

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Public Services Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Monday, 18th July, 2022 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor A. Watts (Chairman)
County Councillor P. Jones (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Jan Butler,
Steven Garratt, Malcolm Lane and Dale Rooke

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Sharran Lloyd, LSB Development Manager
Matthew Gatehouse, Head of Policy and
Governance
Richard Jones, Performance Manager

APOLOGIES: County Councillor Frances Taylor

1. Election of Chair

Councillor Armand Watts, nominated by Councillor Rooke and seconded by Councillor Bond.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Councillor Penny Jones, nominated by Councillor Butler and seconded by Councillor Lane.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Public Open Forum

No public submissions were received.

5. Discussion on the role of the Committee in Scrutinising the Public Service Board - presentation

Hazel Ilett delivered the presentation to the committee, with additional comments from Matthew Gatehouse. Sharran Lloyd and Matthew Gatehouse answered the members' questions.

Challenge:

What overall influence do we have with the Wellbeing Plan? Will we be updated as it progresses?

The key factor in producing the regional Wellbeing Plan at the regional level, and the remit of the Gwent Public Services Board, is not to lose the localism. As we start to develop that plan, we are making links through the local delivery group, the subgroup for the regional Public Services Board. Each of the 5 localities has that board in place – ours is the Monmouthshire Programme Board, which will link with the Public Services Board and ensure that we drive what matters to Monmouthshire. It will take on board any of the recommendations from this committee and ensure its voice is heard in the development of the next plan. Officers are working on establishing a Gwent scrutiny process; members of this committee might sit on the regional board as well, with ability then to influence the local picture.

Are the 5 authorities each going to have a scrutiny committee?

We're all maintaining our local scrutiny but will also link with the regional scrutiny arrangement.

Will each local authority concentrate on its local aspect?

Yes. We want this committee to focus on what matters to Monmouthshire and ensure that the Gwent Public Services Board is delivering on the county's behalf. Then there are the mechanisms to feed back if the committee doesn't feel that our citizens are being serviced best through this arrangement.

The report is Monmouthshire-based. Will there be a high-level report and 5 separate reports for each area?

Possibly, but we don't have answers at the moment as the regional plan isn't yet in place. There will be a local plan and a report coming forward; we are working now through how the regional plan works with that. There could be 2 reports but we will try to simplify them into one report for this committee, if feasible.

Do we have representation on the separate boards? What does 'separate boards' mean?

The Gwent Public Services Board has become a regional board with representatives from the 5 local authorities and partners. To ensure they still have localism feeding in, there are 5 local delivery groups in each authority – they are the strategic delivery groups for those 5 areas. In Monmouthshire, ours is a programme board, essentially a sub-group of the regional Public Services Board, and will feed in what matters to Monmouthshire at that PSB level.

Do we have officers or members on the local delivery board?

It mirrors the PSB, in effect. We have all of the partners who sit at PSB level represented here in the county – the next level down from the Chief Executives who sit at regional PSB, so here we have Directors and their counterparts from across the other public services. The difference in Monmouthshire is that we also have representation from town and community councils on our board. Because it's a delivery group, and non-political, it's an Officer forum.

Who is on the Programme Board, currently?

It is chaired by Matt Gatehouse, with Will McLean, Frances O'Brien and Jane Rodgers from MCC. We also have representation from Public Health and ABHB, the Chief Constable and Superintendent representing Gwent Police, Gavo as third sector representation, representation from town and community councils, South Wales fire and rescue service, and Natural Resources Wales.

Is it possible to have an overview/hierarchy of what was just explained and how the groups fit together?

An illustration of the structures can be sent to the committee.

6. Pre-decision Scrutiny of the Public Service Board Annual Report

Richard Jones and Sharran Lloyd presented the report and answered the members' questions with Matthew Gatehouse.

Challenge:

Are these established objectives likely to be carried forward to the new regional objectives?

The alignment between local and regional is clear. Our priorities are informed by our local data and evidence, which has helped to inform the regional plan. The themes that they are looking at are completely aligned to those that we have in Monmouthshire.

Can members signpost people to the social workers performing triage in the community?

There is an email address, which will need to be supplied later, for a central point to which people can be referred.

In the table on p9, what are the criteria for the identification of links between these steps? Do ACEs have an intergenerational link?

This brings up an important point about Integration, one of the 5 ways of working set out in the Future Generations Act. The table quickly demonstrates how a particular step might contribute to, or work alongside, another step, so that work isn't being done in isolation. Taking the ACEs example, mental health is a very important part of the underlying causes. So, the leads of those steps should work together to maximise the contribution that they can make to improving wellbeing in that area. That then runs through the rest of that table, trying to show the most significant integrations.

How do the icons relate to the 4 Objectives?

A key will be added in to make it clearer. It's to succinctly show integration between the goals at a higher level than steps. Behind this work there will be more detailed plans about that integration and how it works.

Is there anything that can be done at an adult level, before adverse experiences for children are created?

This year the PSB endorsed an early years transformation programme. Also, as part of the ACEs step in this Wellbeing plan, we have been looking at the first 1000 days, thinking about the formative years from pregnancy to starting school. It hasn't been fully referenced in this report but will come through in the work going forward.

Is there scope to look at doing something to benefit fledgling businesses, local entrepreneurs struggling to get a foothold in Chepstow, particularly following Covid and given the town's large business rates and rents?

