



**Neudd y Cyngor
Y Rhadyr
Brynbuga
NP15 1GA**

**County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA**

10 Ionawr 2014

10 January 2014

**Notice of meeting:
Monmouthshire County Council**

***Hysbysiad o gyfarfod:
Cyngor Sir Fynwy***

**Thursday 16th January 2014, at 2.00pm
Council Chamber, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk**

***Dydd Iau 16 Ionawr 2014, am 2.00yp
Siambur y Cyngor, Neuadd y Cyngor, Y Rhadyr, Brynbuga,***

Prayers will be said prior to the Council meeting at 1.55pm. All members are welcome to join the Chairman for prayers should they wish to do.

AGENDA

Item No	Item
1.	Apologies for absence.
2.	Chairman's report and receipt of petitions (page 7)
3.	To receive declarations of interest.
4.	To confirm and sign the minutes of the following meeting: (a) County Council 21st November 2013 (page 9)

<p>5.</p> <p>6.</p> <p>7.</p> <p>8.</p> <p>9.</p> <p>10.</p>	<p>Public Forum items (none received).</p> <p>To receive the minutes of the following meetings: (a) SACRE 18th October 2013 (<i>page 27</i>) (b) Democratic Services Committee 4th November 2013 (<i>page 35</i>) (c) Internal Monitoring Board 17th December 2013 (<i>page 41</i>)</p> <p>To receive the SACRE Annual Report for 2012/13 (<i>page 47</i>)</p> <p>To consider whether to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.</p> <p>Reference from the Strong Communities Select Committee, 28th November 2013 (<i>page 69</i>): Park Street School – Health and Safety Works (call-in of Cabinet Decision 6th November 2013).</p> <p>The following are attached: (a) Report to Cabinet 6th November 2013 (b) Cabinet Decision log (c) Call-in Request (d) Extract from minutes of Strong Communities Select Committee, 28th November 2013 (e) Exempt Background Paper.</p> <p>Notices of motion (a) Submitted by County Councillor D. Blakebrough <i>“ That as Monmouthshire County Council was aware in March/April 2013 that the 1% pay award for school staff was being considered and would have an impact on their budget but failed to inform schools until September 2013 and as this decision communicated at such a late stage in the school financial year could well impact on resources for curriculum development and the rising standards agenda for the young people in Monmouthshire schools, and due to the already significant financial pressures on school budgets and the late communication by Monmouthshire County Council, the council agrees to fund the Monmouthshire schools 1% pay award in full to cover the 7 month period from 1st September 2013 to 31st March 2014”</i></p> <p>(b) Submitted by County Councillor D. Blakebrough <i>‘That this council supports and encourages all young people to participate in post-16 learning, training or work. That policy decisions will be built on a principle of fairness and equity in providing an environment to ensure that all Monmouthshire young people have the opportunity to experience positive post-16 transitions. That in its endeavours to encourage inclusion and prevent isolation this council is resolved to provide continuing support to those young people living in rural communities.’</i></p>
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(c) Submitted by County Councillor D. Batrouni

'That this Council caps hospitality spending at £10,000.'

11. **Report of the Chief Officer: Children and Young Peoples Service**
21st Century Schools Programme (page 83)
12. **Reports of the Chief Officer: Regeneration and Culture**
(a) Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013 (page 359)
(b) MCC Response to Welsh Government M4 Corridor around Newport Consultation (page 377)
13. **Report of the Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer)**
Adoption of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2014/15 (page 385)
14. **Report of the Monitoring Officer**
Family Absence for Members (page 405)
15. **Report of the Head of Improvement and Democracy**
Payment of Mileage for Constituency Responsibilities (page 411)
16. **Members' questions**
(a) From County Councillor J. Crook to County Councillor S.B. Jones, Cabinet Member for County Operations:
"Has there already been instruction to begin implementing the proposed rural street light switch off's as included in the Conservative/Lib Dem budget proposals?"
- (b) From County Councillor S. White to the Leader, County Councillor P.A. Fox**
With reference to Press Release "Gonna be a Green Christmas" dated 3rd December 2013:
- We as a Council put great store by our support to farmers of Monmouthshire. We work with our tenant farmers, to be fair and helpful to landlords. We fought long and hard for our new Livestock Market to give farmers the best venue to market their prized stock.
- Why then did we advocate the people of Monmouthshire should "go veggie" and "give up the turkey"
- Bullet point 3 "Monmouthshire is a major food producer" conflicts wildly with bullet point 5, "go veggie" and "give up the turkey".
- Bullet point 6 "Ditch the Christmas Card" many charities rely on sales of cards each year.
- Where was our Christmas spirit, can I be assured this conflict of interest will never happen again?

(c) From County Councillor D. Batrouni to the Leader, County Councillor P.A. Fox

'Does he support the Coalition government's £1.7bn cut to the Welsh Government budget?'

(d) From County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor P. Murphy, Cabinet Member for Finance

'How much of Nesta Income has been utilised to pay for Dr Thomas' services?'

**Paul Matthews
Chief Executive
*Prif Weithredwr***

***I Gadeirydd ac Aelodau
Cyngor Sir Fynwy***

**To the Chairman and Members of
Monmouthshire County Council**

Aims and values of Monmouthshire County Council

Connecting with people

Our outcomes

The Council has agreed five whole population outcomes. These are *People in Monmouthshire will*:

- Live safely and are protected from harm
- Live healthy and fulfilled lives
- Benefit from education, training and skills development
- Benefit from an economy which is prosperous and supports enterprise and sustainable growth
- Benefit from an environment that is diverse, vibrant and sustainable

Our priorities

- Schools
- Protection of vulnerable people
- Supporting enterprise, job creation and entrepreneurship

Values

- * **Openness:** we aspire to be open and honest to develop trusting relationships.
- * **Fairness:** we aspire to provide fair choice, opportunities and experiences and become an organisation built on mutual respect.
- * **Flexibility:** we aspire to be flexible in our thinking and action to become an effective and efficient organisation.
- * **Teamwork:** we aspire to work together to share our successes and failures by building on our strengths and supporting one another to achieve our goals.

Cysylltu gyda phobl

Ein canlyniadau

Mae'r Cyngor wedi cytuno ar bum canlyniad ar gyfer yr holl boblogaeth, sef y bydd pobl yn Sir Fynwy yn:

- Byw'n ddiogel a chael eu diogelu rhag niwed
- Byw bywydau iach a chrwn
- Manteisio o addysg, hyfforddiant a datblygu sgiliau
- Manteisio o economi sy'n llewyrchus ac sy'n cefnogi menter a thwf cynaliadwy
- Manteisio o amgylchedd amrywiol, egniol a chynaliadwy

Ein blaenoriaethau

- Ysgolion
- Diogelu pobl agored i niwed
- Cefnogi menter, creu swyddi ac entrepreneuriaeth

Gwerthoedd

- **Didwylledd:** ein huchelgais yw bod yn agored ac onest i ddatblygu cysylltiadau dibynadwy.
- **Tegwch:** ein huchelgais yw darparu dewis, cyfleoedd a phrofiadau teg a dyfod yn gorff sydd wedi ei seilio ar barch.
- **Hyblygrwydd:** ein huchelgais yw meddwl a gweithredu mewn ffordd hyblyg er mwyn dod yn gorff effeithiol ac effeithlon.
- **Cydweithrediad:** ein huchelgais yw gweithio ar y cyd i rannu'n llwyddiannau a'n diffygion trwy adeiladu ar ein cryfderau a chynorthwyo'n gilydd i gyflawni'n hamcanion.

CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS

Festival of Flowers entitled 'Advent to Candlemas' Preview Evening St Mary's Priory, Abergavenny	Wednesday 20 th November 7 p.m.
Age Cymru – Spread the Warmth Winter Concert Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Cardiff	Thursday 28 th November 7 p.m.
Monmouthshire Livestock Centre Croes Bychan, Bryngwym	Friday 29 th November 11 a.m.
Light up a Life Service 2013 Chepstow Methodist Church	Thursday 5 th December 7 p.m.
South Monmouthshire Music Centre Christmas Concert – GMS Chepstow Leisure Centre	Monday 9 th December 6.30 p.m.
HRH The Prince of Wales visit to Abergavenny	Friday 13 th December
North Monmouthshire Music Centre Christmas Concert Monmouth Leisure Centre	Friday 13 th December 7 p.m.
Annual Awards Ceremony for post 16 pupils Caldicot School	Friday 20 th December 1.15 p.m.
Greater Gwent Youth Brass Band Annual Concert Bassaleg Comprehensive School	Sunday 5 th January 3.30 p.m.

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

PRESENT: County Councillor D.L.S. Dovey, (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Batrouni, D. Blakebrough, R.F. Chapman, P.R. Clarke, J.E. Crook, G.L. Down, A. Easson, D.L. Edwards, R. Edwards, P.S. Farley, P.A. Fox, R.J.W. Greenland, L. Guppy, E.J. Hackett Pain, R.G. Harris, R.J.C. Hayward, M. Hickman, R.J. Higginson, P.A.D. Hobson, G. Howard, S.G.M. Howarth, D.W.H. Jones, P. Jones, S.B. Jones, R.P. Jordan, P. Murphy, M. Powell, J.L. Prosser, V.E. Smith, B. Strong, F. Taylor, A.C. Watts, P.A. Watts, A.E. Webb, S. White and A.M. Wintle.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. P. Matthews	Chief Executive
Mrs. M. Wilkinson	Deputy Chief Executive
Mr. S.M.W. Andrews	Monitoring Officer
Ms. S. McGuinness	Chief Officer: Children and Young Peoples Service
Mr. R. Hoggins	Head of Infrastructure Networks and Sustainability
Mr. S. Kneafsey	21 st Century Schools Programme Manager
Mrs. J. Morris	21 st Century Schools Client Liaison Officer
Ms. C. Sheen	21 st Century Schools Client Liaison Officer
Mrs. N. Wellington	Finance Manager
Mr. J. Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Mr. W. McLean	Head of Strategic Partnerships
Mrs. L. O’Gorman	Principal Licensing Officer
Mr. G. Perry	Public Protection Manager
Mrs. S. King	Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors G.C. Burrows, D.J. Evans, J. George, S. Jones, J.I. Marshall and K.G. Williams.

2. CHAIRMANS REPORT AND RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

The Chairman had attended a number of events during the Autumn, details of which were included in the minutes of the last meeting.

The Chairman provided information regarding the White Ribbon Campaign and details were provided by the Chief Officer Social Care and Health:

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

'In 1999 the UN recognised 25th November as international day for elimination of violence against women, the white ribbon is the symbol for hope for a world where women and girls can live free from violence, wearing the ribbon is about challenging acceptability of violence by getting men involved, helping women break silence and encouraging everyone to come together to build a better world. It was recognised that County Councillors were supportive of work around domestic violence, particularly Councillor Hobson as Chairman of the steering group and Councillors D. Blakebrough, L. Guppy, S. Jones and F. Taylor as champions. In Gwent collaborative work has been undertaken to ensure strong coordinated approach to prevention. Members were invited to:

- 1) Sign the white ribbon – which will be displayed at Gwent Conference in December.
- 2) Wear the badge with pride to show personal commitment to the issue.

The absence of the Domestic Abuse Officer was noted and the Chairman conveyed congratulations on the birth of her daughter.

The Chairman informed Council that this was the last meeting that would be attended by the Deputy Chief Executive and announcements were invited from group leaders. In summary, members expressed sincere thanks and gratitude to the Officer and commended the excellent dedication during her time at Monmouthshire County Council. Council wished the Deputy Chief Executive the very best for the future.

The following petition was presented:

- Councillor S. White presented a petition regarding no double yellow lines in Goldwire Lane and Somerset Road, Monmouth.

The petition would be passed to the Chief Officer for Regeneration and Culture as the appropriate Chief Officer and it would be a matter for her or one of her colleagues to prepare a report for the relevant committee or cabinet.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest are recorded under the relevant minute heading.

4. MINUTES

- (a) We resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 26th September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, with the following amendment:

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

- Page 20, question from County Councillor F. Taylor, penultimate paragraph should read 'County Councillor reiterated the question for clarification that Cabinet made the decisions for the other Members to follow'.

Councillor F. Taylor informed the meeting that the purpose of the action sheet was to decide where actions were required from discussions held at Council. It was requested that an Officer was associated with the action relating to Thornwell School. It was suggested that an additional column was added to note progress of the action.

Councillor F. Taylor also raised that there was no action arising following significant deliberations in relation to dog fouling, it was requested that an action was added for Cabinet to sympathetically consider the issue.

County Councillor A. Watts sought clarification with regard to timing for phase 2 of Thornwell school. The Cabinet Member advised that information would be provided to Councillor Watts.

- (b) We resolved that the minutes of the special meeting of the County Council held on 16th October 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, with the following amendment:

- Pages 2 to 7 (inclusive) Header should read 'Minutes of the Special Meeting of Monmouthshire County Council' and not Children and Young People Select Committee.

County Councillor D. Blakebrough enquired as to whether the CMC² Business Plan would be presented to the Economy and Development Select Committee. We were advised that it was the intention for the report to go to the select committee but it would be a matter for the Chairman of Economy and Development Select to decide.

County Councillor A. Wintle requested that appropriate language was used in presenting items on the agenda and definition was sought regarding the use of the word 'Ethnographic' (page 7). Council were informed that the term related to a research approach which allowed for understanding a variety of issues that individuals encounter.

5. PUBLIC FORUM ITEMS

None received.

6. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR J. PROSSER

(a) Community Armed Forces Covenant

We received a report from County Councillor J. Prosser, which advised of activities surrounding the role as Representative to the Reserve Forces and Cadets

Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.

