

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Place Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Thursday, 25th May, 2023 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Lisa Dymock (Chairman)
County Councillor Jane Lucas (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: Emma Bryn, Tomos Davies, Jane Lucas, Su McConnel, Maria Stevens, Jackie Strong, Rachel Buckler, Meirion Howells, Laura Wright, Ann Webb and Paul Griffiths

Also in attendance County Councillors:
Rachel Buckler, Ann Webb and Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Economy
County Councillor Paul Griffiths

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Mark Hand, Head of Place-making, Housing, Highways and Flood
Ian Saunders, Chief Officer Customer, Culture and Wellbeing.
David Jones, Head of Public Protection
Sadie Beer, Town Centre Engagement Project Officer
Claire Sullivan, Regeneration Project Manager

APOLOGIES: County Councillor Louise Brown

1. Election of Chair

Councillor Dymock was nominated by Councillor Davies, seconded by Councillor Lucas.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair

Councillor Lucas was nominated by Councillor Dymock, seconded by Councillor Davies.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Dymock declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as the former Cabinet Member for Social Justice and Community Wellbeing, which covered Levelling Up.

Councillor Howells declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as Chair of the Steering Group for the Usk Improvement Plan.

4. Public Open Forum

None.

5. Public Spaces Protection Order for Dog Controls

Paul Griffiths introduced the report. Huw Owen and David Jones answered the members' questions.

Key points raised by Committee members:

- Clarifying where and when this PSPO would be enforced, and whether ground staff will receive letters informing them that they're able to enforce it.
- Whether dogs will be allowed on multi-use fields for events such as fetes, and asking what steps the Council would take to ensure that all residents are informed of the change.
- Understanding how exclusion areas will fit with an active travel route such as the links from Caldicot Leisure Centre, and how the areas cordoned off for artificial pitches in the Caldicot proposals will affect families wishing to take their dog to see games.
- Whether the route from Deepweir towards Denny View can be separated, and noting the need to balance reducing dog fouling with overall well-being, given the possible implication for dog owners exercising along footpaths.
- Asking how wide the consultation has been and how it would take shape if conducted over the summer.
- Asking if overflowing dog bins can be addressed, and how people can be made to take responsibility for dog mess.
- Clarifying whether rural commons, rural footpaths and bridleways will be included, and the definition of a 'lead'.
- Understanding exactly what enforcement officers will be able to carry out, and how they would stop someone who has no intention of adhering to the rules, even when confronted on the matter.
- Whether it would be possible to have clearer graphics, and fewer words, on signs.
- Asking if a registration number could be sent to an enforcement officer, and if that would count as 'intelligence'.
- Clarifying how many officers there would be, and whether they would be mobile across the county.
- Asking if the Monmouth sports field could be fenced off, or a dog exercising area be provided.
- Asking whether, in the future, dogs could be registered and their DNA recorded.
- Noting the need to ensure that the authority knows the June and July dates of the Community Council meetings to ensure that their views are sought.
- Asking how many fixed penalty notices were issued for dog fouling across the county in the last 12 months.
- Asking if Cabinet will be encouraged by officers to reflect again on the current fixed penalty level, and whether a fixed penalty notice of £100 will be a sufficient deterrent to make progress.

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to officers for the report and members for their contributions.

- Concerns about law-abiding dog owners being negatively affected by the exclusion zones, especially with regard to families wanting to include their dogs on family days, attending fetes and the different events that take place around the county.

- We need to encourage better dog ownership.
- How rural commons footpaths and bridleways are incorporated is very important.
- Overflowing dog bins are a huge concern and we need to raise awareness that if there is a dog bin overflowing residents need to be encouraged to take their waste home.
- We would welcome more collaborative work with Welsh government in tackling puppy farms and irresponsible backstreet dog breeders.
- Where the two metre lead leaves dog owners in relation to extension leads and dangerous dogs.
- More simple signage is needed.

6. Regeneration priorities and funding

Cabinet Member Paul Griffiths introduced the report. Daniel Fordham answered the members' questions with Paul Griffiths and Mark Hand.

Key points raised by Committee members:

- Asking if there has been feedback as to why the previous bids last year were unsuccessful
- Noting the importance of access to toilets for disabled residents, and if a changing space could therefore be incorporated into the former Store 21 building
- Asking about the resource implications in developing these schemes, and how their cost is being factored in
- Raising concerns about how long Monnow Street, and therefore its businesses, will be out of action if the bid is improved, and given the engineering required, the overall effect on the town
- Noting that some Monmouth residents felt let down by not being consulted about the changes to Monnow Street, and the need for members and residents to understand the timescales involved
- Clarifying the plans for regenerating the rural economy, and asking how smaller towns and hamlets can be reflected in future priorities for funding
- Asking if the lanes leading from the car park to Monnow Street will be part of this bid

Chair's Summary:

The committee supports the recommendations. We have heard valid comments about disability-friendly projects and more accessible provisions. There were questions about resource implications, and while this work is about regenerating towns, we can't neglect our rural economy.

7. Transforming Chepstow Masterplan

Cabinet Member Paul Griffiths introduced the report. Daniel Fordham answered the members' questions with Paul Griffiths:

Key points raised by the Committee Members

- Asking how ideas to relieve the traffic volume problem in Chepstow are progressing e.g. the bypass, and what implication bidding for Transforming Town Centres will have for the Transforming Chepstow funding bid?
- Proposing that consideration needs to be given to car use given the county's rurality
- Noting the volume of traffic that comes down Hardwick Hill in Chepstow but doesn't go into the town centre; that the future of Barclays Bank will be critical, and that despite there being excellent small shops there isn't a big draw such as a cinema or large market
- Asking whether the flexi transport idea could include an on-demand minibus, as used in Bristol
- Noting that Grassroots is restrictive, and therefore flexibility is needed

Chair's Summary:

Members have raised questions and concerns about traffic issues that need to be resolved around the Chepstow area, in order for the masterplan to be successful. Flexible public transport to allow residents to visit the town centre was stressed, and there were queries regarding funding allocation and whether the bid for the Monmouth project would affect Chepstow being successful.

8. Place Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List

Noted.

9. Cabinet and Council Work Planner

Noted.

10. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of 19th April 2023 were approved as an accurate record, proposed by Councillor Lucas and seconded by Councillor Davies.

11. Next Meeting: 6th July 2023

Members agreed that this meeting should be cancelled given that items have moved, if no other business comes forward.

The meeting ended at **12.07 pm**.