

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee held at on Wednesday, 20th September, 2023 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Alistair Neill, (Chairman)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Paul Pavia, Peter Strong, Ann Webb, John Crook (substituting for Laura Wright , Sara Burch (substituting for Catherine Fookes) and Mary Ann Brocklesby

Also in attendance County Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby, Leader of the Council

Officers in Attendance

Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Matthew Gatehouse, Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.
Richard Jones, Performance and Data Insight Manager
Hannah Carter, Graduate Performance Analyst

APOLOGIES: County Councillors Laura Wright and Catherine Fookes.

Note: the following minutes focus on the challenge from members – for the full discussion, the recording of the meeting is at www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeulHVZogCw&list=PLLMqn4nAaFJDsC93C-EKJZrFkDEQBdiXK&index=10

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Public Open Forum

None.

3. Self-Assessment Process

Councillor Brocklesby introduced the report and Richard Jones and Hannah Carter delivered a presentation. Councillor Brocklesby, Matthew Gatehouse and Richard Jones answered the members' questions.

Key points raised by Committee members:

- Noting that the availability of this report to the public alongside access to a dashboard would have been more useful, and that such coordination should be considered
- Asking for further information on the process of self-assessment, whether there are stakeholder communication plans, and whether reviews of what has been done take place
- Whether residents are asked for their views on value for money
- Asking why the percentage of people who feel they are able to influence decisions is only 40%

- Noting that some councils put self-assessment to resident groups to ask their views about the impact of the council's performance on residents – noting the importance and value of feedback from residents and the distinction between residents feeling able to influence decisions and actually engaging in that process
- Observing that with the report's focus on outputs, it would have been useful to have more information on the direct benefit of those outcomes to residents e.g. the health benefits from the increased uptake in participation in leisure facilities
- Asking how the council is using leisure facilities to delay deconditioning, ensure residents avoid urgent hospital care, and improve the mental health and wellbeing of certain groups
- Asking how we are going to capture and measure the voices of lived experience, whether there can be citizen engagement in service design, and if an early iteration of the report can be sent to the Future Generations Office for review, to see if the right datasets are being captured
- Noting that it would be useful to have relevant comparisons with other authorities, and that such data would be shown best in a dashboard
- Asking why there can't be interim targets now, how the information provided by officers is challenged, and whether the report can be less backward-looking and look more to the future
- Noting that as a dashboard won't be interactive for the residents, careful consideration needs to be given to the information we give to residents – it is very important that residents' experience and feedback be included in this evaluation, and that their feeling of not being involved in the council needs to change
- Suggesting that it would be useful to have more detail on how decision-making has been affected by strategies and surveys mentioned in the report, such as the Nature Isn't Neat survey
- Expressing doubt over the utility of certain surveys e.g. library survey, asking why the 99% of non-users haven't been asked why they don't use the library services
- Proposing that with a need to find better ways to communicate, other information be included in the annual delivery of the council tax bill
- Noting that sometimes there aren't objective criteria in order to qualify something as a success e.g. the introduction of the 20mph limits, as Monmouthshire was a pilot scheme, and that the approach to measuring success can be very subjective
- Asking whether the 'success' of a project should include public support
- Reiterating that it would be useful to know what other authorities are doing, and asking whether we can share practice with them, to ensure that we are asking ourselves the right questions
- Proposing that the summary of today's discussion be sent to the Democratic Services committee – the Chair will include the committee when sending his summary to Cabinet
- Asking if consultations could be published in community and parish newsletters
- Asking why the 2026/27 target for the annual economic impact of tourism is a third lower than the latest figure
- Noting that details of the impact of the new teaching curriculum implementation would have been useful, particularly in relation to the change in science teaching, and expressing concern

over the drop in language GCSEs and A Levels – **ACTION: add an update on language and science education to the work programme**

- Questioning the relevance of service reduction targets that were attained prior to the invasion of Ukraine and subsequent inflation rises
- Asking if the forecast budget shortfall of £23m for 26/27 combined with the forecast of reserves shrinking to £22.7m in the same timeframe is the definition of an organisation approaching insolvency, and why there isn't a specific commentary linking those two figures together
- Asking how we are planning to use improved data to improve citizen experience, and noting the importance of the service business plans to everything the council does
- Reiterating the importance of stakeholder analysis; for example, with the introduction of 20mph limits in Monmouthshire there was not enough engagement with residents – the council needs to consider a Before Action and After Action review – and noting that there is no recommendation of the learning from Spytty Park

Chair's Summary:

The Chair thanked the officers and moved the report.

4. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan and Action List

The LDP Annual Monitoring Report item needs to move back from the next meeting, possibly to January.

Councillor Bond proposed bringing the Financial Strategy, Flood Strategy (Place Committee) and the Council & Community Resilience items forward on the work programme – **ACTIONS**

5. Cabinet and Council Work Planner

6. To confirm and sign the following minutes:

- 21st June 2023: Ordinary Meeting
- 17th July 2023: Special Meeting

The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record.

7. Next Meeting: 24th October 2023

The meeting ended at **12.21 pm**

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