Association (RFCA) and the evolution of Armed Forces. The report highlighted the following:

- What Monmouthshire County Council and other Local Authorities have been doing.
- Community Covenant Grants - project applications submitted via a panel. Success includes 69k award for an off-road project in Monmouth.
- Welcome more projects via applications for local grant.
- New Armed Forces Forum – Welsh Government encouraged health boards to convene forum, of various representatives, in line with the priority of health and wellbeing of military veterans. Council asked to approve Terms of Reference.
- On Going Initiatives - to develop website and contact pages to access contact details. Need to ensure compliance with declared intent on the Armed Forces Covenant.
- Need to approve draft Terms of Reference and use of champion and lead officer title.
- Members generally expressed support for the report and it was noted that it would be brought to the attention of head teachers of schools.

We resolved to agree recommendations:

- To receive the report on the RFCA and Armed Forces Covenant.
- To approve the draft terms of reference of the Aneurin Bevan Health Board Armed Forces Forum.
- To approve use of titles of “Armed Forces Champion and Lead Officer” as referred in the terms of reference.

(b) Review of Area Committees

We received a report which updated members on the outcome of the Review of Area Committees meeting held on 11th November 2013.

Council were provided with the background that the review was established following a motion at Council in 2010, to improve effectiveness of area committees. Activities were reviewed which included aspects, training, community council involvement and embracing public at meetings.

Issues were discussed in early November and reviewed performance with councillors and Area Services Officers. It was felt that Areas Committees should evolve into effective models using Whole Place Plan and evolve in line with models, town team and programme board in Abergavenny.

Members were invited to comment on the report and during discussion the following points were noted:

- Council thanked Councillor Prosser for presenting the report and it was recognised that a different approach was required in relation to area committees and engagement.

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

- It was noted that recommendation 2.7 related to working groups and members felt it was evident that the Joint Severnside and Lower Wye Rail Working Group should be deliberated at a more strategic level. Concerns were expressed if the work of the group was not included within proposed changes. Further points were raised regarding transport within the whole place approach.
- Discussions were held regarding recommendation 2.2, reduction of £15 Environment/Capital fund to £5k per area. Members were reluctant to approve the recommendation as the money had provided assistance to local groups. Particular concerns were raised in relation to developing a budget in sections.
- Clarification was provided that the £15k was allocation of funds for capital grants and the revenue budget would not be affected, the issue could be considered within the Medium Term Financial Plan. Historically, there was £15k revenue grant and £15k capital for each area working budget, however, the revenue amount was depleted within the budget several years ago.
- Council recognised the importance of engagement at an area level, however, it was generally felt that area committees may not be the best channel.
- Clarification was provided in relation to recommendation 2.4, accept there is vehicle for change for engagement. The committee had discussed models that were in place where adjustments could be made to area committees and engagement could evolve.
- It was suggested that there was a need to look at grant funding on a wider scale and how assistance was provided, as there were a number of small grant funds available, which could be more beneficial in one central pot.
- Further detailed information was requested regarding costs of area committee.
- Councillor P. Murphy proposed an amendment to recommendation 2.2, to add *subject to consideration within the Medium Term Financial Plan Capital Grant*, which was duly seconded.
- We agreed to add that the Joint Rail Working Group was included in future deliberations surrounding area working.

We resolved to agree recommendations and amendment as follows:

- 2.1 Engagement must continue.
- 2.2 Reduce £15k Environment/Capital Fund to £5k per area, total saving £40k subject to consideration within the Medium Term Financial Plan Capital Grant.
- 2.3 Head of Strategic Partnerships to develop and evolve Area Committees using North Mon Liaison and Whole Place models, Lower Wye/Severnside Joint Rail Working Group to be evolved and included in future deliberations regarding area working.
- 2.4 Accept that there is vehicle for change for engagement.
- 2.5 Recognise that there may not be capacity of officers to service all area committees in the future.
- 2.6 Reduce frequency of meetings to quarterly per year.
- 2.7 Working Groups operating within the remit of Area Committees would report to the Chair of the appropriate Area Committee.
- 2.8 Wherever possible free venues to be used for area committee meeting.
- 2.9 With the evolution of the Democratic Services Committee it was felt that the Review of Area Committees had completed its task and in future discussions

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

relating to area committees could be considered by the Democratic Services Committee.

7. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

County Councillor L .Guppy declared a personal interest under the Members Code of Conduct in item 7(c) as an LEA governor of Caldicot School.

County Councillors R.P. Jordan and M. Powell declared a personal interest under the Members Code of Conduct in item 7(c) as a governor of King Henry VIII School.

County Councillor S.G.M. Howarth declared a personal prejudicial interest under the Members Code of Conduct in item 7(c) should the discussion involve the specific school that his children attended.

We resolved that the following minutes be received:

- a) Standards Committee 3rd October 2013
- b) Democratic Services Committee 23rd September 2013
- c) Internal Monitoring Board 6th November 2013

In receiving these minutes, the following points were discussed:

Standards Committee 3rd October 2013

Councillor Crook enquired as to whether the electronic version of the gifts and hospitality register would be published. The Monitoring Officer advised that a further report would be received by the Standards Committee in January 2014, before a decision would be made.

Democratic Services Committee 23rd September 2013

Clarification was requested regarding progress regarding live streaming of meetings. Council were informed that some technical problems still had to be addressed, it was anticipated that live streaming could begin in a few months.

It was suggested that recommendations could be summarised within the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee.

8. NOTICES OF MOTION

a) Energy switch scheme

The following motion was moved by County Councillor D. Batrouni and seconded:

“That this Council develop and launches an energy switch scheme to utilise the collective buying power of Monmouthshire residents to get better deals for them from energy companies.”

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

In moving the motion Councillor Batrouni highlighted the following points:

- Energy prices and fuel poverty on the rise, people have to decide whether to buy food or keep properties warm.
- Use collective power to better negotiate energy deals, hopefully, to reduce fuel bills.
- Many models, examples and different ways for Local Authorities to operate scheme, either collaboratively or individual scheme.
- Examples of possible savings, Norwich Council per resident signed to scheme saved £164 per year. Surrey saved £250 per resident. Cornwall saved annually £3.7 million across households and business.
- Potential for Monmouthshire County Council to open the offer to homes and also businesses.
- Understand some work has been done but wanted to open discussion via agenda.

During the debate the following items were raised:

- Recognised that the Cyd Cymru collective switching scheme was being led by Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Councils, which any organisation could become a partner.
- In general, members felt that Monmouthshire County Council should sign up to a collective switching scheme, further investigation would be required as to whether individual or collaborative scheme would be beneficial.
- The Cabinet Member advised that collective switching is a new direction recently taken by English authorities. A significant amount of work had been undertaken by the sustainability team. Through research it had been discovered that schemes do not necessarily guarantee the best deal and consumers are advised to shop around whilst signing up.
- It was confirmed that Monmouthshire County Council had signed up to the Cyd Cymru scheme and Monmouthshire residents would be able to sign up from 15th December 2013. Progress had not been reported at an earlier stage as developments had to be confirmed.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor P.A.D. Hobson and duly seconded:

The Council is to be congratulated on its work in investigating an energy switching scheme to utilise the collective buying power of Monmouthshire residents to get better deal for electricity and gas supplies. In so doing, that this Council does not develop its own energy switching scheme, but instead encourages residents to register for the all Wales scheme "CYD Cymru" being promoted by the Welsh Government. Success in energy switching schemes can be better achieved by maximising the numbers invited to join the scheme, for which residents can now apply to join.

Members debated the amendment:

- Support was expressed for the amendment.
- Council thanked Councillor Batrouni for raising the motion.

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

- Councillors requested clarification from Cabinet Members why information had not been provided at an earlier date, it was felt that all members should have received details of the scheme prior to the going live date. In response it was noted that information was available if members required and joining an existing collective switching scheme was the best option for the authority.
- It was requested that as an action, every County Councillor and Town/Community Council received information regarding the scheme and information was also contained in local leaflets.
- Council were advised that the media department would issue a press release and information would be publicly available.
- Councillor Batrouni agreed to withdraw the original motion.

On being put to the vote we resolved that the amendment be carried.

The Council is to be congratulated on its work in investigating an energy switching scheme to utilise the collective buying power of Monmouthshire residents to get better deal for electricity and gas supplies. In so doing, that this Council does not develop its own energy switching scheme, but instead encourages residents to register for the all Wales scheme "CYD Cymru" being promoted by the Welsh Government. Success in energy switching schemes can be better achieved by maximising the numbers invited to join the scheme, for which residents can now apply to join.

b) Severn Bridge Tolls

The following motion was moved by County Councillor R.J. Higginson and seconded:

" That this Council writes to the Westminster Government deploring the fact that again, an increase to the Severn Estuary tolls will cause additional costs to those companies within Wales who are already suffering from energy amongst other substantial price increases which, in turn reduces their competitiveness compared to companies in England . Also, the additional cost to commuters who, having to travel over the bridges for their employment again suffer the effects of another increased "tax" upon their family's income. Appreciating the fact that there is an act allowing increases year upon year, the time has come for Government intervention to prevent these increases escalating out of all proportion and harming the Welsh industry and hence economy."

In moving the motion, Councillor Higginson highlighted the following points:

- Severn Bridges are main gateways into Wales. Year on year charges are being increased and action needs to be taken.
- Cost to the public in Wales, public transport bus Bristol to Chepstow – paying per journey, considerable amount of money per day.
- Ask that Council supports the motion that a letter is sent to Westminster as something needs to be done.

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

During the debate the following issues were raised:

- Support for the motion was expressed and the Council recognised that it was a social issue, which impacted on lives and jobs.
- We noted that the questions had been submitted to the Lower Wye and Severnside Area Committees, which had both expressed support for the issue.
- Concerns were expressed that tolls in parts of England were significantly less than those charged on the Severn Bridges. There was a requirement for tolls to be reduced to a reasonable cost and local, Welsh and National Government should be contacted regarding the issue.
- Concerns were expressed that the tolls were a disincentive for companies to invest in Wales. There was a requirement for Wales to have free and easy access to encourage investment.
- A member highlighted that it was the Council policy for Cabinet to proactively campaign for the situation and it was requested that activity was increased.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor P.A.D. Hobson and duly seconded:

'That this Council writes to the relevant UK Government Minister and the CEO of Severn River Crossings plc deploring the fact that again, an increase to the Severn Estuary Tolls will cause additional cost to those companies trading in Wales who are already suffering from increased energy and fuel costs which reduces their competitiveness compared to companies in England. We recognise the provisions of the Severn Bridges Act 1992, which sets a mechanism to increase tolls on annual basis by the prevailing RPI. We call upon the UK Government to start now to engage with local communities here in Monmouthshire and other directly affected areas, regarding the future ownership and management of the Severn Bridges in preparation for the end of the current concession term.'

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried, became the substantive motion, and was carried.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET

(a) Raglan School Project

County Councillor P. Jones declared a personal interest under the Members Code of Conduct as the Ward Member and a LEA School Governor of Raglan Primary School.

We received the Raglan School Project report which sought Council approval to proceed with the development of a new 210 place Primary School, in Raglan, to replace the existing buildings, following Welsh Government approval of a Business Justification Case under the 21st Century Schools Programme.

In introducing the report we were advised that Welsh Government had supported the bid for a new school at Raglan and agreed to pay 50% of the project costs within 21st

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

Century Schools scheme and Monmouthshire County Council would be required to find the other 50%.

Members raised the following points:

- Further information was requested regarding the 21st Century School status and further assurance was required that all schools would become 21st Century Schools and would meet the required criteria.
- In response it was noted that, Raglan School was part of the educational strategic review which had been on-going for 12 years. Extra funding was part of the bid and would be received earlier than anticipated. A member seminar would be held in relation to 21st Century Schools and the approach to the school programme.
- Clarification was requested regarding the procurement process. We were informed that the appropriate process had been adhered to and officers could provide additional details, if required.

We resolved:

- That the inclusion of a capital budget of £4.5 million for the Raglan project within the Council's Capital Programme, as part of Monmouthshire's Band A, 21st Century School Programme, and split over the 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 financial years in line with project requirements,
- That funding for 50% of the project costs will be found from a combination of capital receipts and prudential borrowing.
- To agree to commencing the project in 2013/14, with a view to completing the school by September 2015.

(b) Scrutiny and Executive Protocol

Council were presented with the Scrutiny and Executive protocol which provided guidance to elected Members and Officers on the procedural elements underpinning the Scrutiny and Executive relationship.

In introducing the report we were advised that the protocol had been received by Cabinet and required ratification at Council. The protocol outlined how scrutiny and executive functions could work in conjunction for best results and for clarity.

A review of scrutiny had been undertaken by the Wales Audit Office in 2006 and a further review was undertaken in 2010 which included recommendations to develop procedures.

Members raised the following points:

- The Scrutiny Manager was commended following work undertaken on the protocol and in developing scrutiny at Monmouthshire County Council.
- The protocol outlined the process to follow and adhere to.
- Members were encouraged to develop scrutiny in the future through attendance at meetings, challenge and decision making process.

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

- Support was expressed for the protocol and it was recognised as a vital part of Council business.
- Clarification was requested regarding Cabinet Member and Officer attendance at meetings and whether a scrutiny committee could exclude particular witnesses. Further clarification was also required regarding whether it was appropriate for witnesses to leave the room following discussions and if members of the press and public should also leave.
- In response, it was felt that scrutiny committees should be in control of their business and should have the right to invite witnesses as and when required and at their discretion. Exclusions would only be possible if press and public were also excluded and would have to be subject to proper grounds. Protocol could say that witnesses do not take part in deliberations of the committee and leave the floor.
- It was highlighted that the protocol had been considered by the Democratic Services Committee and would be subject to further consideration at Council, as part of the review of constitution.
- Discussions may be more appropriate when relevant officers would be available.
- Council were informed that the protocol was not exhaustive and in practice could be amended.
- Scrutiny Committee timetables for a call-in would be set in conjunction with Scrutiny Manager, the Chair, Officers and Cabinet member. Witnesses would be invited as and when required, however, the Cabinet Member and report author would be included.
- It was clarified that members of the executive should leave the meeting once evidence has been submitted at a scrutiny committee, as they are in attendance as invited witnesses.
- We noted that significant progress had been made in relation to the Council and Cabinet Forward Planner and updates.
- It was recognised that the protocol may have teething problems which could be addressed, however, in general the process was adoptable.

