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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Severnside Area Committee held
at Bethany Baptist Church - Bethany Baptist Church on Wednesday, 4th January, 2017
at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillors: D Evans (Chair)
J. Higginson (Vice Chair)
J. Crook, A. Easson and F. Taylor

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Aaron Reeks Caldicot Town Team
Town Councillor P. Stephens Caldicot Town Council

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Deb Hill-Howells Head of Community Led Delivery
Roger Hoggins Head of Operations
Andy Smith Strategic Investment and Funding Manager
Paula Harris Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

County Councillor P. Watts

2. Declarations of Interest

None received.

3. Confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting

Town Councillor P. Stevens wished for it to be noted in the minutes that an incorrect set of minutes were sent out with the agenda and that his apologies for the last meeting were not noted.

4. Public Open Forum

The Committee were joined by residents of the community who wished to discuss local matters.

Calvin Parker asked if Brookside had been surveyed to ascertain what improvement work could have been carried out rather than knock the building down and build new properties. He questioned why the building had been allowed to fall into disrepair and now facilities such as the lift were inadequate.

He was answered by County Councillor J. Higginson that the building had been unfit for purpose for many years and that it no longer met the Welsh Housing standards.

Robert Powell asked about the lack of public awareness of the Severnside Area Committee meeting. County Councillor A. Easson advised that the meeting dates were readily available via

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the Council website and advertised in the One Stop Shop. Unfortunately, due to cost restraints a door to door leaflet drop was not financially viable.

Owen Davies raised the question of the new housing not providing a 'like for like' provision in terms of OAP care and commented on the lack of options offered at the consultation stage. Robert Powell also commented that there is a real need for OAP provision and that the residents feel they need someone to fight their corner in this respect.

At this point the Chair suggested that a special meeting was called inviting officers from planning, housing and Monmouthshire Housing to attend the meeting to address residents' concerns.

County Councillor Easson spoke of his criticism of the pre-application process.

Mr Derek Hall and Robert Powell spoke of issues with access in the area, with Mr Hall unable to access his hedge and Mr Powell witnessing a gritter lorry unable to treat the road due to parked cars. Mr Powell told the meeting that residents had been asked to park on the pavements to allow access to emergency vehicles, while Mr Owen advised that the Police had warned residents not to do this.

Mr Damian Wade expressed his frustration due to the lack of response to the emails he had sent to MCC planning office in respect of the development.

Rev Hall applauded County Councillor Easson for his work in the community and said the plans for Brookside development needed some minor adjustments.

In answer to resident's concerns the Head of Community Led Delivery confirmed that the MHA houses would be mixed tenure, however MCC have strategic sites that they looking to develop with Melin Homes, not care home accommodation but houses and that MHA will look at the county as a whole.

County Councillor Frances Taylor was concerned that the members of the public weren't aware of the public speaking policy at the planning committee meeting and asked the clerk to email a copy to the interested residents at the meeting so that they were informed.

The Chair spoke of his appreciation of the resident's concerns and resolved to call a public meeting inviting residents, MHA and officers from MCC planning, housing and highways departments to discuss further, date TBC.

5. Area Grants

Area grants was deferred to allow consideration of late applications.

Andy Smith, the Strategic Investment and Funding Manager visited committee to discuss RDP grant funding which benefit community led groups promoting inclusion.

Andy will send more detailed information to members of the committee and will return to Committee at a future meeting to answer any questions members may have.

6. Town Team Update

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We received a Town Team update from Aaron Reeks on various projects.

The Committee noted the project report for Caldicot market and noted the following;

- The project had grown in popularity over the year, culminating in their largest market, the Christmas gift market which featured 33 stalls.
- Running costs were higher during January-June due to the hire of a vehicle and trips to Abergavenny market to collect and use MCC stalls.
- Running costs reduced considerably since the purchase of 10 gazebos.
- The programme of markets for 2017 has been confirmed with bookings already made by stall holders.

The Committee noted the project report for Caldicot Goes Pop! and noted the following;

- The shop had an occupancy rate of 90%.
- It was rented out the equivalent of 35 full weeks.
- Charities received 33 days of free rental.
- 30% of S106 budget was recuperated in the first 4 months of the project.
- The shop has hosted 14 traders with 2 returning.

Other updates included;

- Shoe Fayre – this unit will become an Italian restaurant with building works starting January and opening Easter 2017.
- British Heart Foundation – this unit will become a Domino's Pizza, taking half of the space currently taken by Concorde. London & Cambridge will offer other space to Concorde.
- Morgan's Travel – this unit is currently under offer by an existing local business who are looking to move.
- Penny Barton's is currently the only empty unit.
- The pop up shop no longer has a premises.

The Town Team's Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday 18th January, 6.30pm at Caldicot Choir Hall followed by a Caldicot In Bloom meeting, members and non-members welcome.

The Town Team presented the Head of Operations with a business plan to take over the maintenance of some of the flower planters in the town centre. After recently cleaning out some of the overgrown planters, a number of drug syringes and a large bladed knife were found. The

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Head of Operations confirmed that a meeting was planned on the 10th January 2017 to discuss. The Town Team advised that they were looking for local business advertising/sponsorship to cover the costs of the beds and were looking to introduce new hanging baskets to the town.

Members of the public were unanimous in their support for the Town Team's work & dedication to improving the town and spoke of the fantastic job Aaron and his team were doing.

Town Councillor Stephens voiced an objection to a recent release by the Town Team regarding CCTV cameras and felt it implied that Town Team look after the cameras which is not the case, they are the responsibility of the Town Council and he felt that the Town Council deserved more recognition.

Councillor Easson asked that in light of a recent incident involving the distribution of a leaflet that the Town Team should publish a statement stating they have no affiliation with any political party. The Town Team confirmed were now aware of the issue, it had been dealt with and they would draw up a statement confirming their political neutrality.

A Member of the public, Marie Stephens asked about the disappointment and frustration felt by residents by the lack of progress with the linkage scheme and stressed the dangers of walking in that area of the town. In response we were told that the linkage scheme delays were the responsibility of the landlord London and Cambridge, not MCC and that the work was now finally able to start on the 16th January 2017 with approx. 12 weeks construction. Aaron reassured residents that he will document the work and keep residents up to date with the progress.

7. Caldicot Town Centre Maintenance

The business case was deferred until the meeting on Tuesday 10th January 2017.

8. To confirm the date of the next meeting as 29th March 2017

With a Special Meeting TBC regarding Brookside and Oakley Way.

The meeting ended at 11.24 am