

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Economy and Development Select Committee held at County Hall, Usk on Thursday 30th January 2014 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor J.L. Prosser (Chairman)

County Councillors: G. Down, D.L.S Dovey, D.L. Edwards, D.J. Evans,
S. Jones, P. Jordan and S. White.

County Councillors R.J.W. Greenland, by invitation of the Chairman.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs K. Beirne	- Chief Officer, Regeneration and Culture
Mr M. Howcroft	- Assistant Head of Finance
Mrs D Hill-Howells	- Estates and Sustainability Manager
Mr M. Lewis	- Chief Operating Officer, Shared Resource Services
Mrs N. Smith	- Food & Tourism Strategic Manager
Miss H. Ilett	- Scrutiny Manager
Mrs S. King	- Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors R.J.C. Hayward, A.C. Watts and K. Williams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

We received the minutes of the Economy and Development Select Committee held on 9th January 2014 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

It was suggested that meetings could be publicised through the Communications Team.

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5. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2013/14 MONTH 8 FORECAST OUTTURN STATEMENT

We received a report which provided Select Committee Members with the forecast outturn position for the current year's capital programme compared to the budget for the year for schemes relating to this committee.

The committee were advised that actual expenditure was 75% of revised budget and it was anticipated that spend would be as predicted. Additional costs relating to the Cattle Market had been offset by the Brewery Yard development scheme.

Members were invited to ask questions and during discussion we noted the following points:

- A question was raised in relation to the Cattle Market overspend and whether the authority were providing vacant or cleared site, as costs were identified for achieving a cleared site. We were advised that the site was vacant and it would be the new owner responsibility to clear, however, costs had accrued for judicial reviews and legal challenge was in progress. We were advised that the report would be corrected to identify vacant site and not cleared, as stated.
- Further information would be provided regarding the Oasthouse business.
- Clarification was requested regarding the £151,000 slippage on Rural Development Plan Schemes and whether it been approved by budget monitoring committee. We were advised that the Welsh Government had extended deadline for all RDP in wales and further information was Expressions of interest were required by end of the month and the RDP would be extended until the end of December, therefore, there would be opportunity for additional funding to be secured at a later stage.

6. MONMOUTHSHIRE MANDATE FOR SAVING FOR THE SHARED RESOURCE SERVICES (SRS)

We received a report from the Chief Operating Officer, Shared Resource Services (SRS) which provided members with detail on the £300,000 savings mandate for the SRS.

We were informed that savings would be achieved in the following areas:

- Hold open vacant roles (£45k)
- Rental Savings (£50k)
- Gain more value from the Microsoft Enterprise agreement (£123k)
- Cancel contracts made redundant over last twelve months (£19k)
- Reduce cleaning costs (£5k)

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- Reduced training budget (£15k)
- Increase income into CCTV (£25k)
- Use spares to support end of life telephone system (£17,900)

Members were invited to comment and ask questions. During discussion we noted the following points:

- We were advised that in terms of increasing income, products were already in place, as part of wider mandate scheme. There was an opportunity to rent/supply product to other local authorities, either through business solutions or CMC2. £75-80k income already coming in through renting spare capacity. More organisations looking to partner with SRS and will have base sale and profit shared back to the authorities, split between Monmouthshire County Council and Torfaen Council.
- County Councillor R.J.W. Greenland declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest under the Members Code of Conduct as a board member of SRS Business solutions,.
- It was noted that vacant roles existed within the service desk. We were advised that weekly calls were monitored, and problems fixed for Monmouthshire were at a high level. Sharepoint sites would be put in place with self-help programme and processes would be in place to minimise requirement for telephone assistance.
- Members requested reassurance that proposals were realistic and achievable.
- The SRS has a number of buildings in Blaenavon, which could be consolidated and achieve savings through staff becoming more agile. We were advised that buildings were owned by Torfaen Council and rented by SRS, proposals could be implemented immediately.
- We were informed that the Microsoft Enterprise agreement related to products used for windows office and other programmes. Licenses possessed by Monmouthshire County Council had been considered and had been reduced to more accurately reflect usage, the saving had already been achieved.
- In relation to cancellation of contracts, a number of projects were in place and further value should be achieved through the switch to the Microsoft Enterprise agreement. Full year saving would be recognised in April 2014.
- Cleaning costs would be reduced as a result of the number of buildings being reduced and cleaners would be used as part of a larger contract, aligned with the master contract, savings would be achieved.
- Training budget consists of £30k from each of the three organisations. Critical training would be undertaken, £15k each and other training would be undertaken when a project is established. Some training would be specialised but one person would attend external training and share with other staff.