Note: Councillor A. Easson left the meeting at 4.13pm.

We resolved:

- 2.1 To endorse the 'Scrutiny and Executive protocol' to strengthen the interface and outline working parameters.
- 2.2 To approve the protocol and agree its inclusion in the revised constitution.

10. REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICE

County Councillor D.L. Edwards declared a personal interest under the Members Code of Conduct in item 10(a) as a School Governor of King Henry VIII School, Abergavenny.

County Councillor L. Guppy declared a personal interest under the Members Code of Conduct in item 10(a) should the discussion involve the specific school attended by her child.

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

(a) Prepared to Succeed – Interim Report

We were presented with the Interim Report from the Chief Officer: Children and Young Peoples Service. It was emphasised to members that this was not the annual report and that would be published annually in April, when results information had been validated.

The Interim Report was presented as a timely update, which would ensure transparency and clarity for members. The report contained early observations and thanks were expressed to the Cabinet Member and colleagues in the directorate. In conjunction with the Cabinet Member, concepts had been supported and embedded and were leading education jointly.

Facts were included in the report, along with links to the single integrated plan, performance information, school improvement, commission school improvement service and developments in the 21st Century Schools Programme.

The Directorate structure was at full complement, following recruitment of three Heads of Service.

Members raised the following points:

- Typing errors were identified on Pages 102 and 103, extended and reflection respectively.
- Council conveyed thanks for a readable and informative report and commended the officer for work that had been undertaken in developing the service since taking up post.
- Particular concern was recognised regarding issues surrounding the social inclusion gap and it was identified that Monmouthshire were lower than the Welsh average in achievement of children from poorer families.
- Flying Start had been established in targeted areas and social inclusion should be prioritised for delivery. It was requested that narrowing the gap was explicitly included within the social inclusion aspect. In response, it was highlighted that narrowing the gap was a crucial aspect of the education service and this had been reduced by 11% in the previous financial year. All schools have dedicated group targets and this aspect would be high on the list of priorities.
- Council recognised the importance of parental input, which was important in education of children. It was a focus of the education service to embrace families as well as children as they had been identified as the first educators of children.
- A question was raised regarding the financial contribution to the educational achievement service, and how funds were distributed and what scrutiny was undertaken. The Educational Achievement Service (EAS) was vital to Monmouthshire County Council and across the South East Wales consortium and the financial contribution is significant. Quality assurance framework is in place to discuss data and provide opportunity for challenge.
- A member confirmed that a joint scrutiny panel for the EAS had been established and representatives were County Councillors P. Farley and R.P. Jordan. However, it was noted that the position was not satisfactory as the panel had not yet met as a complete panel. Officers and members were urged to progress the position.

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

- Council were advised that since the time of writing the report, Caldicot Comprehensive Schools was included in the first quartile for secondary schools.
- Further information would be welcomed within the annual report, particularly in relation to clarity of interventions that are working and changing educational achievement and attainment. Significant concern for the authority would be where schools had performed lower than average. Further information was welcomed regarding the increased demand on Welsh education and how the 2016 deadline would be staged.
- There was a requirement to develop secondary level, but continued focus was needed at primary level. Interested in how the authority responds to the ministers' curriculum review, response to narrowing attainment gap and how members contribute and understand it.
- Details were requested in relation to how the pupil deprivation grant was spent across schools in improving attainment and achievement, particularly as the future budget would be doubled per pupil, specifically supporting children on receipt of free school meals.
- In response to all points, members were thanked for comments and informed that schools were being challenged and there would be continued focus at Primary level. The on-going curriculum review would close on 17th January 2014 and contributions could be made through the Welsh Government website, Monmouthshire would respond across the South East Wales consortium. Clarification on budget questions could be provided by finance officers and clarity would be required from schools regarding the pupil deprivation grant.
- Further work was on-going by the school improvement service and focus was required regarding the transition from Key Stage 2 to KS3 and there was a requirement to understand where the gap had widened.
- There would be a need to ensure that young people have access to quality vocational qualifications and the curriculum would have to be considered, but statutory provision would have to be taken into account. Opportunity for schools to creatively respond to the needs of the community.

We resolved to receive the report.

Note: County Councillors R.F. Chapman, D.L. Edwards, M. Hickman, R.P. Jordan and M. Powell left the meeting at 5:10pm.

We agreed to a 5 minute adjournment and the meeting reconvened at 5.15pm.

(b) Request for funding and inclusion in the Capital Programme for sewerage diversion works at Thornwell Primary School

We received a report which sought member approval to include sewerage diversion works at Thornwell Primary School and funding to undertake the work.

In presenting the report we were advised that there is a necessity to divert sewer and capital budget to be approved as not currently provided for. Welsh Water stipulated that sewer must be diverted, agreement made that diversion works undertaken when new building completed, end of 2014, formalised with build over agreement.

Members raised the following points:

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

- A query was raised as to why the issue was not identified earlier in the project. We were advised that any school that required building work will have support of member working group, which are established so that at various times through school work the members will be informed. Meetings would be usually set to members discretion and information provided at various intervals.
- Members expressed support for the report as the need to build the school was recognised. However, clarification was required regarding whether the matter could have been identified as a problem. In response, it was unfortunate matter that came about with any building project when first started and things become more apparent than it was at the beginning. The issue was not related to an oversight and had come to light through investigative works, which were part of the process.
- Clarification was requested regarding the significant contingency amount. Council were advised that the contingency amount highlighted that Welsh Water had not provided a fixed price for the job and it was felt that the figure was adequate to cover extra over claims that may be submitted.
- Members were informed that as the sewer was owned by Welsh Water, they had the prerogative to decide whether to undertake the work themselves, which in this case they would carry out.

We resolved to agree that a budget of £349k is funded using the capital receipt from the sale of the caretaker's bungalow and available Authority capital funding brought forward from 2012/13.

Note: Councillor F. Taylor left the meeting at 5.22pm.

11. REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER: REGENERATION AND CULTURE

We received the report which considered the Authority's approach to the revocation of Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Drivers License.

County Councillor R.J. Higginson moved an amendment which was duly seconded to, delegate power to the Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokesperson.

Upon being put to the vote the amendment was not carried.

We resolved:

- 1) Delegate to the Chair and Vice Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee the power (for either of them) to determine (upon written report from officers) whether a decision regarding the potential revocation of a taxi driver's licence should be made as a matter of urgency or referred to the Committee.
- 2) To delegate to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee, the power (for either of them) to revoke a Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Drivers Licence.
- 3) Delegate to the Chair and Vice Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee the power (for either of them) to determine (upon written report from officers) whether an application to reinstate a licence following revocation should be referred to Committee or dealt with without delay.

Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.

- 4) To delegate to the Chair or Vice Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee, the power (for either of them) to reinstate a licence following revocation.
- 5) The policy set out in the appendix to this report entitled "Policy To Accept a New Application for a Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Drivers Licence Following Revocation", is adopted.

12. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

We received a report which considered a response to the Welsh Government's consultation paper relating to the proposed list of public service providers to be included in the Designated Persons Order (No. 1) under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

In presenting the report we were informed that the report had been received by relevant scrutiny chairs and the closing date for responses was 21st November 2013.

Members raised the following points:

- Specifically add that the Ambulance Service falls within the NHS trust.
- Clarification was provided that Welsh Government recognised the collaborative working approach and there would be an advantage to public services delivered in Monmouthshire being the subject of scrutiny by elected members.
- The Designated Persons Order outlines the right to scrutinise partners and key outcomes would be the ability to scrutinise partner agencies who had signed up to a single integrated plan.

We resolved that Members considered the comments of the Select Chairs and provided further views on the specific questions raised for submission to the Welsh Government.

13. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF IMPROVEMENT AND DEMOCRACY

We received a report which informed all Council members of executive member portfolio changes made by the leader on 16th October 2013.

We resolved to note the changes made to executive member's delegated portfolio responsibilities effective as of 16th October 2013.

14. REPORT OF THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY MANAGER

County Councillors P.R. Clarke, J.E. Crook, D. Edwards, P.S. Farley, P.A. Fox, L. Guppy, R.G. Harris, R.J.C. Hayward, R.J. Higginson, P.A.D. Hobson, G. Howard, S.G.M. Howarth, P. Jones D.W.H. Jones, R.P. Jordan, P. Murphy, B. Strong, A.C. Watts, P.A. Watts and S. White declared personal interests under the Members Code of Conduct as Community and/or Town Councillors.

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

We received a report which sought Council approval to publish, and commence consultation on, the draft proposals for the community and electoral arrangements in Monmouthshire.

In presenting the report, we were advised that there was a duty under Local Government act 1972 to keep under review boundary and electoral arrangements of communities within Monmouthshire.

In order to ensure compliance we agreed in July 2012 that a review would be undertaken and a politically balanced member working group was established, to formulate the draft.

12 week consultation commenced and representations were invited from stakeholders, which were considered during formulation of draft proposals. Working group reviewed communities and formulated draft proposals within the document.

Summary of proposals - under existing arrangements currently 33 community councils with 119 community wards represented by 356 community councillors. Proposed arrangements 31 community councils (reduction of 2), 118 community wards (reduction of 2) and 287 community councillors (reduction of 69). Draft proposals would see abolition or mergers or various wards, proposed new community councils in some areas. One notable inclusion is Magor promoted to Town, from Community Council.

Next step would be consultations for everyone with an interest to make representation.

Members raised the following points:

- Council expressed thanks to the Local Democracy Manager and he was commended for compiling the report.
- Not necessary for all elected members to raise individual points as adequate consultation period will provide opportunity.
- We were advised that new properties had been developed in areas, i.e. Gilwern and Magor/Undy, which would need to be included.
- It was requested that dates for consultation were provided, it was agreed that these would be sent by email.
- In relation to the Magor/Undy area, there had been lack of local knowledge and the Cabinet Member welcomed the opportunity to visit the area in order to understand the community.
- We were advised that each community would have the opportunity to discuss proposals for the area and will be covered during the consultation period.

We resolved:

- 1) To receive the draft proposals formulated by the working group for the Review of Communities and Electoral Arrangements.
- 2) To approve publication of the draft proposals for further consultation.
- 3) To note that final proposals will be received in relation to this review in the next financial year.

Note: Councillor R.J. Higginson left the meeting at 5.53pm.

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

15. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

(a) From County Councillor D. Batrouni to the Leader, County Councillor P.A. Fox

"What is his view on the alternative budget put forth by the Conservative group in the Welsh Assembly?"

In response Councillor Fox advised that the issue had been discussed at a national level and an alternative budget had not been submitted. The budget had been considered at the Welsh Government and views had been expressed regarding areas of discontent. Concerns would be raised in due course, however, there was no alternative budget to reflect on.

As a supplementary, Councillor Batrouni asked if the leader agreed with the predicted budget 12% cuts to education.

In response, Councillor Fox advised that he did not agree with the level of cuts and did not agree with Wales underfunding education. There would be challenging decisions ahead and the Welsh Government would have discretion to prioritise where they feel necessary.

(b) From County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor G. Howard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Public Services and Housing

"Can he update us on how many tenants in social housing have been served with eviction notices as a result of rent arrears accrued due to the bedroom tax?"

In response, Councillor Howard advised that there were nil properties.

There was no supplementary question.

(c) From County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor G.C.Burrows, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health & Leisure

"Does the Cabinet member responsible for Childrens' Services agree that the recent public response made by the Association of Chief Officers for Childrens' Services in Wales when answering concerns raised in the media about the welfare of children and young people placed out of area was wholly inadequate and does the Cabinet Member agree that written procedures alone are meaningless unless;

- a. they comply with all legal requirements and responsibilities and*
- b. managers at all levels ensure that they are constantly carried out in everyday professional practice?"*

Can the Cabinet member give assurances that we have the staff time and qualitative supervision in place to ensure our adherence in practice to both the letter and the spirit of the relevant legislation and the guidance set out under the following:

Sections 25(8), 27(4) & 28(4) of the Children Act 2004

Section 7 of the Local Authority Social services Act 1970"

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 21st November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.**

In addition, Councillor Batrouni added that in the absence of Councillor Burrows, a written report would be acceptable.

In response, Councillor Fox advised that a written reply had been prepared which would be distributed.

There was no supplementary question.

(d) Councillor P. Farley County Councillor P. Farley to the Leader, County Councillor P. Fox:

“Please detail both the range and extent of the statutory and regulatory service provision requirements placed on the authority for services within the areas of responsibility of all members of the Cabinet.

A written response is acceptable but if you choose to reply verbally please also provide a written reply.”

In response, Councillor Fox advised that a written report would be provided.

There was no supplementary question.

The meeting ended 6.05 pm

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on
Religious Education held at Innovation House, Magor
Friday 18th October 2013 at 1:30pm**

PRESENT: County Councillors: E.J. Hacket Pain and P.Watts.

Representing the Church In Wales

Mrs V. Howells

Representing the Free Churches

Revd. Dr. P. Baines

Representing the Bahá'í Faith

Mrs S. Cave

Representing the Muslim Faith

Mrs F. Jilani

Representing the Sikh Faith

Mrs N. Baicher JP

Representatives of the Teachers' Associations:

Mrs S. Perry Phillips

Mrs A.R Wiggins

Co – opted Member:

Mrs K. Fitter

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs D. Mountfield	-	
Ms. G. Vaisey	-	Religious Education Consultant
Mrs E. Tapper	-	Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors P. Clarke, D. Hughes – Jones and B. Strong. Apologies for absence were also received from Ngakma S. Chatral, representing the Buddhist Faith, Mr S Sharma, representing the Hindu Faith, and Ms C. Cooper and Mrs J. Thomas, representing the Teachers Associations. We welcomed Mrs Kay Fitter, Higher Level Teaching Assistant at Goytre Fawr Primary School to her first SACRE Committee meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on Friday 7th June 2013 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

**Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on
Religious Education, Friday 18th October 2013 continued**

4. UPDATES

• **INCERTS**

The RE Consultant advised that the Foundation Phase outcomes for Religious Education remained pending.

