

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Economy and Development Select Committee held at County Hall, Usk on Thursday 16th October 2014 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor S. Jones (Chairman)

County Councillors: D.L.S Dovey, D.L. Edwards, R.J.C. Hayward, J.L. Prosser, S. White, K. Williams and A. Wintle

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

County Councillors R.J.W. Greenland, V. Smith and A. Webb

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. K. Beirne	- Chief Officer Enterprise
Mr. P. Davies	- Head of Commercial & People Development, Enterprise
Ms. C. Fallon	- Head of Economy and Enterprise
Mr. G. Ashworth	- Head of Planning
Mr. M. Davies	- Development Plans Manager
Mr. I. Saunders	- Head of Leisure, Tourism & Heritage
Mr D. Davies	- Events Officer
Ms. H. Ilett	- Scrutiny Manager
Mrs. S. King	- Senior Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor S. White declared a personal interest pursuant to the Members Code of Conduct in relation to Community Infrastructure Levy, Wonastow Road development.

County Councillor J. Prosser declared a personal interest pursuant to the Members Code of Conduct in relation to events within Monmouthshire as the Chairman of Monmouthshire County Council.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

We confirmed the minutes of the Economy and Development Select Committee held on 23rd September 2014 as an accurate record and they were signed by the Chairman.

4. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

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We received a report which advised members of the progress made on preparatory work for a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

As recommendations within the report, Members were asked to note the contents of the report on the preparatory work that had been undertaken on CIL and comment accordingly.

In presenting the following points, we noted the following points:

- CIL is a new levy that local authorities (LA) in England and Wales can choose to charge on new developments in their area. The money can be used to support development by funding infrastructure that the local community needs. It applies to most new buildings and charges are based on the size and type of the new development. The CIL regulations came into force on 6 April 2010. However, liability to pay CIL for a development will not arise until the LA has implemented a charging schedule (which has to be based on an up-to-date development plan, i.e. a Local Development Plan (LDP), and is subject to consultation).
- It was resolved at a meeting of Full Council on 27 June 2013 to commence preparatory work for CIL with a view to adopting a CIL charge as soon as is practicable following adoption of the Monmouthshire LDP. Subsequently, the LDP was adopted on 27 February 2014.
- The report appended three documents, guidance note, Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (PDCS) and viability and infrastructure assessment.
- It was envisaged that the CIL would be adopted in July 2015.

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

- The Chair thanked officers for presenting a detailed document, which it was anticipated should provide for predictability and certainty for planners.
- Explanation regarding difference between CIL and S106. We noted that schemes would come through infrastructure plan, which would be corporate document. 15% of CIL would go to specified areas and the remaining would go to the Authority. The purpose of S106 would be to assist development and is directly related to the site. The CIL could be spent more widely, i.e. to encourage sustainable and viable community. It would be responsibility of Council on how issues would be prioritised in relation to the CIL, it was requested that clarity was put in place regarding processes of spending CIL.
- A member recognised that several stages of decision making for Council would be involved in the process.
- Further information was requested regarding the 15% community element. We were advised that advice was provided by UK Government and Welsh

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Government. A final decision would need to be agreed, with agreement of town/community councils.

- Members were reminded of the importance of the wider context of the CIL. S106 was highlighted as an effective tool, however, it was not used strategically to identify needs and priorities. There was a need to look at longer term needs and working with stakeholders so that funding was used most effectively. Other frameworks would be required to be in place to deliver other issues and become more creative for using CIL in future.
- It was anticipated that priorities would be identified by communities and would be facilitated by the Authority.
- A query was raised regarding the detail to be implemented by 2015 and any threats or impacts if processes were not in place by April 2015. It was noted that none were expected.
- The committee were presented with the preliminary draft charging schedule, which would be updated to the draft charging schedule and explained the CIL process. We were advised that the CIL viability assessment was not draft and was the final report prepared by consultants for Council to decide whether it would be adopted. Any changes will be made to preliminary draft charging schedule before it becomes draft. The documents would be received by Planning, Cabinet and Council.
- It was anticipated that money should be spent effectively and in ways that would widely benefit communities. The funding mechanism should take account of whole place and town teams and it was anticipated that policies would be in place to clarify.
- It was anticipated that discussions would relate to how funding could be used so that the wider community would benefit.
- CIL was identified as an opportunity for money and investment to be introduced into communities. It would be a strategic focus for how CIL could be used.
- We noted that other Welsh authorities had adopted the CIL and Monmouthshire compared favourably due to good land values.
- Further clarification was requested regarding how funding would be allocated and how decisions would be made. It was noted that this needed to be clarified before the document was approved.
- Members requested clarification on how the plan would be implemented within the County, prior to the plan being considered by Council. The process should be continually reviewed.
- It was noted that the plan would be ratified by full Council.