This is probably not relevant to this committee or this particular report, despite being of great importance.

How will we identify and deliver the government's pledge to deliver 50% affordable housing on all new sites? How are we working towards filling empty homes and addressing homelessness?

The PSB focusses on collaborative things i.e. challenges that a single agency couldn't consider in isolation. Therefore, most of the work concerning town centres sits with MCC as a single agency, so wouldn't normally be looked at by the PSB. Housing becomes more of an issue across multiple partners; for example, there is a role for Natural Resources Wales when considering the problem of phosphates and housing sites.

Under Objective 3, is there an opportunity to look at role-modelling behaviours e.g. going plastic-free in County Hall, and culture change targets in schools?

This is very important. There is already no plastic in County Hall, due to an earlier initiative, and there are numerous initiatives in our towns to work with businesses to reduce the use of single-use plastics, though these haven't yet reached full fruition. Through the PSB we need to get all public service bodies to commit to this.

What does Monmouthshire get out of the Cardiff Capital Region?

Essentially, CCR is a collaboration across 10 local authorities to raise the economic output of the region as a whole. Economic benefit in one part of south Wales will tend to benefit all parts, especially as most people don't live and work in one county. If we can raise prosperity in the region as a whole, then all parts benefit. but further detail would rest with the joint scrutiny committee which is in place for the CCR.

MCC is looking at the environmental impact of people commuting out of county, has bringing larger businesses into areas of southern Monmouthshire been considered?

Certain industries naturally sit in certain areas but Monmouthshire does have high levels of out-commuting. One of the challenges there is public transport. Under the CCR, the huge investment in the South Wales Metro should make it easier for people to move around the region. One of the challenges for the CCR is how communities such as

Monmouthshire can access and benefit from it. Tied in is the development of remote working and ensuring that our communities have access to high-speed broadband.

How do town and community councils share best practice? Why aren't Magor and Undy included?

There is fantastic learning from the town and community councils. We are in the process of strengthening how we collaborate with them. We are strengthening their role, establishing quarterly meetings to share best practice and provide more information than previously. They are required to report how they have delivered against our objectives, with the work done under their autonomy to align to the needs of the county. Magor and Undy aren't under the duties of the legislation to report against this plan – only the 4 town councils are currently required under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. But we still link with them in the Partnership space and keep the relationships going. There's a financial threshold for being covered by the Act: town and community councils with an annual turnover of £100k or more.

Why does the order of the list of towns change throughout the report?

The running order is probably just an error.

Under 'How are we doing', is quoting the ONS average for national wellbeing measures useful?

The ONS data is included to try to demonstrate the effect on personal wellbeing. Although Monmouthshire is very diverse it helps to give us some context by comparing the county to Wales and the UK. But we do need a deeper understanding, which is where the updated Wellbeing Assessment comes in, looking at Gwent, Monmouthshire, and Monmouthshire's 5 areas in detail. The data available at the more local level isn't as comprehensive as that at county level but we also undertook an engagement exercise to ask residents about their areas to supplement this. The assessment should help the committee to understand the strengths and weaknesses and will be used to inform the next Wellbeing Plan at Gwent level as well as our more local activities; within that we have identified key emerging issues.

Is the reason for percentages to fit in with the national survey for Wales and/or DEFRA?

Yes, in those cases we are using data from the Welsh Government survey and other available statistics. But indicators are used cautiously in cases of small sample sizes, for example.

Under Objective 3, is JBA Consulting looking at everything related to the list of project objectives? Is there an Action Plan? When might it be completed?

JBA were used to look at some of the PSB objectives on Climate Change and Decarbonisation. They were tasked with writing a report on how to raise our level of ambition across Gwent and what steps can be taken as a PSB to demonstrate our own commitments. They came up with things like sharing fleets and buildings, sharing technology to reduce the carbon footprint. JBA's work was handed to PSB partners to progress and taken through the Environment Partnership Board, chaired by NRW.

There will be an action plan, though the full details aren't to hand, but some of the things are more difficult than might be imagined e.g. to share desk booking across different organisations, the systems need to be able to talk to each other. So, more work needs to be done to carry the ideas forward in practice. The committee can be given an update on the current state of the proposed actions.

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, with additional comments from the Chair and Vice-Chair. The committee proposed the following topics:

- Bringing in Aneurin Bevan Health Board Adult Dementia Care about its plans for Monmouthshire and dealing with the demographic timebomb, to advance care for those people and reach out to communities
- Stagecoach's review of its bus services in the CCR – what is happening, particularly in relation to getting people to and from work
- ABHB: Dentistry for young people
- The Covid vaccination programme: ABHB's plans for Winter, location of centres, publicity
- The mental health impact from Covid, and educational effects
- Schools culture and education pertaining to the environment and climate change.

Hazel Ilett noted that there are other ways to address some of these concerns e.g. the vaccination issue needs timely action, so the Chair could write a letter to the Chief Executive of the Health Board asking for clarification about the rollout.

Chair's Summary:

Transport (Stagecoach) and Dementia will be progressed as priorities. Regarding the matter of schools' environmental culture and education, the Chair proposed writing to the Chief Officer for Education as a starting point.

8. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th February 2022

The minutes were noted, as none of the members were present.

9. Next Meeting:

Monday 10th October 2022 at 2.00pm.

The meeting ended at **12.14 pm**