

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Economy and Development Select Committee  
held at County Hall, Usk  
on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2014 at 10.00 am**

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

County Councillors: D.L.S Dovey, R.J. C. Hayward, and S. White.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ms K. Beirne	- Chief Officer Regeneration and Culture
Mr M. Howcroft	- Assistant Head of Finance
Miss H. Ilett	- Scrutiny Manager
Mrs E. Tapper	- Democratic Services Officer

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor D.J. Evans, D.L. Edwards and K.G. Williams.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

We confirmed the minutes of the Economy and Development Select Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014 as an accurate record and they were signed by the Chairman.

It was requested that any actions should be highlighted in bold type.

**4. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

There were no members of the public present.

**5. SCRUTINY OF CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2013/14 MONTH 10 FORECAST  
OUTTURN STATEMENT**

We received the Capital Programme 2013/14 Month 10 Forecast Outturn Position Statement from the Assistant Head of Finance compared to the budget for the year for schemes relevant to the Economy and Development Select Committee portfolio.

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We scrutinised the Statement and in so doing the following points were noted:

- The adjusted revised budget for the Committee was £5,303,000, made up of £3,150,000 approved capital expenditure from 2013/14 £2,607,000 slippage from 2012/13 and £325,000 of budget revisions.
- The Council's total revised capital budget at month 10 was £31 143 000.
- Actual expenditure was £5,195,000 (98% of revised budget) at month 10, an increase of 23% from month 8.
- A net over spend of £219,000 is forecast resulting from an over spend of £247,000 on the Abergavenny Regeneration scheme, offset by an under spend of £28,000 on the Brewery Yard development scheme. The under spend on the Brewery Yard Development was attributed to a grant not being taken up by the owner of Oathouse within the deadline.
- It should be noted that Abergavenny Regeneration scheme is also anticipating to over spend in later years as a further £51,000 for legal costs is expected in addition to the compensation sum potentially payable in relation to shooting rights at High House Farm. This was not factored into the original future capital programme. Costs will also be incurred for the provision of vacant possession for Morrisons and in order to conclude negotiations with existing tenants.
- £400 000 was slipped into 2014/15 for remedial works relating to Abergavenny Cattle Market.
- Members queried why the County Hall demolition and remodelling totalling £915 000 appeared as a budget revision in 2013/14 rather than being incorporated into the original capital budget. **The Assistant Head of Finance agreed to clarify the position.**
- Members raised the possibility of creating a specific budget for capital expenditure for community projects in the MTFP. Members expressed concern that a budget did not exist for subsidising land for sale to housing associations and suggested that rather than allocate 100% of capital receipts to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools, 5% be withheld for community projects given that it is difficult to anticipate why and when community projects would arise. We felt that a contingency fund would avoid the need for decisions to be called in and would demonstrate that the Authority was transparent and reactive.

The Chief Officer felt that the budget position should reflect the policy position of the Authority but that this would require a change in Council

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policy. **The Assistant Head of Finance agreed to investigate the feasibility of the Economy and Development formalising the suggestions as a recommendation to full Council.**

- Members queried the need for the replacement of video conferencing facilities totalling £20 000. We were advised that this capital expenditure would reduce officer and member travel expenses given the expansion of video conferencing and the roll out of Office 365.
- In response to a Member request the Assistant Head of Finance expressed confidence that the capital programme would come in on budget at year end given that underspends in other service areas could be utilised to compensate for legal challenges when they arose.

We resolved to note the Capital Programme 2013/14 Month 10 Forecast Outturn Statement.

**6. REVIEW OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE WORK OF THE ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE**

We received an overview of the activities of the Economy and Development Select Committee for the period May 2013 – 14 from the Scrutiny Manager. The overview was presented in the form of an annual report. We heard that Wales Audit Office would utilise the content of the report to provide an opinion on the Committee's self - evaluation.

The Committee was asked to consider whether the contents of the annual report were appropriate and to use the report to formulate its work programme for 2014/15.