• **ARTEFACT LOAN SERVICE**

We welcomed notice that the artefact loan service was being utilised well by schools but it could still be used more frequently. In response to a request from the School Library Service, the RE Consultant agreed to provide the SLS with support and training to maximise the use of the religious artefacts. Members of the Teachers Associations felt that it would be beneficial for a nominated teacher to attend the training session in the use of religious artefacts, to be held during a school day.

5. INFORMATION BRIEFINGS

Mrs A Wiggins, representing the Teachers' Associations, advised the Committee that schools were required to incorporate the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework into Religious Education lessons. There was consensus that where numeracy did not naturally enhance or compliment Religious Education lessons it should not be included. Members of the Teachers' Associations stated that training was required to ensure effective delivery of Literacy and Numeracy teaching.

Mrs F. Jilani advised the Committee that a class of year 4 pupils from Blaina Primary School had visited Blaina Mosque and had participated in and enjoyed an informative workshop and photographic opportunities. A further visit from year 6 pupils had also been planned. Mrs Jilani extended an invitation to Monmouthshire schools to visit Blaina Mosque. The SACRE Chairman expressed her thanks to Mrs Jilani and agreed to raise this at the forthcoming Head Teachers' Conference.

Mrs S. Cave, representing the Bahá'í Faith, informed the Committee that a Universal House of Justice Conference was held at Warwick University. It was one of 114 conferences held throughout the world. It was attended by approximately 1000 Bahá'í youth and their friends, including some from Wales. The youngsters were from diverse backgrounds and came together for youth-led discussions and workshops to enable them to fulfil their high destiny, both materially and spiritually. Many attendees have since offered their services to their local communities by engaging with the local junior youth and inviting them to participate in a junior youth empowerment programme, with the aim of understanding of how they can help contribute to society in a positive and meaningful way.

Mrs N. Baicher, representing the Sikh Faith, informed the Committee of the following dates of significance in the Sikh calendar:

**Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on
Religious Education, Friday 18th October 2013 continued**

- **Wednesday 9th October 2013**
Birthday of Guru Ram Das (1534 – 1581) was the fourth of the Sikh Gurus. (Nanakshahi Calendar).
- **Sunday 3rd November 2013**
Diwali: For Sikhs, Diwali is of particular importance because it celebrates the release of the sixth Guru, Guru Hagobind and 52 other princes, in 1619.
- **Sunday 17th November 2013**
Birthday of Guru Nanak, according to the Lunar Calendar. This festival may also be celebrated on April 14th, in accordance with the Nanakshahi Calendar.
- **Sunday November 24th 2013**
Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, honoured as a champion of religious freedom. Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed in 1675 for refusing to convert to Islam.

We noted the information provided.

Mrs N. Baicher referred the Committee to the publication, “The Sikh Messenger” which stated that the National Curriculum was currently under review in England. Mrs Baicher queried whether there was provision to remove the term “principal religions” from the revised National Curriculum.

The RE Consultant stated that the term had been extracted from the 1988 Education Reform Act and that there was no indication that it would be removed from the Religious Education Framework in England.

We received notice that generally Religious Education had been broadened to include Humanism, Atheism and Agnosticism, marking a change in emphasis to educate pupils regarding peoples’ beliefs.

We expressed thanks to the teacher and religious representatives for the information provided.

6. PEOPLE, BELIEFS AND QUESTIONS: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR 3 – 7 YEAR OLDS IN WALES

The RE Consultant informed the Committee that the publication of the Welsh Government document “People, Beliefs and Questions: Religious Education for 3 – 7 year olds in Wales was four years overdue as a consequence of printing difficulties. Although the publication had been made available on the Welsh government website, it had now been removed.

The RE Consultant informed the Committee that she would make enquiries to determine the reasoning behind this.

The Committee proceeded to review the document during which the following points were noted:

- The document provides an overview of what constitutes good practice in Religious Education in the Foundation Phase. It also provides key messages for planning, learning and teaching in religious education for children aged 3 to 7

Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, Friday 18th October 2013 continued

years old. It includes case studies showing good classroom practice, planning grids and suggestions regarding assessment. The document describes an entitlement to receive religious education which should adequately prepare children for the challenges at Foundation Phase and beyond.

- “People, beliefs and questions: Religious Education for 3 – 7 year olds in Wales” explains the value and purpose of Religious Education and how it can help children to develop a wide range of skills including personal and social, decision making, respect for cultural diversity and the environment and living things, literacy and numeracy and an understanding of themselves and others. The emphasis is one of a skills based approach rather than knowledge accumulation.
- The document offers useful examples of how teachers can plan religious education activities. It states that “lessons should be sufficiently focused so as to provide opportunities for children to develop specific religious education skills (as identified in *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* pages 16–17a), but should also be sufficiently flexible to allow children to have ownership of their activities by initiating ideas in relation to the topic being explored.”

It also includes planning grids for religious education exemplifying the appropriate Range, Skills and Focus as well as the skills from the seven areas of learning. Two planning grids supplement each case study.

- The case studies were taken from teachers, for example “Welcoming babies into the Christian and Sikh faith”, “Mini Beasts and Khalifah” and Hatching/Easter. We welcomed notice that SACRE Member, Mrs Jan Thomas, Llantilio Pertholey School had been involved in one of the case studies.
- The document also provides practitioners with an example of how to evidence pupils’ attainment. The RE Consultant informed the Committee that in the case study, Hanukkah, Isaac was said to have demonstrated the characteristics of Foundation Phase Outcome 2. Ms C Cooper, SACRE Member, and teacher at Osbaston Church In Wales Primary School had queried whether the evidence pointed to Religious Education Level 2. Concern was expressed that this was not a useful example of levelling. The RE Consultant agreed to clarify the position with Welsh Government.
We heard that outcomes and levels were subject to change as part of the review of the National Curriculum.
- The RE Consultant advised the Committee that the Useful Resources list included KS2 and KS3 reference material, which was unsuitable for Foundation Phase.
The Committee requested that the RE Consultant prepare an updated and Foundation Phase relevant Resource List to distribute to schools with the document.

We welcomed the document as a useful resource for Foundation Phase practitioners and resolved that it should be distributed to the Authority’s schools with the amended Resource List subject to receiving clarification regarding levelling.

**Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on
Religious Education, Friday 18th October 2013 continued**

7. RE CELEBRATION DAYS 2014.

The RE Consultant informed the Committee that only five primary schools had expressed an interest in attending the RE Celebration days scheduled to take place in January/February 2014. Mrs D. Mountfield agreed that the Chief Officer, Children and Young People would extend a written invitation to RE Coordinators in all Monmouthshire primary schools.

We welcomed notice that there had been a fantastic response to the event from Faith representatives.

We resolved to establish an RE Celebration Day working group to assist with arrangements. The membership of the group was agreed as follows:

Mrs S. Perry – Phillips, representing the Teachers' Associations

Mrs S. Cave, representing the Bahá'í Faith

Reverend P. Baines, representing the Free Churches

Mrs K. Fitter, Co - opted Member.

An invitation to join the working group would also be extended to Mrs R. Davies, King Henry VIII School.

A meeting of the working group would be arranged in due course.

8. ESTYN REVIEW OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS JUNE 2013.

We received the above report which had been produced in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2012 -13. The review was based upon visits to 20 secondary schools in Wales, one of which being Chepstow Comprehensive School.

We reviewed the report and noted the following:

- The number of pupils taking the short and full GCSE courses in religious studies had increased significantly over the last five years. We noted that more girls than boys were entered for both the short and full courses.
- The percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C in religious studies was well above the average for other subjects, with a higher proportion of pupils attaining a grade A* in Wales than in England.
- Despite attainment having fallen in the short religious studies GCSE course during the last five years, the percentage of pupils attaining grade A* to C in Wales had remained consistently higher than for the UK as a whole.
- Lessons observed during the review and pupils' work demonstrated that standards were good in the majority of schools visited at Key Stage 3 but standards were not considered excellent in any of the schools visited.
- Where pupils did not follow an examination course at key stage 4, standards in lessons were rarely above "adequate" and some pupils misbehaved. This suggested that pupils did not value the lessons perhaps because they did not lead to a formal qualification.

We particularly welcomed the following finding, "Almost all pupils in the lessons observed showed respect for the opinions and beliefs of others. Many pupils value what they learn in religious education and understand how it contributes to their personal and social development. In particular, pupils enjoy engaging with fundamental questions, such as 'is there life after death?', 'what is evil?' and 'what is truth?'. Pupils enjoy learning about different religious responses to questions like these and why people live their lives in different ways as a result of their beliefs. They enjoy considering their own views, and discussing them with

Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, Friday 18th October 2013 continued

peers. They are prepared to talk about a variety of issues relating to religion and ethics and take part in lessons enthusiastically.”

- Teaching was good or better in over two thirds of the lessons observed. In one fifth of lessons, teaching was considered to be excellent. Teaching for religious education was better than average for teaching across all subjects in secondary schools inspected since 2010. This finding identified a disparity between teaching standards and pupils’ achievements.
- Non – specialist teachers did not have a negative impact on standards in the majority of schools. The Committee did not expect this finding.
- We expected to note that the review would identify that few teachers were found to have an accurate understanding of the levels of pupil performance at key stage 3.
- Self - evaluation was considered “good” or “better” in a minority of religious education departments. Only a minority of these analyse internal examination data thoroughly in order to plan for improvement.
- A lack of opportunities for professional development and learning networks was identified.

We concluded that the latter findings highlighted the need to support teachers in self - evaluation and in the use of and understanding level descriptions. The Welsh Government’s response to the Estyn review stated that it would work with regional consortia and local SACREs to support schools to improve attainment and the quality of teacher assessment.

Concern was expressed regarding the funding streams identified by Welsh Government to support teachers’ professional development given that the School Effectiveness Grant (SEG) and the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) were primarily focused on Literacy and Numeracy.

We agreed to investigate avenues to support secondary teachers in these areas.

We expressed disappointment that the Welsh Government had concluded that it was inappropriate to collect, analyse and publish attainment data for religious education and religious studies in the same way as for non – core subjects.

The Committee queried how the implementation of Estyn’s recommendations could be monitored and were advised that it was unlikely that Estyn would revisit them because the report was broadly positive.

We noted the report and commended the improved attainment and standards in religious education in secondary schools in Wales.

We resolved to distribute the report to the Authority’s secondary schools and request that they provide SACRE with an evaluation of their own provision in relation to the report’s recommendations.

9. ESTYN INSPECTION REPORT AND SCHOOL SELF EVALUATION REPORT

- a. We received an update on monitoring of Chepstow Comprehensive School from the RE Consultant. We welcomed notice that the school had made significant improvements. The staffing position had much improved as the Assistant Head and RE specialist was primarily delivering RE lessons and the other subjects were being covered within the Humanities specialism. This has allowed the Head of Department additional time to develop the Curriculum with support from the

Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, Friday 18th October 2013 continued

Assistant Head Teacher. Summer 2013 examination results were strong and 30 students, an increase of 21, had opted to take RE at AS Level.

We expressed thanks to the RE Consultant for the update and commended the improvements made.

- b. We received an inspection report on the quality of education at Osbaston Church In Wales School from the RE Consultant. We noted that the report did not contain any reference to Collective Worship or Religious Education thus it was assumed that statutory requirements were being met.

We welcomed the inclusion of the following statement;

“The overall provision for the promotion of pupils’ spiritual and cultural development is good. The arrangements to enhance pupils’ spirituality successfully encourage pupils to reflect and to appreciate wider issues. Pupils have good opportunities to consider moral questions and to learn about and value the cultures and traditions of other countries. Provision for personal and social education is planned well and is included regularly in many activities across the curriculum.”

We noted that the school’s current performance was “Adequate” with “Good” prospects for improvement”, being under new management.

We received the self - evaluation report prepared by SACRE Member and teacher at Osbaston Church in Wales School. The self - evaluation provided detailed information regarding what and how the school plans. It identified that “Listening to Learners” should continue to take place regularly, with more child - led interactive activities. There was a danger that the worship and spiritual development element of Collective Worship could be lost if acts of Collective Worship were only used to deliver the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning.

We welcomed the comprehensive self – evaluation report and requested that an expression of thanks be communicated to Ms C. Cooper.

Reverend Baines questioned whether it was appropriate for Diocesan inspection reports to be monitored by SACRE. The RE Consultant informed the Committee that SACRE’s remit was to monitor RE according to the Agreed Syllabus. Church Aided Schools follow the Church Syllabus, which is outside of SACRE’s monitoring remit. It was agreed, however, that the full Osbaston Section 50 inspection report would be presented at the next meeting for information.

We noted the inspection report.

The RE Consultant advised the Committee that the monitoring and self - evaluation reports for Deri View Primary School and The Dell Primary School would be presented at the next meeting of SACRE.

10. WASACRE

- a. We received nominations to the WASACRE Executive.
Following consideration of the nominees personal profiles we resolved to nominate Reverend Roy Watson to the WASACRE Executive.
- b. We received feedback from the WASACRE Conference which was held on 10th October 2013 and was attended by approximately 100 delegates. We welcomed the opportunity to view a selection of photographs taken on the day. Monmouthshire SACRE members, Sue Cave and Mrs Perry Phillips attended the

Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, Friday 18th October 2013 continued

Conference, along with the RE Consultant who delivered workshops to delegates.

The Conference addressed issues such as how can SACREs monitor standards, how WASACRE can support Key Stage 3 teachers in terms of assessment. Key note speakers included the Minister of Education and Mark Campion, Estyn.