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- CCTV in operation with the data centre in Blaenavon, requirement to ensure that those who should be paying are doing so. Both Torfaen and Monmouthshire purchase out of hours, there is a need to achieve best value. Discussions would be held with Monmouthshire County Council, with regard to progress going forward. Clarification would be circulated in relation to the position of town and community councils.
- The old telephone system is still in place providing a service to a small number of schools and leisure centres. Enough spares were available to keep running for 4 months, until the system needed to be replaced. Full saving would be achieved for next year.
- More organisations moving towards working with SRS, however, there is some reluctance for other authorities to hand over specialist services.
- SRS were commended for coming forward with savings, however, it was recognised that decisions relating staffing were the responsibility of Torfaen County Council. It was noted that there was a requirement to monitor any shared service developments, officers were in place to look at governance structures.
- A member queried limited broadband provision at Mounton House School, Chepstow. We were advised that the facility was too far from the local exchange and funding of £14k would be required for extra cable.
- In summary, the chairman advised that two main points were raised, Service Desk to give service expected by members and further information required regarding CCTV.

7. 6 MONTH TOURISM UPDATE

We received a report from the Food & Tourism Strategic Manager, which responded to a request from the Chair of Economy & Development Select Committee for a 6 month update on tourism progress following the meeting on 11th July 2013, in terms of:

- The successes and difficulties over the last year
- What are we getting right? What are we not getting right?
- Where do you see things heading? i.e. projection forward for 6 months.

The following points were highlighted to the committee:

- I. Development of a programme of Community Tourism Ambassador training which will be delivered between March & September 2014. This programme is designed to increase the capacity of Monmouthshire's communities to deliver an enhanced experience to visitors and improve the competitive advantage of Monmouthshire for

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- tourism. 200 individuals will be trained under this programme, up to fifteen of which will also undertake the accredited World Host training course.
- II. Progress has been made on implementation of the new Destination Marketing Strategy, aimed at making better use of available resources and avoiding duplication. This includes: continued membership of the Brecon Beacons Sustainable Destination Partnership and delivery of a joint PR campaign to promote the Brecon Beacons in key visitor markets. A new collaborative PR & marketing contract has been commissioned for the 'Wye Valley & Forest of Dean' destination, in partnership with Capital Region Tourism, Forest of Dean District Council and Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association. MCC is the lead partner for this project which aims to address late availability and seasonality in the area.
 - III. Highlighted activity delivered under the RDP Axis 3 Welcome Monmouthshire Project since the last update.
 - IV. Highlighted activity delivered by adventa under RDP Axis 4 Aspirational Monmouthshire Project since last update.
 - V. Following Select Committee's rejection of the proposal to relocate Abergavenny & Chepstow TICs into the museums, a number of alternative service delivery models are being explored.
 - VI. National Cycling Championships 2014 – support being given to Ian Saunders' team to prepare for the event and ensure maximum potential benefits for the destination and a positive experience for visitors.

Difficulties over the last year

We have continued to struggle to progress the interventions recommended in the Visitor Accommodation Opportunities study to improve the quantity and quality of Monmouthshire's accommodation offer to sustain future tourism growth. Planning policy and development control ultimately determine new visitor accommodation development in Monmouthshire so it is important that the planning policy framework is in line with market potential and the types of accommodation that the Council wishes to encourage.

