

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Economy and Development Select Committee held at County Hall, Usk on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2015 at 2.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor S. Jones (Chairman)

County Councillors: D.L.S Dovey, D.L. Edwards, R.J.C. Hayward, J.L. Prosser, D.J. Evans and A.M. Wintle

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

County Councillor V.E. Smith

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ms. K. Beirne	- Chief Officer Enterprise
Mr. D. Davies	- Events Manager
Mr. I. Saunders	- Head of Tourism Leisure and Culture
Ms. C. Fallon	- Head of Economy and Enterprise
Mr. T. Lewis	- Events Coordinator
Mr. O. Wilce	- A County That Serves Volunteer Coordination
Ms. H. Ilett	- Scrutiny Manager
Mr. R. Williams	- Democratic Services Officer

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors A.C. Watts and S. White.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. MONMOUTHSHIRE EVENTS STRATEGY**

We scrutinised the report in which the Select Committee were provided with a high level strategy which will underpin the Council's commitment, approach and vision for supporting, hosting and staging events within the County.

Select Committee Members were informed that the Council had not previously adopted an events strategy which was much needed to better align the Council to the Welsh Government events strategy, enabling Monmouthshire County Council to move forward in this important area of the Tourism, Leisure Culture and Enterprise. The strategy outlined Monmouthshire's current position on events within the County and recognised the exceptional value of its active communities in staging well-operated events.

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The strategy has grown and developed recent Member support on staging events to assist the coordination of the Council's resources and skills to best lend itself in enabling events to flourish and develop.

Whilst events could play a significant role in generating income for the County, it was more about creating value, enhancing the skillset and ideas of our most active communities, utilising our assets and resources to their absolute potential and promoting a 'can-do' attitude and mind-set through our organisation.

There were so many events and festivals that occurred throughout Monmouthshire and better coordination and planning would provide more opportunities to promote and market these events.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The strategy will form the foundations of an Events Toolkit for Monmouthshire. This is a whole events package of running and delivering events.
- The Strategy would provide effective communication and coordination across the County with Monmouthshire's Events Strategy becoming the first step for town / community council's to go to when preparing an event in their area.
- A number of groups have contacted the Authority for support in preparing local events, resulting in a more networked community. Organisers were in constant contact with the Events Team.
- The Council was committed to delivering high quality events in line with Monmouthshire priorities and the Welsh Government Events Strategy.
- The Strategy will provide a mechanism for income generation.
- The Events Team will come back to a future Select Committee Meeting to showcase what the events Team are doing.
- The Events Strategy was based on encouraging growth and adding value in austere times.
- An Events Strategy meeting was being held this evening with interested parties in which mechanisms would be established to identify ways of sharing information.
- Establishing an Events Champion should be considered.
- The Events Team would provide feedback to the Select Committee regarding the Events Strategy meeting this evening.

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- The Events Team would come back to a future meeting to provide an update on progress.

We resolved to support the Events Team in developing a toolkit to assist and sustain current and new events within the county.

**4. BROADBAND IN MONMOUTHSHIRE**

We scrutinised a report regarding Superfast Broadband provision in Monmouthshire and associated opportunities for delivery of external iCounty activities.

The report outlined the likely and continued digital deprivation following the implementation of Next Generation Broadband Access or Superfast Cymru in Monmouthshire. It also raised awareness of ICT exploitation opportunities associated with Superfast Cymru, the Superconnected Cities programme and other alternative connection technologies such as wireless and satellite deployed in the County.

It was recognised that there was a need for additional resources to enable Monmouthshire Business and Enterprise to capitalise on Monmouthshire's existing and emerging Broadband infrastructure assets, to ensure opportunities and experience were maximised and gaps in provision, skills and impact were addressed.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question raised by a Select Committee Member regarding engagement with Welsh Government in which the Authority was asking for funding for exploitation and whether this should come under the Superfast Cymru contract to encourage take up for broadband services, the Head of Economy and Enterprise informed the Select Committee that there were delays and that we were on a short timescale regarding Superconnected cities. However, the Authority has managed to get this extended to March 2016 but it was unlikely that this would be extended further. Regarding ICT exploitation, there were also delays regarding the rollout of the Welsh Government ICT exploitation programme which should be noted was for business only. The Authority could however use RDP funds for ICT exploitation activities with communities but that wouldn't be available until July 2015. Therefore, by maximising the opportunities by making a small investment to provide additional resources to promote the current schemes and capitalise on Monmouthshire's existing and emerging Broadband infrastructure assets, the County would benefit by getting more communities and businesses online.