It was agreed that the conference was hugely valuable and appreciated by those who attended.

- c. We received a report of the activities of WASACRE during 2012 – 13 which summarised the work of the Executive. This work included:
- Advising Welsh Government with regard to the Review of SACRE Reports.
 - Consulting with Estyn regarding the Thematic Review of RE at Key Stages 3 and 4.
 - Organising the WASACRE Conference.
 - Monitoring developments which could affect the role of local SACREs such as the curriculum review and regional Education consortia.
 - Participation in the RE Council for England and Wales and the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education.
 - Working with the RE Council for England and Wales to develop and trial an adapted version of the RE Quality Mark in Wales.

We welcomed notice that WASACRE's financial position remained positive and that the Association had also received a variety of interesting and valuable presentations. We noted also the change in membership on the Executive Committee.

11. SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2012 – 13

We received for consideration, Monmouthshire County Council's draft SACRE Annual Report for 2012 – 13 which outlined the advice provided by SACRE to the Local Education Authority during the year. Members were asked to consider the report and provide feedback to the RE Consultant outside of the meeting.

We heard that subject to any amendments/feedback received outside of the meeting that the Annual Report 2012 - 13 would be presented to full council in due course for approval.

12. TIME & DATE OF NEXT MEETING

We agreed that the next meetings of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education would be held on Friday 7th March 2014 at 1.30pm at @Innovation House, Magor.

The meeting ended at 15.25

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held at County Hall, Usk on 4th November 2013 at 4.00 p.m.

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Evans

County Councillors: P.R. Clarke, D.L. Edwards, R.G. Harris, J. Higginson, P. Jones, J.L. Prosser, V.E. Smith and S. White

Also in attendance County Councillor A. Easson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr M. Andrews	-	Monitoring Officer
Mr R. Tranter	-	Deputy Monitoring Officer
Mrs S. King	-	Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors D. Blakebrough, S.G.M. Howarth, S. Jones and S. White.

2. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

We resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23rd September 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. PAYMENT OF MILEAGE FOR CONSTITUENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

We received a report deferred from the meeting held on 23rd September 2013.

The purpose of the report, from the Democratic Services Manager, was for the committee to consider a scheme for the payment of mileage to members for mileage incurred in carrying out constituency responsibilities.

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

**Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee
dated 4th November 2013 - continued**

- Members recognised that constituency duties were part of the elected member role, however, were sympathetic to members with large rural wards.
- The committee were aware that mileage could be claimed with outside bodies, if meetings were attended on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council.
- The Monitoring Officer advised that a booklet of guidance for expenses would be created for members. Control of Member Expenses was the responsibility of the Independent Remuneration Panel.
- All member expenses are published, this includes travel and care allowances. Claims would be subject to public scrutiny and audit.
- Officer claims would be verified by managers of officers.
- In summing up, the chair highlighted that members felt that expenses should be claimed if business was being undertaken for Monmouthshire County Council. It was requested that an appendix should be included in the guidance booklet to ensure that processes were water precise.

We resolved to approve the recommendation with an amendment as follows:

That the Committee recommend to the County Council the adoption of a scheme as set out in appendix A and that a rulebook be developed for clarification.

6. WALES CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

We received a report, deferred from the meeting held on 23rd September 2013, which informed the Committee of the WLGA's Wales Charter for Member Support and Development, and to benchmark Monmouthshire against the Charter criteria.

During discussion a member suggested that lockers would be beneficial for County Councillors.

Further detail was required from the Head of Improvement and Democracy, particularly in relation to training structures and personal development reviews.

We resolved to defer the report to the next meeting.

7. WLGA SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE FOR COUNCILLORS

We received the WLGA Social Media Guide for Councillors, which was referred from the Standards Committee meeting held on 3rd October 2013, the document was a guide for members on the use of Social Media.

We resolved to note the report.

**Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee
dated 4th November 2013 - continued**

8. REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION

The Monitoring Officer presented the Democratic Services Committee with the first 55 pages of the new draft model constitution for review.

We were advised that a copy of the full draft would be available on The Point and members were invited to give views and comments.

The Monitoring Officer guided members through suggested changes for the first 55 pages and these were noted as follows:

- 1.1.3 Refer to as Select Committees
- 1.1.4 Refer to as Cabinet
- 1.2.3 Leader appointed each year
Leader decides the size and membership of Cabinet
- 2.3.2 Existing position stands
- 2.8.2 Members will have the choice if they wish to receive printed or electronic
- 3.1.1 (c) Three clear days before a meeting
- 3.2.1 (d) Item must already be on the agenda or relevant to work of committee
- 4.7.3 Refer to as Chair
- 4.10.1 (i) Annually
(m) Strong leader model
- 4.10.2 (d) Existing position stands

Councillor Higginson advised that he was a member of the Archives Board, responsible for financial decisions, however, clarification was requested regarding duty of non-executive members. The Monitoring Officer would provide clarification regarding the position.

- 4.12.1 Addition Monitoring Officer
(c) Five
- 4.13.1 Addition Monitoring Officer
- 4.13.2 Three hours
- 4.14 Addition Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer
- 4.17 *New provision – guidance to be issued*
- 4.18.3 Five working days before the day of the meeting
- 4.19.5 One question per member - Eight maximum total number of questions
- 4.19.8 (c) Five days
- 4.19.10 Three minutes
- 4.19.11 (a) Maximum time limit 30 minutes
- 4.20.1 5pm
- 4.20.4 *New provision*
- 4.20.5 *New provision*
- 4.20.6 30 minutes
- 4.22.2 *New provision*
- 4.22.4 10 minutes
Matter for the Chair
- 4.23.4 *New provision*

**Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee
dated 4th November 2013 - continued**

- 4.24 Existing provision stands
- 4.25.4 Existing provision stands
- 4.34.3 Up to one hour before the meeting
- 5.4 Deputy Leader(s)
Monitoring Officer to look at First and Second deputy
- 5.7.1 *Monitoring Officer to consider - Members and Officers to be aware of Scheme of Delegation*
- 5.10.7 (a) 3
(b) Quarter
- 5.12.2 Existing provision stands
- 6.1.2 Annual
Strong Leader Model
- 6.5.5 Addition Head of Paid Service and Proper Officer

Page 44 Section 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 – refer to Select Committees

- 7.6 Chairs to be included
- 7.7 5 co-opted members
- 7.10.2 (d) Eight meetings
- 7.12 Existing provision stands
- 7.18.3 Committee to be in control of how work is ordered
- 7.25.1 (d) Ten day limit
(e) Fifteen working days
(h) £10,000 threshold removed
(j) Call In members to be present

The Monitoring Officer thanked members for their contribution and advised that the Standards Committee would consider part of the constitution, it was agreed that Audit Committee would be invited to consider the following areas:

- Financial Regulations
- Contract Standing Orders

Scheme of Delegation to be considered by Cabinet and Officers.

9. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members reviewed the work programme of the committee and the following points were noted:

- A meeting of the Review of Area Committees had been held and recommendations would be referred to full council. One recommendation was that any further actions would be referred to the Democratic Services Committee.
- An ICT clinic would be held on 21st November 2013.

**Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee
dated 4th November 2013 - continued**

10. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held at County Hall, Usk on **Monday 16th December 2013**.

The committee discussed the time of future meetings and resolved that the next meeting would be held at **2.00pm**, and not 4.00pm.

The meeting ended at 6.15 p.m.

**Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee
dated 4th November 2013 - continued**

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting of the Internal Monitoring Board held at
County Hall, Usk on Tuesday 17th December 2013 at 4.00pm

PRESENT: County Councillor P.A. Fox (Chairman)
County Councillors: D. Blakebrough and L. Guppy

ALSO PRESENT: County Councillors E.J. Hacket Pain and G.C. Burrows

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. S. McGuinness: Chief Officer, Children & Young People
Mr. S. Burch: Chief Officer, Social Care and Health
Mr. W. McLean: Head of Strategic Partnerships
Mr. R. Williams: Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from County Councillor R.P. Jordan and from Paul Matthews, Chief Executive.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES

We received and noted the minutes of the Internal Monitoring Board dated 6th November 2013.

4. POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN – UPDATE ON PROGRESS

The Board was provided with the latest information in respect of the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP). The following information was noted:

The Head of Strategic Partnerships outlined the progress of three of the four work streams, namely:

- Standards and Challenge
- Corporate arrangements
- Section 'B' (ALN & Wellbeing)

Progress in respect of Safeguarding is outlined in the next minute by the Cabinet Member and the Chief Officer for Social Care and Health.

Having received the PIAP, the following points were noted:

**Minutes of the meeting of the Internal Monitoring Board
Dated 17th December 2013 continued**

Standards and Challenge

Current Status – Between Amber/Green and Green - Risk staying the same since the last report.

Changes since the last report:

- Key Stage 4 (Final provisional information awaiting verification 20th December 2013).
- Performance in Level 2 (including English and mathematics) has improved by 1% to 57%. Although this outcome is 4 points above the Wales average, it is well below the target of 65%.
- Provisional school targets to be scrutinised and challenged where appropriate, and aggregated against Local Authority targets.
- Secondary school stocktake with Members in January 2014.
- Analysis of KS4 Free School Meals (FSM) and non-FSM data.
- KS4 and 5 Performance report to be delivered to the Children and Young People Select Committee.
- Review of Local Authority Literacy Strategy.
- Chief Officer's Interim Annual Report delivered to Council in November 2013.
- School targets have been set using individual pupil level targets. The level of challenge from SL's has been much greater than in previous years.
- Targets received by the Local Authority 13th December 2013.
- Second SSSP has restored outcomes to results 'on the day level'.
- Complete EAS commissioning evaluation December 2013.
- Meeting held to clarify grants – clear way forward agreed and implemented by January 2014.

Corporate Arrangements

Current Status – Between Amber/Green and Green – Risk staying the same since the last report.

Changes since the last report:

- The third Head of Service has been appointed.

**Minutes of the meeting of the Internal Monitoring Board
Dated 17th December 2013 continued**

- In response to a query raised regarding reading tests / literacy tests, the Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that such queries should be directed to the Children and Young People Directorate.
- A report on the Performance Framework had been presented to the Children and Young People Select Committee for scrutiny.
- Feedback had been received from Estyn indicating that the information being provided to the Select Committee was balanced and correct. However, it had been considered that Select Committee questioning could be more challenging.
- David Hopkins had offered to provide the Select Committee with further training.

Section 'B' (ALN & Wellbeing)

Current Status – Inclusion - Between Amber/Green and Green – Risk increasing.

ALN – Between Amber/Red & Amber/Green - Risk increasing.

Changes since the last report:

- A group of volunteers (parents, SNAP, SENCOs) met on 16th December 2013 to review the format and what information is available to parents within the process of statutory assessment.
- QA tool developed within SIMS to track the attainment and achievements of pupils in Monmouthshire.
- Pilot Schools, Psychologists and Officers trained in personal centred planning with pupil profiles and Individual Development Plans 10th December 2013.
- November 2013, EPs training completed and are now able to undertake the Autism Awareness training in Monmouthshire schools.
- Training for 10 Pilot schools for Autism Awareness to be carried out in schools on 20th and 21st March 2014.
- Schools to be introduced to the QA tool on 6th February 2014.
- Schools to be trained in the personal centred planning approach with pupil profiling and Individual Development Plans on 28th January, 12th February and 18th March 2014.
- EPs / Early Years SEN Officer booked on Early Bird training course on 14th, 15th and 16th January 2014.
- Information review to pilot new approaches to information sharing with parents.

**Minutes of the meeting of the Internal Monitoring Board
Dated 17th December 2013 continued**

- QA now within the Local Authority and to be introduced to schools on 6th February 2014.

Having received the update, the following points were noted:

- Real Progress was being made around ALN.
- In response to a Member's question regarding training for 10 Pilot schools for Autism Awareness, the Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that as an Authority, we will have better identification. From 2015, it is possible that ALN will be consortium driven. In order to respond to the demand identified in schools, the Authority needs to be open to this prospect, should this occur.
- It was noted that information contained in the PIAP relating to Inclusion did not align with the earlier position. The Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that she would investigate this matter with the appropriate officer.
- Clarification would be sought regarding bullet point 2 under Next Period – Inclusion, which referred to the CAPS being set at 430 for secondary schools and 20 days for primary schools – these being aspirational targets.
- A federated way of working was being supported in consultation with all of Monmouthshire's schools.
- The Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that she hosts the Secondary Headteachers meetings. Collaboration between the secondary schools was occurring.

5. SAFEGUARDING

Current status – Between Amber/Green – Risk staying the same since the last report.

The Cabinet Member and the Chief Officer for Social Care and Health outlined the changes since the last report:

- Policy - Safeguarding Policy Consultation completed and policy review complete awaiting Cabinet approval.
- The first level 2 training event (Monmouthshire specific) took place on 19th November 2013 and was well evaluated. Governors' level training was undertaken on 18th November 2013 and was well evaluated.
- The 'How Safe Do You Feel in Monmouthshire?' Survey was completed by Monmouthshire Youth Service and a report had been written with a meeting arranged to plan responses and the next steps.
- The audit programme has commenced with commissioned and grant funded organisations.

**Minutes of the meeting of the Internal Monitoring Board
Dated 17th December 2013 continued**

- There was positive evidence of safeguarding awareness training having an impact within leisure services. Safeguarding consultation / supervision arrangements are established within key schools / settings.

The Cabinet Member and the Chief Officer for Social Care and Health also provided the following information:

- Monmouthshire's first Safeguarding Conference was a success.
- The new DBS Protocol had been written and a unified system was in place to monitor compliance monthly.
- Safeguarding training was being delivered. However, it needed its own budget.
- The Safeguarding Team was well placed for re-inspection on 5th February 2014.

