

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Special Economy and Development Select Committee
held at County Hall, Usk
on Monday 30th March 2015 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: County Councillors: D. Dovey, D. Evans, J.L. Prosser and A. Wintle.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: County Councillors R.J.W. Greenland, P. Murphy and A Easson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. K. Beirne	-	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Mrs. M. Bartlett	-	Finance Manager
Ms. S. Hayward	-	Digital and Technology Manager
Mr. M. Lewis	-	Chief Operating Officer, Shared Resource Services
Miss H. Ilett	-	Scrutiny Manager
Mrs N. Perry	-	Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

We received apologies for absence from County Councillors R.J.C. Hayward, S. Jones and D.L. Edwards.

The Committee nominated County Councillor J. Prosser to Chair the meeting in the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

The Committee heard that County Councillor A. Easson was in attendance to present a question to the Committee. This would be addressed at an appropriate point during the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PERFORMANCE OF THE Y PRENTIS SCHEME.

The Committee received a report to update on the Y Prentis, Shared Apprenticeship Scheme, established in September 2012, presented by the Digital and Technology Manager.

We heard that the purpose of Y Prentis was to deliver a Shared Apprenticeship Scheme across the South East Wales region in partnership with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). The vision for Y Prentis was to provide long term sustainably employment opportunities to help young people maximise their potential and gain fruitful future employment. Y Prentis had been designed to offer flexible

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options as a response to the growing demand for community benefit requirements within many construction based, development and maintenance contracts.

During discussion following presentation of the report, the following points were raised:

A Member questioned if there was a particular reason that out of 69 apprentices currently under-going an apprenticeship programme, only 1 was from Monmouthshire. The Cabinet Member for Enterprise confirmed that the figures were low at the moment, but had not always been the case. Opportunities through the 21st Century Schools projects would increase the number of apprenticeship schemes available. Many apprentices were from the Greater Gwent area and it was important for Monmouthshire County Council to do all they could to assist the project.

A Member requested clarification on the procedure for allocating apprenticeships. We were informed by the Chief Officer for Enterprise that Y Prentis ran across CMC² and Melin Homes who operated the scheme on a referral basis, working with various companies and establishments, as well as schools and higher education. Profit would be redistributed Melin Homes and Monmouthshire County Council, which would then be used to bring people into the scheme. Members were encouraged to make any referrals to Head of Economy and Enterprise. The scheme was currently construction based, but there was an intention to broaden the scheme to other industries.

In terms of success we heard that Monmouthshire County Council was currently working with 6 individuals to recruit under the 21st Century Schools Programme. In terms of wider success, each of the 98 apprentices across the South East Wales region would have a subsidy of approximately £3500, which could give an idea of the amount of funding the scheme generated.

In response to a question regarding contracts for procurement we were advised that the Head of Property Services and the Head of Economy and Enterprise were directors on the board of Y Prentis. We heard there was a model social clause in place which was used for targeted recruitment and training. An immediate advantage of this was that Interserve had agreed to take on 33 apprentices through the Y Prentis scheme to attach to the 21st Century Schools programme. It was accepted that more could be done with projects going forward.

In response to a request for clarification on numbers of successes, we were informed that there were 109 apprentices on the scheme to date, with the target being 105. A breakdown by county could be provided to Members. We were told that it was important to note that Y Prentis was a scheme for the region, not just Monmouthshire, but the profits would be redistributed into the Monmouthshire economy.

In response to a question regarding the problem of mobility for apprentices we heard that mobility was an issue in Monmouthshire and some of our apprentices would have to travel extensively. In recognition of the need for people to travel, Melin Homes had

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set up a scheme, which could be accessed by apprentices, to enable young people to learn to drive. We heard that some Local Authorities provided vehicles, which Monmouthshire County Council was considering, as well as improving the bus services. Any further suggestions were welcomed.

With regards to future employment we could look towards the LDP. Also, Melin Homes had secured a £30 million pound investment. Having the scheme in place would prepare young people for these opportunities.

Support services were provided through the website and promotional literature.

With regards to the effect of the withdrawal of funding for Coleg Gwent, the Chief Officer for Enterprise would report back to Members.

In summary, the Chairman applauded the initiative. It was noted that the Committee would appreciate the Monmouthshire figures in detail. The Committee looked forward to receiving further detail on the promotional material.

4. PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT MONMOUTHSHIRE BUSINESSES' COMPETITIVENESS

We heard from the Chief Officer for Enterprise that the item was to be deferred due to capacity issues.

