by Councillor Stevens and seconded by Councillor Strong.

The Chair delivered some welcoming remarks, emphasising the opportunity of the committee to shape services to enhance people's lives, and represent everyone.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Councillor Christopher Edwards was nominated by Councillor Powell, seconded by Councillor Bromfield. Councillor Angela Sandles was nominated by Councillor Strong, seconded by Councillor Stevens.

Councillor Sandles was appointed as Vice Chair, following a vote.

3. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Christopher Edwards, with Councillor Penny Jones substituting, and Councillor David Hughes-Jones.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Powell, Bromfield, Riley and McKenna declared a non-prejudicial interest as members of the Planning committee.

5. Public Open Forum

No public submissions were received.

6. Gypsy and Traveller Site Selection - To consider a proposal for assessing the suitability of Council owned land for the potential purpose of addressing the Council's statutory obligation, to meet the identified need for Gypsy and Traveller sites

Ian Bakewell presented the report, with additional comments from Mark Hand. Ian Bakewell and Mark Hand answered the members' questions.

Challenge:

The Planning committee approved a Travellers' site last month – has that been deducted off the 13? Is there any public consultation prior to the planning stage?

The site mentioned in relation to the Planning committee concerns a family that was not identified via the process of the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment, in which the need for 13 sites was identified. Therefore, the number of families can change, and there will be a review in 2025. The number is also based on predictions about how families will grow by 2033. So, there's some fluidity but it is the accepted and best process.

There will be a consultation as part of the process of site sifting, led by the Housing team, looking at which sites are shortlisted and how they might fit in with the LDP. The second stage is that they are included in the LDP, as a statutory process. There will be public consultation on that along with all the other aspects of the plan. The third stage is at planning application level. Once things are allocated in the plan it is an agreed council document so it would only be a case of finalising site specifics in more detail at that last stage.

13 pitches have been proposed, for 13 needed. Has there been any element of choice from the community itself?

As much flexibility is built in as possible – we don't want a situation where we arbitrarily choose a site and tell the family. There is a relatively small number of families, so we know them and their needs well. It's about trying to take in as much of that as we go along, so that when we get to the end of the process there are no surprises or disappointment. As we're starting from scratch, there is the opportunity to involve the families in the development of sites.

The community will be involved, and Trudy Aspinall, the Lead for Travelling Ahead, will speak on their behalf?

Yes. Trudy asked that we state today that she's happy to be involved and advocate, facilitating community engagement, but isn't a direct representative.

What is the current situation of the families – how are they supported at the moment?

We can't answer directly at this time. The families are independent, but we know they need access to particular health facilities, some of the children attend comprehensive school in Pontypool, one is working in the Usk area, etc. We would expect the families to feed back to us their situation and needs, for us to take into account. The important thing for us is to listen and respond accordingly.

In terms of the families' physical situation, we have all of that information and can go through it in the first workshop e.g., if a family is currently overcrowded, they could be catered for by an extra caravan on the area that they already own, subject to planning. One particular issue is the area in Llancayo, which is unauthorised in terms of planning: planning was refused, the appeal was rejected, and it has gone through a court process. So those families have somewhere to live at the moment but it's unauthorised; they need to stay there for now, but the purpose of this exercise is to find them somewhere that's a suitable alternative. The Planning issue concerned

flood risk; they are currently in safe accommodation, there is no immediate risk to anyone at present.

Chair's Summary:

The committee agreed that this be added to the Forward Work Programme.

7. Forward Work Programme - To consider the Forward Work Programme Report and identify areas for future scrutiny, and in doing so, to agree a draft Forward Work Programme

Hazel Ilett presented the report. Members proposed the following subjects:

- Home to school transport
- Waiting times for NHS patients
- Workforce development: the policy concerning the gap for discharge from hospital and social care
- Child Protection: how many children are on child protection from neglect, and what preventative services could be added to reduce that number

Chair's Summary:

Waiting times for NHS patients is more relevant to the Public Services committee. Members agreed for a discussion with PS over a joint workshop on the matter. Regarding Social Care, the Chief Officer's report will be scrutinised by the Performance & Overview committee, with a special meeting proposed in October to cover it; members of this committee would be welcome, and many of their questions would hopefully be answered there.

School transport and Child Protection were agreed for 27th September.

8. To confirm the following minutes:

- 8a. Adults Select Committee dated 2nd March 2022.
- 8b. Children and Young People Select Committee dated 3rd March 2022.

The minutes were noted, as none of the members were present for either, except Councillor Powell.

Adults Select Committee dated 2nd March 2022

Children and Young People Select Committee dated 3rd March 2022

9. Next Meeting: Tuesday 27th September 2022 at 10.00am.

Members preferred that the time be changed to 10.00am.

The meeting ended at **11.05 am**

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