6. UPDATE ON SCHOOL ACTION PLANS AND PROGRESS

The Chief Officer for Children and Young People provided the Board with the following information:

In December 2013:

- 17 schools in Monmouthshire required routine or specific intervention in respect of minor issues.
- 12 schools in Monmouthshire required sustained intervention.
- 8 schools in Monmouthshire required intensive / critical support. An intervention plan for each of these schools had been established which had been agreed by the Chief Officer for Children and Young People. Systems leaders review the intervention plans regularly and schools with intervention plans meet the Cabinet Member and the Chief Officer for Children and Young People every six months.

7. REQUESTS FOR THE NEXT MONMOUTHSHIRE RECOVERY BOARD

The Monmouthshire Recovery Board had requested the following information for its next meeting on 7th January 2014:

- Clarification of how much the Local Authority was paying the Education Achievement Service (EAS).
- A copy of the Executive Scrutiny Protocol.
- 2014 Targets against last years – historical and where it should be.
- The draft Children and Young People Service Plan.

**Minutes of the meeting of the Internal Monitoring Board
Dated 17th December 2013 continued**

All of this information was presented to the Internal Monitoring Board for information. In doing so, the following information was noted:

2014 Targets

- On the whole, targets were in line with outcomes.
- Primary school tracking was robust.
- There was a need to improve teacher assessments, i.e., narrow the gap between assessment and outcomes.
- On 6th January 2014, a stocktake with Monmouthshire's secondary schools will be undertaken. All of the Headteachers have been invited to County Hall, Usk, to discuss the rigour around their own target setting, the robust nature of their decisions and to demonstrate how the aspirational targets that were currently set have been reached.

8. ESTYN MONITORING VISIT – 5th FEBRUARY 2013

The Board noted that Estyn would undertake a re-inspection on 5th February 2014.

9. AGENDA FOR THE RECOVERY BOARD – 7th JANUARY 2014

The Board noted that the Monmouthshire Recovery Board was scheduled to meet on 7th January 2014. Agenda items are as follows:

- Update on the Post Inspection Action Plan.
- Clarification of how much the Local Authority was paying the Education Achievement Service (EAS).
- A copy of the Executive Scrutiny Protocol.
- 2014 Targets against last years – historical and where it should be.
- The draft Children and Young People Service Plan.
- Representatives from the EAS would be attending the meeting.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Head of Strategic Partnerships will contact the Internal Monitoring Board Members and officers regarding the date for the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 5.37pm.

Annual Report



Standing Advisory Council On Religious Education (SACRE)

1st August, 2012 - 31st July, 2013

Annual Report Of Monmouthshire County Council Standing Advisory Council On Religious Education (SACRE)

1st August, 2012 - 31st July, 2013

Contents

	Page
1. Executive Summary	4
2. Advice To The LA	
2.1 Locally Agreed Syllabus.	5
2.2 Standards in Religious Education	6
2.3 Methods of teaching and the choice of teaching materials	8
2.4 Teacher training	11
2.5 Collective Worship	12
2.6 Advice to the LA on other issues	13
3. Annexes:	
A) Number of meetings	19
B) The Composition of SACRE	19
C) Membership	20
D) Distribution of the Annual Report	21

1. Executive Summary

Summary of advice given to the LA:

- **Membership**

SACRE recommended to the LA that the Humanist Association be offered a co-opted place if they had a suitable individual who would like to attend meetings. The Religious Education Consultant had written to the Humanist Association asking for a suitable nominee for the Committee but had so far received no response

- **Agreed Syllabus**

SACRE recommended that the outcome of the National Curriculum review should be awaited before making any further decisions regarding the review of the Agreed Syllabus.

- **Monitoring Standards in RE and Collective Worship**

SACRE recommended that as such little evidence of RE and Collective Worship is evident in inspection reports it requests self evaluation reports from schools at the time of their Estyn inspection.

- **Assessment of RE and Incerts programme**

Schools were advised to ensure that they were using the Wales version of the commercial Incerts programme for assessing RE at KS2 which contains the RE Level Descriptions applicable to Wales.

- **Small Grant Scheme**

SACRE recommended that the LA advise Secondary Schools of the opportunity to apply to the Small Grants Scheme for a £500 to support the teaching of Christianity within Religious Education. A letter to all secondary schools was distributed.

- **RE Today Art in Heaven competition**

On SACREs recommendation details of the RE Today Art in Heaven competition were sent to all schools.

- **St Gabriel's weekend**

On SACREs recommendation details of the St. Gabriel's Weekend were sent to all schools.

2. Advice To The LA

2.1 Locally Agreed Syllabus.

Date of adoption of current Agreed Syllabus: September 2008
Last review held: 24th January, 2008
New Agreed Syllabus implementation date: September 2008

2008 Agreed Syllabus

Printed copies of the Agreed Syllabus were distributed to all schools within the authority. Each primary school received 2 copies with each secondary school receiving four copies. This is in addition to the electronic copy previously distributed.

The concepts and skills based Agreed Syllabus is fully in line with other curriculum subject documentation and the Foundation Phase. It is supported by comprehensive guidance material.

Training opportunities have been provided to support the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus for Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2. A course for Key Stage 2 / 3 was offered but was cancelled due to insufficient number of applicants. Secondary schools have been advised of other training opportunities.

Review

SACRE has begun to consider a review of the 2008 Agreed Syllabus as required within the five year period. Teacher representatives on SACRE have considered the effectiveness of the Agreed Syllabus and reported back to SACRE at several meetings. It was felt that overall the programmes of study are effective however, the Level Descriptions need to be reviewed and revised.

The RE Consultant to SACRE is in the process of working with other RE adviser colleagues across Wales to produce supplementary guidance on using the Agreed Syllabus. This will take the form of Frequently Asked Questions. In addition, the group will review and amend the Level Descriptions as necessary. It is hoped that all SACREs in Wales will adopt the guidance documentation and revised Level Descriptions in order to maintain consistency across schools in Wales.

It was agreed that any changes made to the Agreed Syllabus for RE should be in line with the National Curriculum and therefore the review of the Agreed Syllabus would be ongoing until the outcome of the WG National Curriculum review and the review of the Foundation Phase was known.

2.2 Standards in religious education

Monitoring of Standards

The LA does not have a subject Adviser for religious education. An RE Consultant is employed to support SACRE. This does not allow time for extra activities and support such as visiting schools and monitoring provision. SACRE analyses school inspection reports and gleans what information it can in relation to religious education and collective worship. Since the new 2010 inspection framework, this has become increasingly difficult with little or no evidence of religious education or collective worship contained within the reports. Therefore SACRE has begun the process of asking schools to provide their own evaluation of the provision of religious education and collective worship.

Three primary schools and one secondary school received inspections during this reporting period.

In primary school 1, SACRE noted from the inspection report that 'Learning experiences, including assemblies, very effectively promote pupils spiritual, moral and development and there is a rich provision for their cultural development.'

The school submitted a very detailed and helpful self evaluation of RE and members were pleased to note the many references to good provision and outcomes.

It was noted that in July 2000 standards at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 had been satisfactory and in June 2006 standards at both key stages were Grade 3.

A letter was sent to the school to congratulate them on their recent achievements.

In primary school 2 SACRE was pleased to note from the inspection report that 'The school's personal and social education programme contributes well to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development' and that many pupils show respect for different cultures. The report also noted that the curriculum meets statutory requirements for religious education.

A self evaluation of RE was submitted by the school and members were pleased to note the references to good provision.

An earlier inspection report in 2006 had stated that standards in RE at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were Grade 2.

Members were pleased to note the present high standards of RE in the school and a letter was sent acknowledging the school's current achievements and provided suggestions to support the school in pursuing the areas for development which it had identified.

In primary school 3, SACRE noted from the inspection report that 'Learning experiences promote pupils spiritual, moral and development and there is a rich provision for their cultural development well.'

'The school community respects and celebrates diversity in studies of other cultures throughout the curriculum. As a result, pupils show care and concern for all in the school, the community and the wider world.'

The school submitted a very detailed and helpful self evaluation of RE and members were pleased to note the many references to excellent provision and outcomes. A letter was sent to the school to congratulate them on their achievements.

In the secondary school report SACRE was pleased to note from the inspection report that 'The school promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well, including through the personal and social education programme and school assemblies. The school submitted a very detailed and helpful self evaluation of RE which allowed members to appreciate the negative effect that a lack of time allocation and non-specialist teaching has on an RE department.

It was noted that in January 2000 standards at Key Stage 3 had been Good and at Key Stage 4 Unsatisfactory due to too little time allocation, whilst Religious Studies at Y10 and 11 were Good and at Y12 / 13 satisfactory. In January 2006 Key Stage 3 was awarded Grade 3, Key Stage 4 Grade 2 and Post 16 Y12 Grade 1.

In a follow up monitoring report, SACRE was pleased to note that since the latest inspection, the school has made significant improvements and is continuing to move forward.

Staffing is much improved as the Assistant Head who is an RE specialist and was previously contributing some lessons amongst a wider portfolio, has now been timetabled almost exclusively to RE and other lessons are covered within Humanities specialism. This is freeing up more time for the Head of Department to work on curriculum development with an input from the Assistant Head. Examination results were strong in Summer 2013 and the uptake for AS has increased from the approximately nine students in previous years to thirty students this year.

2.3 Methods of teaching and the choice of teaching materials

Comprehensive advice on methods of teaching and the choice of teaching materials is provided by the authority. Schools also have access to the professional adviser to SACRE on an independent basis for individual school support.

- **2008 Support Material**

Foundation Phase

Comprehensive Foundation Phase support material entitled 'Think Topic' was distributed to all settings and schools within the authority in summer 2008.

The production of the material in the form of a CD and hard copy was a joint project with two other authorities. A working party of teachers, Foundation Phase Training Officers and the RE Consultant developed topic based support material with Religious Education included as appropriate. Additional religious education support material was included in the pack as it was recognised that this area of learning often needs additional guidance.

Key Stage 2 / 3

The Key Stage 2 / 3 Agreed Syllabus Support Material was made available to all schools in autumn 2008. The material includes an updated outline long term plan for Key Stage 2 'straight classes' and a long term plan for 'mixed classes' over a two year cycle. There are twelve units of work, six of which are exemplified with samples of pupils' work. All of the units promote a skills based approach to RE and provide a wealth of activities and specific learning objectives. The units are aimed to be supported by the use of the 'Developing Primary RE' series produced by RE Today Services and schools have been encouraged to invest in the purchase of these publications.

Key Stage 3 teachers should find the support material helpful in providing an insight into the provision of RE at Key Stage 2 and the quality and standards of pupils' work being achieved. Many of the units identify key resources and areas of exploration for Key Stage 3 which will effectively build on prior learning.

Feedback from schools using the support material has been extremely positive. Teachers have found the material easy to use and very effective in supporting a skills based approach to Religious Education. SACRE will continue to monitor the impact of the use of the material across schools within the authority.

- **RE Today publications**

To accompany the locally produced support material, schools were advised that it was highly recommended that they purchase the '*Developing Primary RE*' and '*Developing Secondary RE*'. A significantly reduced cost was negotiated with RE Today Services and schools were invited to place an order via the authority. Sixteen primary schools subsequently purchased the resources which have been cross-referenced with the Agreed Syllabus Support Material units of work.

- **Small Grant Scheme**

SACRE recommended that the LA advise Secondary Schools of the opportunity to apply to the Small Grants Scheme for a £500 to support the teaching of Christianity within Religious Education. This would allow them to purchase text books, CDs, DVDs, and artefacts to support learning in their schools.

A letter to all secondary schools was distributed. It is not known whether any schools took advantage of this offer.

- **RE Today Art in Heaven competition**

On SACREs recommendation details of the RE Today Art in Heaven competition were sent to all schools.

- **St Gabriel's weekend**

On SACREs recommendation details of the free St. Gabriel's RE Leadership professional development weekend were sent to all schools. The event taking place on 28-29 September 2013 at Wokefield Park Conference Centre, Reading was highly commended by SACRE.

- **Assessment of RE and Incerts programme**

Schools were advised to ensure that they were using the Wales version of the commercial Incerts programme for assessing RE at KS2 which contains the RE Level Descriptions applicable to Wales.

Concerns have also been raised regarding the lack of RE Outcomes within the Foundation Phase section of the Incerts programme and dialogue is ongoing regarding this issue.

- **Contacts for RE and CW**

The recently list of faith representatives contacts for visits to schools and visits to places worship was redistributed to all schools.

- **Diverse Cymru's Children and Young People's Service**

The Diverse Cymru booklet 'In Our Own Words' was emailed to all schools suggesting that the Diverse Cymru website may also be a useful further resource

www.diversecymru.org.uk

- **Learning to be a Muslim**

A very useful series of six digital stories created by Muslim children aged 6-13 from Cardiff for use in the classroom and suitable for all ages was made know to schools and is freely available on-line at <http://vimeo.com/channels/learningtobeamuslim>

- **Artefact Loan Service**

A comprehensive Artefact Loan Service is available specifically for Monmouthshire schools and is operated by the Schools' Library Service.

- **RE News**

The LA subscribes to RE News and copies of the magazine are sent to schools free of charge on a termly basis. The magazine provides a vehicle for sharing examples of good practice in RE. Several articles have been featured from Monmouthshire including an account of the visit to a school in Sri Lanka by teachers from the Abergavenny cluster.

2.4 Teacher training

KS3 Teacher Training

Secondary Schools were notified of the opportunity to attend the WASACRE funded KS3 Training in the use of Level Descriptions. One teacher from Blaenau Gwent attended the training day and reported that she found it useful.

St Gabriel's weekend

On SACREs recommendation details of the free St. Gabriel's RE Leadership professional development weekend were sent to all schools. The event taking place on 28-29 September 2013 at Wokefield Park Conference Centre, Reading was highly commended by SACRE. It is not known if any teachers attended.