During consideration of the annual report the following issues were raised and or noted:

- Economy and Development was the only Select Committee that did not agree with all Capital and Revenue Proposals for 2014 – 15 to 2017 – 18 scrutinised. The Committee was instrumental in influencing and changing the proposed business case for amalgamating Tourist Information Centres and Museums in the four major towns.  
We welcomed that this piece of work had been entered into the Scrutiny Awards.  
**The Committee requested that the amended business plans for TICs and Museums be received by Committee for further scrutiny.**
- **The Committee agreed to include pre – decision scrutiny of the draft business plan for Caldicot Castle and Old Station Tintern into their forward work programme.**

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- Concern was expressed regarding the impact and timing of budget proposals on town and community councils' ability to make informed decisions. It was felt that as the Council wished to work more fruitfully with town and community councils, it was essential for the Authority to provide them with more timely and accurate information. The failure of the Authority to provide Monmouth Town Council with an SLA relating to Monmouth public conveniences, within 3 years and following 16 - 17 letters from the Town Council was cited as an example of the need to improve. The need for a clear audit trail was also emphasised.
- **The Committee requested that significant progress is made regarding the Car Parking Review in order to accurately reflect the impact of the consultant's report in the budget setting process.** The Chief Officer Regeneration and Culture felt that the Authority should drive the consultants and expressed concern that Whole Place initiatives could be disadvantaged by unresolved car parking issues.
- Members felt that attendance by relevant outside agencies had made a valuable contribution to the work of the Select Committee.

We resolved that:

1. the content of the annual report was appropriate subject to the addition of the following to "On – going Scrutiny/Unresolved items"
  - The impact of austerity measures.
  - Review of SRS, to include strategic, financial and operational matters.
2. The annual report be utilised to formulate the work programme.

**7. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15**

We received the Economy and Development Select Committee Work Programme for 2014 – 15. The Committee acknowledged that its work programme should be clearly defined, outcome based and inform Council policy. We noted its contents and agreed the following:

- **To receive a closure paper regarding the amended business plan for Museums and TICS**
- **To receive 6 monthly progress reports relating to the on - going scrutiny of tourism matters**
- **To monitor the business plan for Leisure Services on an annual basis.**

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- To undertake further scrutiny of the Car Parking Review as soon as is feasible.
- To scrutinise the business plan for Caldicot Castle and Country Park. Following this the Committee will decide when and if to review the item. We noted that a performance report was being prepared and would be presented to Committee in due course.
- To annually review the business plan for CMC<sup>2</sup>
- To undertake in depth scrutiny of the strategic, operational and financial arrangements of SRS
- To remove the Annual Directors Performance Report on Regeneration from the Committee Work Programme and refer to Strong Communities Select Committee.
- To remove scrutiny of the Customer Charter for Development Control from the work programme.
- To scrutinise the Authority's response to austerity measures to include the impact of new supermarkets in the County and the response from the Chambers of Commerce.
- To review the impact of major events to be held in the Authority and how they are being handled. The Committee requested that this should include an appraisal of the financial impact, income versus expenditure, on the Authority.
- To receive a report regarding Monmouthshire's role in the Cardiff Capital Region and how the Authority can and should influence regional and national transport links. Report anticipated for September 2014.
- The Committee resolved that the Scrutiny Manager would create a draft work programme for the Economy and Development Select Committee 2014/15.

**8. MINUTES OF COORDINATING BOARD 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2014**

We noted the minutes of the meeting of the Coordinating Board of 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

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Members expressed concern that Coordinating Board had lost its originally intended business management role and had evolved into a “talking shop”. The Chairman informed the Committee that he had reviewed the terms of reference of the board and that these had not changed.

**The Economy and Development Select Committee resolved to recommend that the Democratic Services Committee review the function and terms of reference of the Coordinating Board.**

**9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

We noted that the next meeting of Economy and Development Select Committee would be held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2014 at 10am.

The Chairman expressed thanks to the Chief Officer Regeneration and Culture, the Scrutiny Manager and Committee members for their support during the year. The Committee and Scrutiny Manager reciprocated thanks to the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 11:33