The Chair highlighted that information had to be clarified and the committee should be continually informed. Further information was requested regarding the step by step process and timescales.

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We were presented with a discussion paper which informed of the strategy that sets out to underpin the Council's commitment, approach and vision for supporting, hosting and staging events within the County.

The strategy would be new for Monmouthshire and would be formulated following discussions with the Welsh Government Major Events team.

We were provided with an outline of planned events which included, Devauden music festival, Abergavenny food festival, Castle rock, Chepstow, Remembrance Event, Caldicot Castle. There were many significant opportunities and also a role in becoming an enabler, partner and facilitator.

During discussion we noted the following points:

- The need for the strategy was identified as appropriate with the direction of the Council and a team was required to push a strategy forward.
- Members welcomed the paper and development of a strategy and recognised the need for a vision for events within the County.
- Members felt that more consultation was required when large events were held.
- We were advised that it was anticipated a calendar of events would be produced and dialogue would be held with communities and local residents.
- We recognised the importance of tourism within the authority and the significant opportunities.
- Officers were commended in events that had been organised. We recognised the difficulty of developing a strategy for non-statutory issues and the need to for funds and income to be generated to sustain and retain the team.
- We recognised the importance of opportunities and assets within the County and welcomed development of a strategy.
- The team welcomed assistance from community representatives with experience of developing events.
- Further information was requested regarding how other strategies would be impacted upon and how links would be established. In addition we welcomed that a new Communications Manager had been appointed.
- The Cabinet Member, thanked the committee for positive comments.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and requested that it was considered by Economy and Development select committee, for pre-decision scrutiny, alongside the destination strategy.

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7. VALE OF USK LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

We received the Vale of Usk Local Development Strategy (LDS) and the committee were invited to endorse and approve the draft strategy for wider consultation with associated partners.

The purpose of the LDS was to inform how the RDP funding for the 2014-2020 period will be spent.

As a predominantly rural county, the main source of European funding for Monmouthshire is the Rural Development Programme (RDP). The current round of funding (2007 – 2013) is now coming to an end and there is a need to submit a new bid to Welsh Government (WG) for the 2014-2020 funding period.

We noted that the draft strategy had been endorsed by Cabinet and it was identified as key that the document was in draft format and the final strategy would be reconsidered by Economy and Development select in the new year.

We received a presentation as follows:

VALE OF USK LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Context of the LDS

- RDP main source of European funding for MCC
- Funding governed by an independent Local Action Group or LAG
- Previously adventa LAG, this funding period WG require LA's to brigade hence Vale of Usk LAG – rural wards Newport & Monmouthshire.
- WG require the LAG to produce an LDS or business plan detailing the activities that will take place during the 2013-2020 funding period

Purpose of the LDS

- Identify synergy between two LA areas in order to guide actions to “*achieve the maximum results*” across the new rural territory
- Build on historical investment to create sustainable impact
- Review emerging programmes and projects to assess complementarity
- Assess project ideas and proposals that have arisen through the consultation process to look at both spatial and sectoral linkages so that maximum benefits are achieved.