WASACRE Conference 10th October, 2013

An invitation was sent to all schools to attend the WASACRE funded Conference which will support SACRE members and RE teachers in addressing the National priorities of Literacy and Numeracy through Religious Education, as well as discussing the key messages from the Estyn Thematic Review for RE. Three teachers have applied to attend the conference.

2.5 Collective Worship

Inspection Findings

SACRE continued to analyse inspection reports in order to monitor the provision of collective worship in schools within the authority although evidence is limited. Self evaluation reports were received from schools giving details of collective worship provision.

Three primary schools received inspections during this reporting period. SACRE was pleased to note that none of the reports stated that statutory requirements in relation to collective worship were not being fulfilled.

In primary school 1, SACRE noted that 'Learning experiences, including assemblies, very effectively promote pupils spiritual, moral and development and there is a rich provision for their cultural development.'

In primary school 2 SACRE was pleased to note from the inspection report that 'The school's personal and social education programme contributes well to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development' and that many pupils show respect for different cultures.

A self evaluation of Collective Worship was submitted by the school and members were pleased to note the references to good provision.

In primary school 3, SACRE noted from the inspection report that 'Learning experiences promote pupils spiritual, moral and development and there is a rich provision for their cultural development well.'

The school submitted a very detailed and helpful self evaluation of Collective Worship and members were pleased to note the many references to excellent provision and commended the identification of appropriate areas for development.

In the secondary school report SACRE noted from the inspection report that 'the school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.' Discussion with the school informed SACRE that this situation is now rectified and the school has put in place comprehensive resources to enable Heads of Year to provide collective worship sessions for four days a week whilst the fifth day collective Worship is provided through a House assembly.

SACRE was pleased to note this development and improvement in provision.

Collective Worship Guidance

In 2010, locally produced guidance on the provision of collective worship was distributed to all schools within the authority together with Estyn's Collective Worship Guidance document and the WASACRE guidance on sixth form provision.

On the recommendation of SACRE faith representatives, schools have also been advised that the guidance should prove useful to visiting clergy who contribute to the school's collective worship.

In July 2012 the WASACRE Guidance on Collective Worship was distributed to all schools.

Determinations

SACRE did not receive any requests for determinations this year.

2.6 Advice to the LA on other issues

Local Issues:

Celebrating RE 2014 Transition Day for Year 6 pupils

Following the success of the Celebrating RE days in March 2011, Monmouthshire County Council SACRE, have arranged an opportunity for Year 6 pupils to join us for a day of RE Celebrations in 2014.

A series of workshops will be provided throughout the day by the Library Service staff and representatives from a range of different faith communities. Each workshop will have a specific theme and organised activities for the pupils to undertake.

The days will take at each of the four Comprehensive School throughout January and February, 2014.

The invitation is extended to all Year 6 classes from feeder primary schools and the school's RE Co-ordinator plus a minimum of two teachers / TAs who will accompany each pupil group and work alongside the faith representative in supporting the pupils with the activities. Teachers will be given the activities in advance so they are fully prepared to support the pupils.

There will be no charge for the day. The library staff and faith representatives are generously making voluntary contributions to provide the workshops.

Schools will need to arrange their own transport as necessary.

Pupils and accompanying staff should bring their own packed lunch.

Blaina Masjid Eid-ul-Adha Celebrations

The Muslim representative informed the Committee that Friday 26th October is Eid-ul-Adha – the festival following pilgrimage to Mecca and anyone was welcome to join the community for prayers and breakfast. An invitation to the Mosque had been extended to all schools.

Sikh Conference

RE Consultant and County Councillor Hackett Pain had attended the Sikh Association Conference held in Cardiff on 10th May, 2013. We heard that the speakers were inspirational and most welcoming.

Monmouthshire Equality and Diversity Group

SACRE is represented on the Monmouthshire Equality and Diversity Group by the RE Consultant who regularly attends meetings.

Community Cohesion Schools Linking Project

At its summer meeting SACRE received a presentation from Mr. J. Nolan of Usk Primary School regarding The Schools Linking Project – Community Cohesion.

The Committee was informed that:

- The idea for the linking project between Maindee and Maesglas schools had come from watching the cultural differences displayed by the children at a football game and was based on the Bradford model – which had been put in place following the riots in the City.
- The aim of the project was to develop understanding on diversity, to promote the community, to build trust and empathy and to try to remove segregation. It would also give the children the opportunity to develop and build new relationships and enable the practitioners to develop good practice.
- The project had involved other local agencies and pillars of the community in the planning to ensure that meaningful interaction took place during the project.
- Following a great deal of planning it had been agreed that the project would last for a period of 8 weeks and involve children from Years 5/6 of both schools.
- Teachers were asked to prepare observation sheets on the children before, during and after the project and the children were asked to state how they felt at the start, during and at the end of the first contact by leaving their comments on a feelings wall and again on a “Blob Wall” at the end of the project.
- The results of the project showed greater understanding between the children of their cultural differences and new friendships were made that continue still.
- At the end of the presentation we were shown a DVD which had been put together with the help of the children which guided us through the project showing how the children had developed friendships.

Following questions from other members, the following points were noted:

- Whilst this had been a one off project then it would be good for funding to be available for other similar projects.
- It has to be done in areas where there are diverse communities – this could be not just by race and culture but also could be urban and rural differences.
- It could be carried out at primary and secondary school age groups

The Chair thanked Mr. Nolan for his presentation and for the time he had given to the project.

Thinking Skills in the Primary and Secondary Classroom

At its summer meeting SACRE received a presentation from the RE Consultant regarding Thinking Skills in the Primary Classroom.

Members heard that there had been a transition from knowledge based teaching to the development of pupils' understanding.

Pupils are therefore:

- Encouraged to adopt a critical attitude
- Taught how to develop skills to think flexibly
- Given tasks that are open ended and have uncertainty
- Allowed time for reflection on thought processes
- Actively encouraged to talk about thinking, questioning, predicting, contradicting, doubting

We noted the following types of Thinking Skills:

- Sequencing and ordering information
- Sorting, classifying and grouping
- Analysing, comparing, contrasting
- Making predictions and hypothesising
- Drawing conclusions with reasons
- Distinguishing facts from opinion
- Determining bias and reliability of evidence
- Generating new ideas and brainstorming
- Relating causes and effects and designing a fair test
- Problem solving and thinking up different solutions

The RE Consultant demonstrated how pupils thinking skills could be developed using a year 3 and/or 4 unit of work "What is the significance of the Bible for Christians?"

We heard that teachers would initially establish pupils existing knowledge of books. For example, pupils would be asked to consider categories of books, how books can be and are used, pupils' favourite authors and pupils' favourite books.

The Committee was invited to participate in a series of practical activities, linked to the unit of work, to replicate the thinking skills that would be developed in the classroom and were asked to consider the types of thinking skills employed:

- What do I know about the Bible?

The Bible is a special book for Christians.

The Bible has more than 1 author

The Bible consists of 66 books

The Bible is historical

The Bible contains stories, songs and poems

The Bible is a number 1 best seller.

The Bible contains rules for life.

Pupils would be asked to chart what they knew about the Bible prior to the activity and what the activity had taught them. The brainstorming activity would be presented in different ways by different pupils.

From this activity, pupils could be given sentence starters to focus their learning and develop their literacy skills. For example:

The most surprising thing was.....

Something I knew already

Something I learned.....

What I would like to learn more about.....

- What makes the Bible a best seller?

The Committee was asked to create a pie chart, with the largest sector of the chart afforded to the best answer. This was again designed to replicate a classroom based activity and encouraged discussion and debate.

Responses received included:

People want spiritual guidance; the Bible is the word of God.

People offer the Bible as a gift.

The RE Consultant emphasised that the thinking process is the most significant part of the activity which should be both engaging and thought provoking. If a different question was posed the ordering of information would also be different.

Other questions used to develop Thinking Skills in the classroom included, "What does the Bible mean for Christians?" What people do they follow? Who supports Christians? Similarly, pupils could be asked to consider how and why the Qur'an is important to Muslims and the same activities employed.

- Matching Metaphors

The Committee was asked to develop metaphors to describe the Bible;

The Bible is like a meal at a nice restaurant; it leaves you satisfied and fulfilled.

The Bible is like a well; its depths are never plumbed.

The Bible is like a glass of water, it refreshes the parts other books cannot reach.

We commended examples of metaphors created by pupils:

The Bible is like a table to sit around and pray.

The Bible is like a piece of gold, you need clean hands to handle it.

The Bible is like a traffic light, it tells you when to stop.

The RE Consultant informed the Committee that it is a teacher's responsibility to remain objective and that pupils' beliefs are their own individual choice. We noted that experience of such activities within the classroom have encouraged pupils to think for themselves and demonstrated that Religious Education must be enjoyable. Where pupils are presented with appropriate activities, their thinking skills develop naturally.

We received a presentation from Mrs S Perry Phillips, representing the Teachers Associations, regarding thinking skills in the secondary classroom.

The Committee was asked to participate in a series of activities, replicating those in the secondary classroom, to demonstrate the development of pupils' thinking skills.

- Mystery Bags (Whole class activity)

Mystery Bags can be utilised to encourage pupils to make connections between different religious objects or ideas, to identify common themes and as memory triggers.

Mystery Bags build a sense of curiosity and anticipation, promote questioning and are multi – sensory.

The Committee was presented with a selection of Mystery Bags. We were asked to identify the common theme between the items contained in the bags. Some of the themes identified were:

Theme: Symbols of God in the Bible

Items: Crown, water, lamb, light bulb, rock, daddy card, picture of a dove.

Theme: The power of religion

Items: Hindu, Jewish and Christian artefacts

- Venn Diagrams

We heard that Venn diagrams are utilised from year 8 onwards and assist pupils in making connections, organising their thoughts and religious responses and in making comparisons. For example, Venn diagrams can be utilised to form responses to questions such as “Why do we suffer?” and to interrogate artefacts or images.

- Kinaesthetic Thinking

Kinaesthetic thinking is a term used to describe the development of thinking through physical activity. Mrs Perry Phillips had employed Kinaesthetic learning techniques in the study of “Belief in reincarnation in Hinduism.”

We heard that pupils would be presented with a visual stimulus to represent the journey from baby to ageing man. The religious concepts of Brahman, Atman, Samsara, Dharma, Karma, Yoga, Maya and Moksha were taught using a ball game.

The Teacher, symbolising God, would throw the ball/Atman to a student, if the student dropped the ball this represented bad Karma, if the ball was caught this represented good Karma. The last student remaining in the game would be liberated and reach Moksha.

- Guess Who? Who am I?

We heard that Guess Who? encouraged debate and stimulated student’s powers of analysis. The activity is used in the study of Gods and Goddesses, Family Roles and Duties, Caste or Life Stages and People in Authority.

- Jigsaws

The Committee was asked to consider the skills needed to complete a jigsaw such as matching by colour, shape, picture, making connections and drawing comparisons. We heard that pupils are asked to describe how a jigsaw represents an arranged marriage. Responses range from “finding a best match” to “the edges of the jigsaw represent the boundaries of an arranged marriage.”

- Mysteries

Mystery activities are utilised at key stage 3 to develop observation skills, memory recall and knowledge acquisition. For example, year 7 pupils are asked to study a picture of a synagogue for a period of 5 seconds before creating a mind map of the synagogue, which would include the main features.

- Butterfly paintings

Butterfly paintings are utilised to demonstrate complex theories and ideas.

- Music

Music is also used to enhance thinking skills. The Committee listened to “Who knew?” by Pink. The lyrics stimulated discussion of the grieving process, emotional aspects of learning such as anger and denial as well as life after death.

Mrs Perry Phillips reiterated that thinking skills enable students to make enormous advances in their learning and “trained” students to debate and analyse incidentally.

The Committee commended the presentation and expressed thanks to the RE Consultant and Mrs Perry Phillips.

National Issues:

WASACRE

Monmouthshire SACRE is a member of the Welsh Association of SACREs and its representatives regularly attend meetings. Nominated representatives of Monmouthshire SACRE at WASACRE meetings are Bahá’í representative Mrs. Sue Cave, Mrs. Sharon Perry-Phillips, teacher representative and Gill Vaisey, RE Consultant.

The LA funds supply cover and travel expenses for teacher representatives to attend WASACRE meetings.

National Advisory Panel for Religious Education (NAPfRE)

The RE Consultant to Monmouthshire SACRE, Gill Vaisey, is a member of NAPfRE and regularly attends meetings on SACRE’s behalf. In this way SACRE is able to keep abreast of developments in Wales and play a crucial role in informing decisions and policies that affect religious education.

3. Annexes

Annex A) **Number of meetings**

Monmouthshire SACRE met on three occasions this year:

19th October, 2012

26th February, 2013

7th June, 2013

Annex B) **The Composition Of Monmouthshire SACRE**

6 Representatives of the Local Education Authority

12 Representatives of Religious Denominations

7 Representatives of Teachers' Associations

2 Co-opted Places

The committee is also supported by the following officers:

Clerk to SACRE

School Improvement Officer responsible for RE

RE Consultant

Annex C) **Membership Of Monmouthshire County Council
Standing Advisory Council On Religious Education**

As at 31st July, 2013:

Representatives of the Local Education Authority:

Councillor E. J. Hackett Pain Chairperson
Councillor P. Clarke
Councillor D.W.H. Jones
Councillor B. Strong
Councillor A. Easson
Councillor J. George

Representatives Of Religious Denominations

Free Churches (4 places):

Gwent Baptist Association	The Reverend Dr. P. Baines
The Salvation Army	Major S. Wilson
2 vacancies	

Church In Wales	Mrs. V. Howells
Roman Catholic Church	Sister D. O'Donnell
Bahá'í	Mrs. S. Cave
Buddhist	Ngakma Shé-zér Chatral
Hindu	Mr. S. Sharma
Jewish	Mr. A. Davidson
Sikh	Vacancy
Muslim	Vacancy

Representatives Of Teachers' Associations

NAHT	Mrs. L. Davies
NUT	Ms. A. Wiggins
NUT	Mrs. R. Davies
NUT	Mrs. C. Cooper
ATL	Mrs. S. Perry-Phillips
NUT	Mrs. L. Wilkinson
NUT	Mrs. J. Thomas

Co-option

Mrs I. Murphy
Mr. S. Mock

Officers:

Ms G. Vaisey	RE Consultant
Mrs. K. Christofi	School Improvement Officer
Mrs. E. Tapper	Clerk to SACRE

Annex D) **Distribution of the Annual Report**

A copy of this annual report has been sent to the following organisations:

- Monmouthshire County Council Full Council
- All Monmouthshire County Council maintained primary, secondary and special schools
- Voluntary Aided Schools in Monmouthshire
- University of Wales, Newport
- Welsh Government / DfES
- National Library of Wales

It has been made available to WASACRE and all Local Education Authorities in Wales via the Welsh Association of SACRE's website.