There have been on-going challenges progressing some of the recommendations of the approved brand and marketing strategy. The new destination website for the Brecon Beacons National Park, although now launched, has been significantly delayed and it has taken time to agree the scope and terms of joint marketing activity with the Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association Ltd. This has resulted in a requirement to continue maintaining / developing the original online channels to provide much needed marketing support to Monmouthshire tourism businesses in the interim period before the new arrangements are working properly.

Forecast for next six months:

STEAM figures for 2013 aren't expected before May, but it's anticipated that

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the results will show an improvement on 2012 figures. According to the Great Britain Tourism Survey, British visitors made almost 8% more overnight trips to Wales in the first nine months of 2013 and spent almost 12% more compared to the same period in 2012.

The results, published on 16 January, show that 2013 was a very successful year for tourism in Wales, with increases in Wales compared with 2012 well ahead of those for Britain as a whole.

During discussion we noted the following points:

- The Chairman thanked the officer and advised that it would be beneficial to receive details which related to the economy of Monmouthshire County Council.
- A member requested that progress against each of the 7 strands of the Destination Marketing Strategy was presented and how targets would be met against different elements. It was confirmed that progress could be reported, against targets.
- STEAM results would be available in May, however, members requested more qualitative data for benchmarking. We were informed that all RDP projects would have specified targets/outputs reported quarterly, it would be possible to report on specific range that was manageable.
- The Chairman highlighted that a pertinent summary was required regarding how much revenue has been generated, how many more visitors, successes, so each meeting can monitor progress, snapshot results. Officers were commended for the detail and hard word and welcomed a future summary with pertinent figures.
- Further work and investigations were on-going regarding the relocation position of Tourist Information Centres, as a result of information contained in budget proposals, which had not been agreed by the Economy and Development Select committee.
- County Councillors D. Edwards, P. Jordan and J. Prosser declared personal interests pursuant with the members' code of conduct, as town councillors.
- It was recognised that discussions should be progressed as Town and Community Councils would be setting precepts.
- Congratulations were conveyed in relation to promotion of walking within the County, this included detail of routes in magazines and publications.
- We were advised that the experience was promoted on the ground, working closely with countryside officers, developed walking product strategy, need to make sure route exists and has legal right of way, regular inspection to make sure route not blocked and that it matches the route stated in a publication, significant checks in place to ensure a

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positive experience. Toolkits being produced for communities, to ensure appropriate checks are undertaken.

- Ambassador scheme contact for local group will receive info and invited to attend. Working closely with all groups involved in all towns.
- A task and finish group would be established and further work would be undertaken to ensure that opportunities were maximised, in preparation for the Nato conference at the Celtic Manor.
- We thanked the officer for the report and welcomed further information and a summary sheet, in future.

8. DISPOSAL POLICY 6 MONTH UPDATE

We received a report from the Estates and Sustainability Manager, which provided an update of the Disposal Policy, which was considered by Strong Communities on 21st March 2013.

- The Economy and Development Select Committee agreed the Disposal of Assets Policy and it was subsequently agreed by Cabinet in May 2013.
- Need to consider when community asset can only consider for 2 years. 3 fall within policy, Rogiet, Caldicot foodstore and Mynydd Bach.
- Policy clarified what is/isn't a community asset.

During discussion we noted the following points:

- The Chairman advised that the committee were satisfied with the information contained in the report.

We resolved to note the report.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

i) Select Committee Work Programme 2013-14

We received the Economy and Development Work Programme and noted the following:

- Dates needed on TBC issues.
- 20th February 2014 – Special Meeting to consider Review of Car Parks.
- 13th March 2014 – Planning framework, S106 and Welsh Water.

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Review meeting to be held 1st May 2014, possibility of discussing change of date closer to the time.

We agreed the work programme and noted changes.

ii) Cabinet Forward Work Planner

We received and noted the Cabinet Forward Work Planner.

10. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

We noted the date and time of next meeting as follows:

- Special Meeting – Thursday 20th February 2014 at 10.00am
- Thursday 13th March 2014 at 10.00am

Meeting ended 12.00 noon