Development Process

- LDS also needs to demonstrate how the LAG has engaged with the local community
- Recent summer community engagement process has included:
 - Community consultations
 - Attendance at Monmouthshire and Usk show
 - On-line survey

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•“A connected territory, in a beautiful landscape, focussed on fostering thriving communities and building resilient local economies whilst embracing the natural and cultural assets of the area”

•Five key themes:

- Adding Value to local identity and natural and cultural resources
- Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains
- Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services
- Renewable energy at Community level
- Exploitation of digital technology

Prioritisation of Activities

- Funding to be allocated according to the priority weighting that each of the themes were given as part of the consultation process.
- Therefore activity will take place under all five themes but particular emphasis will be placed on ‘Exploitation of Digital Technology’ and ‘Adding Value to local identity and natural and cultural resources’ and so on. This can of course be adjusted throughout the delivery period.
- LAG will make a regular call for projects under all five themes and, communities of interest will be invited to apply for funds.
- Support to develop projects will come from the RDP delivery team, hosted by MCC as Administrative Body and 100% funded through the RDP.
- The delivery team will be much smaller than the last funding period, reducing from fifteen to a core team of five, due to new greater focus on up-skilling, enabling, etc. rather than individual project officers.

Potential Scope

- Make the area more connected, linking for mutual benefit;
- Provide more opportunity for communities to learn from each other;
- Consolidate the significant investment has taken place in Monmouthshire and extend the reach in terms of physical and digital improvements and community led initiatives;
- Recognise the value of countryside and landscape making the area coherent
- Understand how the environment can play a part in access, heritage, identity, mobility, tourism, exploration and realising local economic development initiatives; this is about whole place and community;
- Use digital technology to deliver smart, dynamic and enterprising communities and businesses whilst being underpinned by a training and mentoring culture.

Funding Package

- The RDP provides the authority with the means, through a 20% match funding underwriting contribution, to access a significant revenue grant funding opportunity.

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- Significant programme, £2.7m RDP funding provision based on a 5% EU funding allocation to LEADER activities (6% = £3.24m.
- £420,315 match funding to be underwritten by MCC based on Monmouthshire's eligible wards. The remaining £85,935 will be underwritten by NCC.

Next Steps

- Draft LDS submitted to WG 30th September 2014
- Consultation with LAs and community on draft to include on-line survey and production of Executive Summary - Launch of survey 20th October for two weeks
- Amendments to LDS following consultations and WG feedback
- Revised submission of final LDS to WG Nov/Dec 2014
- Anticipated approval January 2015 by WG, MCC and NCC
- Recruitment Feb/March 2015
- Start date 1st April 2015

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

- We were advised that match funding, would be met from existing resource. Revenue budget in place, to cover funding for existing programme.
- The benefits of the strategy were recognised. However, some concerns were expressed regarding finance and resource pressures. It was noted that this core European funding would be received. There would be themes in place to ensure that there was alignment, where possible.
- A member recognised the need for the programme to be adequately promoted. We were informed that there would be a communications plan in place, which would be based on the engagement process and bidding on projects.
- The projects related to community development and unfortunately, some posts had not been retained due to reduced funding. However, the plan would be supported by existing officers.
- Officers were commended for work and strategy that had been developed. It was recognised that this was an opportunity to access European funding.

The Chair thanked officers for the presentation and report and welcomed re-consideration prior to Cabinet.

We resolved to agree recommendations:

1. To endorse and approve the draft Vale of Usk LDS for wider consultation with associated partners.
2. To provide in principle agreement to a 20% match funding contribution required to fund the RDP activities in the Monmouthshire wards, acknowledging that a level of budget provision already exists under the existing RDP.

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3. To endorse the current Partnership with Newport City Council (NCC) and approve the extended partnership requirements requested by Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC), with MCC acting as Administrative Body.

8. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

We received the Economy and Development Select Committee Work Programme for 2014/15. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- The next meeting would be held on 20th November and statutory items would be considered.
- A special meeting would be held on 4th December 2014.

9. COUNCIL AND CABINET BUSINESS FORWARD PLAN

We resolved to receive the Council and Cabinet Business Forward Plan and noted its content.

10. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

We noted that the next meeting of the Economy and Development Select Committee would be held on Thursday 20th November 2014 at 10.00am.

The meeting closed at 12.30pm