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- It was noted that the total resource allocation required for this programme of activities was £73,000. The report had been presented to the Digital Board which had been endorsed. It was noted that there was a need for the Authority to invest in this programme in order to support businesses and communities.
- Funding for this programme had been ring-fenced via the ICT Transformation Reserve and a decision on funding allocation would be made by Cabinet.
- Post code areas within 'white' areas were being looked at with a view to providing broadband provision to these areas via a pilot innovative broadband infrastructure programme funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in the sum of £890,000.
- It was noted that 20% of people within Monmouthshire had not taken up Broadband provision. It was imperative that efforts be made to encourage as many people as possible to take up Broadband provision so that they did not become left behind. It was acknowledged though, that some people would never chose to take up Broadband provision.
- It was acknowledged that in order to maintain and encourage further business development within Monmouthshire, Superfast Broadband provision was essential.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding Superfast Broadband provision in Chepstow, it was noted that the Chamber of Commerce had been notified of the Superfast Cymru Broadband programme and the Superconnected Cities voucher scheme and issues were being addressed regarding Broadband connection in this area.
- Superfast Broadband can be expensive and unaffordable for some who may choose to use mobile devices to receive Broadband rather than a direct line rental into their homes.
- Support in accessing Broadband provision needed to be provided and how to access various devices such as tablets and laptops etc. Monmouthshire On Line was available to provide this support but the funding ends in March 2015 with no clear route to additional funds available yet. Officers were looking to work with partners, such as Argos and Barclays Digital Eagles.
- Officers were working with Melin Homes regarding the Digital Access and Skills Strategy.

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We resolved to endorse the report to be presented to Cabinet to secure ICT transformation funding to allow additional resources to be secured to ensure that the potential of Superfast Cymru and associated programmes were maximised for the benefit of Monmouthshire businesses and residents.

**5. CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION BOARD**

County Councillor P.A. Fox attended the meeting as a Board Member of the Cardiff Capital Region Board and provided the Select Committee with an update on progress.

In doing so, the following points were noted:

- The next meeting of the Cardiff Capital Region Board will formulate firm recommendations to be submitted to the Welsh Government Minister Edwina Hart.
- The drivers for a city region approach were both internal and external to the region.
- Cardiff was a city growing at pace and was a vibrant city which boded well for the region as a whole.
- The priority themes for the Board were around connectivity, both digital and physical, around skills, innovation and growth, as well as creating a positive identity for the region.
- Aligning strategies and thinking – engagement with all key stakeholders will take place. Monmouthshire will be asked to contribute its views on how the authority might fit within the vision of the Cardiff Capital Region.
- All communities will benefit from the Capital Region.
- There was an opportunity to put the Region onto the global stage, creating a vibrant City Region. Therefore, it was key that the development of the Cardiff Capital Region continued to move at pace.
- The Board was scheduled to hold three further meetings by which time firm recommendations would be presented to the Welsh Government Minister regarding the Board's vision.

Having received the update, the following points were noted:

- Abergavenny was a hub town. Therefore, effective communication and improved transport links from the north of the County to the region was

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key. It was noted that the transport plan was being aligned with the City Region Plan.

- The Monmouthshire Strategic Transport Group had made progress regarding the creation of a new Transport Plan for Monmouthshire which would shortly be presented to Council for consideration. Cross border issues had also been discussed in preparing the Transport Plan.
- Concern was expressed that Monmouthshire will become a dormitory to the region where residents will work out of County.
- The region requires better infrastructure. Currently, there was only one motorway located within the region.
- Full Council will discuss Monmouthshire's part in the City Region in due course.
- Monmouthshire was located in a prime position between two city Regions, i.e. Cardiff and Bristol.
- The Select Committee would be presented with the recommendations of the Board in due course.
- A Member Seminar could be established to provide an update on progress regarding the Cardiff Capital Region Board before being debated at Full Council in due course.

We resolved to receive the update and noted its content.

**6. WORK PROGRAMME**

We received the Economy and Development Select Committee Work Programme for 2014/15. In doing so, the Scrutiny Manager informed the Select Committee that since receiving the agenda, there had been substantial changes to the work programme as some urgent reports had come forward that required scrutiny.

The Work Programme would be amended as follows:

**5<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at 10.00am**

- Pre-decision scrutiny of the Business Improvement District in Abergavenny.
- Economic return on investment of the cycling programme.
- Capital and Revenue Budget Monitoring.

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**Special Meeting – 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at 10.00am**

- Update on the Y Prentis Scheme.
- Supporting Monmouthshire's Business Competitiveness.
- Tourism Destination Management Strategy.
- CMC2 – Community Interest Company leading green and digital growth.

**21st April 2015 at 12.00pm (Pre-Meeting at 11.30am)**

This meeting to be re-arranged from 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015.

Agenda items:

- Shared Resource Service.
- Chief Officer Annual Report.
- Improvement Plan 2014 – 2017.
- Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring – Outturn Reports.

**After May 2015 (Council Diary yet to be confirmed)**

- Planning and Development.
- Section 106 Agreements.

We resolved to receive the work programme and noted its content.

**The meeting closed at 4.42pm**

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