5. PERFORMANCE OF THE SHARED RESOURCE SERVICE

We received a report to update Members on the progress made with the SRS review and to provide an outline of the proposed forward business strategy and plan.

Members were recommended to examine the progress made and to evaluate the opportunities for development in the development of the future business strategy for SRS.

In 2014, a report was first brought to Committee detailing the purpose of, and work delivered to date, on the SRS review. The work addressed the problems, solutions, evidence-based business case and a sequential plan to guide activity and actions. In view of the fact that Monmouthshire invested c£2.2-4m in SRS annually, it represented the largest portion of IT spend and it was essential that we understood the nature of the service and the value it yielded to the Council. The review had focused on four main areas:

- Identifying the 'core service' – led by all
- Strategic finance – led by Monmouthshire
- Governance – led by Gwent Police
- Culture/HR/ Leadership – led by Torfaen

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Following presentation of the report, Members were invited to ask questions.

It was thought to be disappointing that there was no top level business plan to explain what was expected and how much it would cost. It was appreciated that a lot of work had been done, but Members would like to see the next level overview. In response the Chief Officer explained that the report had been brought forward in order to provide a snapshot. It was agreed that more detail was needed to provide a bigger picture. Further information was outstanding, but a business plan had been completed for the year ahead. It was necessary to identify if where we needed to be, and where we should be driving SRS.

In response to a query on high costs we were informed that laptops were purchased in blocks of 400, which resulted in a reduced cost of £100 per laptop. It was noted that we did not purchase individual storage drives.

It was explained that costs relating to CCTV of £45,000 were for the management of CCTV which covered 5 members of staff and the support costs for equipment.

In response to a Member query relating to a reduction of email storage capacity, it was confirmed that Members should have unlimited space and this would be checked and corrected.

It was noted that Mounton House were involved in ongoing discussions to obtain provision of higher speed access with less costs. The Chief Operating Officer would provide further information. The Chief Officer for Enterprise confirmed that individual schools were responsible for investing in their individual connectivity needs. Through the Digital Board, the ICT sufficiency was being discussed and a detailed audit of school needs was being carried out. It was heard that the Authority may be making an investment in schools ICT needs.

In summary the Chairman noted that the Committee looked for further clarity and further information on the purpose of SRS. It was thought that the report provided a good insight into the work in progress. The Committee would welcome a business plan be brought to a future meeting, and requested that officers set a date with the Scrutiny Manager.

The Chairman invited County Councillor A. Easson to raise a question as there was no public forum at the special meeting.

The Member raised concerns regarding the principles and focus of Section 106. It was noted that following scrutiny of Section 106 by the Economy and Development Committee of the previous Council, it had been agreed to seek Member representation on a Section 106 working group. It was noted that the requirement had not been fulfilled by the Committee of this Council. The Chairman agreed that when the new Committee convened the item should be added to the agenda, in order to identify representation.

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6. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15 MONTH 9 OUTTURN FORECAST STATEMENT

We received a report in order to provide Members with information on the capital forecast outturn position of the Authority at the end of month 9 for the 2014/15 financial year.

Members were recommended to consider the position concerning 3rd quarter capital monitoring with a revised budget of £16.1 million, month 9 spending of £8.2 million and forecast spend of a further £7.7million in the last 3 months of financial year, to derive an outturn underspend of £187,000.

Also, in light of previous concerns about the level of progress with capital projects that Cabinet considers the slippage levels of £9.1 million identified in Appendix 1, and

- accepts slippage proposals totalling £8,159,000 subject to final outturn position being confirmed
- de-prioritises schemes totalling £771,000 whose funding is of a general nature subject to final outturn position being confirmed:

Property Maintenance Schemes	£185k
Infrastructure Schemes	£218k
ESR Access for All	£136k
General Access for All	£200k
RDP	£ 16k
Cemeteries	£ 15k

- Refers ICT schemes totalling £195,000 whose funding is from the IT transformation reserve to the Digital Board for them to consider whether the scheme should be de-committed or slipped as appropriate in the light of other pressures on the IT transformation Reserve.

It was recommended that Cabinet seek confirmation that practice designed to mitigate the level of slippage going forward in future years would be improved.

Following presentation of the report Members were invited to ask questions.

A Member queried the length of time being taken to resolve the drainage issues at Monmouth Sports Ground. Chief Officer for Enterprise would provide an update via email.

It was confirmed that the slippage for cemeteries had been de-prioritised as the ground had not been identified. Therefore, when the land was found a new bid could be made at a realistic level.

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The Chairman thanked the Officer for the informative report. A request was made for a detailed list of members of the Capital Working Group.

The meeting ended at 11.55am.