SUBJECT: PARK STREET SCHOOL – Health & Safety Works
MEETING: CABINET
DATE: 6th November 2013
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: GROFIELD

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To seek approval from members to amend the Property Maintenance Capital Programme to fund the works required at the former Park Street school building, thereby enabling the completion of the lease to ACT.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees to vary the Property Maintenance Capital Programme by viring funding from the Schools Kitchen Maintenance Budget to undertake the required Fire Safety Works at Park Street.
- 2.2 That the lease to ACT is completed as soon as practicable.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The school was declared surplus and advertised for sale by auction in November 2009. A day prior to the auction the property was removed at the request of ACT to enable them to apply for funding to acquire the site. ACT were unsuccessful with their grant bids and were unable to secure any other form of funding to help them acquire the building. As a result it was decided to re-advertise the building for sale and it was due to be sold by public auction in June 2011.
- 3.2 ACT approached the Council requesting that they be granted a further opportunity to acquire the site, including the possibility of leasing it. This was agreed and the property was removed a few days before the intended June 2011 auction.

- 3.3 There followed a protracted period of negotiations wherein ACT were preparing a business plan and the parties were discussing the terms and conditions of a proposed lease. In July 2012, Cabinet agreed to the grant of the lease to ACT.
- 3.4 As the lease discussions were being held, it became apparent that the proposed 3 yearly break clause caused problems for ACT in applying for grant funding. We therefore agreed on the principle of an initial short term lease (3 years – equal to the first break in the lease terms Council initially agreed to), followed by a full 25 year lease without breaks, if within the 3 years ACT achieve committed unconditional grant funding of at least £230k (a figure ACT identified as required to get the building and project up and running). This would give the Council comfort that ACT are likely to be viable moving forward, and could therefore agree to the new lease terms. It also provides time for ACT to obtain sufficient grants and funding to enable them to progress the project.
- 3.5 The mission statement for ACT is as follows:
The Abergavenny Community Trust is a catalyst for positive social change. The movement offers a safe anchoring point for building and sustaining resilience at the grassroots. The community-led vision ~ to bring people and places together ~ springs from a desire to co-create a welcoming space where mutual acts of kindness and a sense of inclusion spreads widely throughout the community to have a positive, remedial effect on people's health and wellbeing and upon the natural and built environment.
- 3.6 As landlord of the building, the Council is required to undertake a number of health and safety surveys and any identified remedial works prior to the occupation of the building. Initial advice was to undertake the Fire Risk Assessment at the point of occupation, however due to feedback from a contractor visiting the site to, this survey was brought forward.
- 3.7 The completed survey highlighted a series of works and some repairs have already been undertaken to rectify electrical faults at a cost of £3,700 +VAT. The Fire Risk Assessment however has identified substantial works estimated at a cost of £45,000 plus VAT. There is also the potential for a further £11,000 plus VAT for asbestos removal works. Currently there is no budget in place to fund these works, however the Property Business Services Manager has identified that the works could be covered by slipping works to the Schools Kitchen Maintenance Budget identified in the Property Maintenance Capital Programme.
- 3.10 Given that the building has been vacant since 2006 the fabric is continuing to deteriorate and will continue to do so until it is either leased or sold. The Council has to date incurred around £20,100 (plus VAT) removing the deteriorating portacabins and dealing with urgent issues and security breaches.

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 Following Council's decision in July 2012 discussions over the lease have been on-going. An initial short term lease for 3 years has been proposed to enable ACT to occupy the building, to avoid further expenditure for MCC and to provide time for ACT to obtain sufficient grants and funding to enable them to progress the project.
- 4.2 Since the Council decision in July 2012 ACT inform that they have continued to build momentum and attract interest in using the building. They have been preparing and writing applications, but not submitting as funders advised that they need a lease in place before funding can be committed. ACT have advised that the issue frustrating progress is the lack of a signed lease.
- 4.3 The safety surveys highlighted substantial works required to satisfy the FRA and there is no MCC budget to cover these costs. ACT have budgeted for some works relating to a FRA, but not to this level. Some of the required work relating to the means of escape may be able to be undertaken in partnership with ACT as part of their intended works to the building.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 By leasing the property to the ACT, the Council is losing a capital receipt in the region of £300,000. The agreed annual rental is £9,250 for the school and £1,200 for the car park (which the council agreed to lease for a period of 1 year, to be reviewed), albeit that the tenant will be applying for a rental grant from the Council.
- 5.2 The further works required are at an estimated cost of up to £56,000. It is proposed that these works are funded from the approved building maintenance capital programme, however, this will result in planned works to the Schools Kitchen maintenance programme being deferred.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

The equality impacts identified in the assessment are either neutral or positive.

7. CONSULTEES:

All Cabinet Members
Leadership Team
Head of Legal Services – Rob Tranter
Monitoring Officer – Murray Andrews

Local Member – Cllr Doug Edwards
Economy & Enterprise – James Woodcock / Dave Bevan

Comments received:

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Previous Cabinet report, meeting date 18th July 2012 and 5th June 2013.

ACT Business Plan.

This background paper is exempt by virtue of s100D (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as it discloses information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the County Council) and the public interest in disclosing the information is outweighed by that in disclosing it.

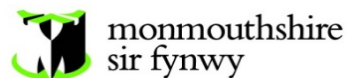
9. AUTHOR:

Debra Hill-Howells, Estates & Sustainability Manager

10. CONTACT DETAILS:

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e-mail: debrahill-howells@monmouthshire.gov.uk



**CABINET
DECISION RECORDING LOG**

DECISION DETERMINED ON: 6TH NOVEMBER 2013

DECISION WILL COME INTO EFFECT ON: 15TH NOVEMBER 2013
(Subject to "Call-in" by appropriate Select Committee)

SUBJECT: PARK STREET SCHOOL – HEALTH AND SAFETY WORKS

DIVISION//WARD AFFECTED: GROFIELD

PURPOSE:

To seek approval from members to amend the Property Maintenance Capital Programme to fund the works required at the former Park Street school building, thereby enabling the completion of the lease to ACT.

DECISION:

1. To agree to vary the Property Maintenance Capital Programme by viring funding from the Schools Kitchen Maintenance Budget to undertake the required Fire Safety Works at Park Street.
2. That the lease to ACT is completed as soon as practicable.

REASONS:

1. Following Council's decision in July 2012 discussions over the lease have been on-going. An initial short term lease for 3 years has been proposed to enable ACT to occupy the building, to avoid further expenditure for MCC and to provide time for ACT to obtain sufficient grants and funding to enable them to progress the project.
2. Since the Council decision in July 2012 ACT inform that they have continued to build momentum and attract interest in using the building. They have been preparing and writing applications, but not submitting as funders advised that they need a lease in place before funding can be committed. ACT have advised that the issue frustrating progress is the lack of a signed lease.
3. The safety surveys highlighted substantial works required to satisfy the FRA and there is no MCC budget to cover these costs. ACT have budgeted for some works relating to a FRA, but not to this level. Some of the required work relating to the means of escape may be able to be undertaken in partnership with ACT as part of their intended works to the building.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

1. By leasing the property to the ACT, the Council is losing a capital receipt in the region of £300,000. The agreed annual rental is £9,250 for the school and £1,200 for the car park (which the council agreed to lease for a period of 1 year, to be reviewed), albeit that the tenant will be applying for a rental grant from the Council.
2. The further works required are at an estimated cost of up to £56,000. It is proposed that these works are funded from the approved building maintenance capital programme, however, this will result in planned works to the Schools Kitchen maintenance programme being deferred.

CONSULTEES:

All Cabinet Members, Leadership Team, Head of Legal Services – Rob Tranter, Monitoring Officer – Murray Andrews, Local Member – Cllr Doug Edwards, Economy & Enterprise – James Woodcock / Dave Bevan.

CABINET MEMBERS PRESENT:

G.C. Burrows, P.A. Fox, R.J.W. Greenland, E.J. Hackett Pain, P.A.D. Hobson, G. Howard, P. Murphy.

OTHER ELECTED MEMBERS PRESENT:

D.L. Edwards, P. Farley, L. Guppy, R.G. Harris, S.G.M. Howarth, M. Powell, J.L. Prosser.

INTEREST DECLARED:

County Councillor D.L. Edwards declared a personal interest under the Members' Code of Conduct as a member of the Board of Abergavenny Community Trust.

AUTHOR:

Debra Hill-Howells, Estates & Sustainability Manager

CONTACT DETAILS:

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E-mail: debrahill-howells@monmouthshire.gov.uk



CALL IN REQUEST

1. SUBJECT:

Park Street School - Health and Safety Works

2. DATE OF CABINET MEETING:

6th November 2013.

3. CABINET DECISION:

① To agree to vary the property maintenance capital programme by using funding from the schools kitchen maintenance budget to undertake the required fire safety works at park street.
 ② that the lease to ACT is completed as soon as practicable

4. REASON(S) FOR CALL- IN:

The uncertainty of the viability of the Park Street School project means that the using of the funding from the schools kitchen maintenance budget is an unjustifiable risk

5. MEMBERS CALLING-IN:

(The Chairman of a Select Committee or any three non-executive members)

Name

Ward

R. Hayward

Duxton with Osbaston

D. Blakeborough

Trellech United

Alan Wintell

Clareville United

ALAN WINTELL

DRYBRIDGE

Please identify which Select Committee should hear the call in based on the reasons for the call in request

STRONG COMMUNITIES | ECON DEV

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Extract from the Minutes of the Strong Communities Select Committee held at County Hall, Usk on Thursday 28th November 2013 at 10.00am

PRESENT: County Councillor S.G.M. Howarth (Chairman)

County Councillors: A. Easson, M. Hickman, D. Jones, M. Powell, V. E. Smith, S. White and A. Wintle.

Also Present:

County Councillor D. Blakebrough

County Councillor D. Edwards

County Councillor P. Fox - (Leader) Cabinet Member with responsibility for Organisational Development

County Councillor R. J. C. Hayward

County Councillor P. A. D. Hobson (Deputy Leader) Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Development

County Councillor B. Jones - Cabinet Member with responsibility for County Operations

Representing Abergavenny Community Trust:

Ms Marion Pearse and Mr Laury Jones

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs K Beirne	- Chief Officer for Regeneration and Culture
Mr C. Edmunds	- Democratic Services Officer
Mr G. Edmunds	- Cleansing and Waste Manager
Ms D Hill – Howells	- Estates Manager, Estates and Sustainability
Mr M Howcroft	- Assistant Head of Finance (Central Finance)
Mr R D Jones	- Improvement Support Officer
Mrs R Jowitt	- Waste Strategy and Resources Manager
Mr A Wallen	- SWTRA and Street Light Manager
Mr R Webb	- Communications Manager

1. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Consideration was given to the question of excluding the press and public from discussion of the following Call-In item in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the item involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

County Councillor Easson expressed the view that the exclusion of the press and public was not necessary because he did not believe there was anything in the exempt papers which were submitted as background to this item which should not be discussed in open session.

In response, the Chief Officer for Regeneration and Culture highlighted that the exempt documents included the Business Plan submitted by Abergavenny Community Trust for redeveloping the Park Road School Building as a Centre for Wellbeing and Learning Excellence and a Social Hub including a Child's Nursery and facilities for Community Arts. As such, the Business Plan contained information which was commercially sensitive. In particular, there was a need for due diligence concerning information relating to anticipated costs which would be used as background to tendering procedures relating to certain aspects of the project.

The Leader of the Council emphasised that the exempt documents which had been circulated to members of the Committee under confidential cover had been submitted to several other committees during the process of considering the project and the exemption had not been challenged at any of those meetings.

Bearing in mind the points now raised, it was duly resolved that the Press and Public should be excluded from discussion on the following Call-In item, in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

2. CALL IN: PARK STREET SCHOOL - HEALTH AND SAFETY WORKS

County Councillor Douglas Edwards declared a personal interest in this item in line with paragraphs 10,11 and 12 of the Members Code of Conduct as set down in the Local Government Act 2000, in that he was a member of the Abergavenny Community Trust.

Before proceeding with discussion, the Chairman questioned whether the documents before the committee were up to date in that he understood that there had been changes in the officers of the Abergavenny Community Trust since the Business Plan relating to Park Street School had been published in May 2012. It was also questioned whether the detail of the plan need to be updated. In response members were informed by the Chief Officer for Regeneration and Culture that it was not unusual for officers of organisations to change and that such changes had to be registered with Companies House, as was the case for the Abergavenny Community Trust.

With regard to updating the Business Plan, it was highlighted that the Trust had prepared a revised description for the Park Street School Project in July 2013 and that this document was included with the exempt documents before the committee, which had been submitted to Cabinet on 6th November 2013.

The Chairman then informed members that a Call-In request had been received in respect of a decision made by Cabinet Member on 6th November 2013 regarding Park Street School and Health and Safety Works.

We were reminded members that the Call-in process was set out within the County Council's Constitution and the purpose of the Call- in now before the committee was to consider the appropriateness of a decision that had already been taken by the Council's Executive.

Members were also advised that, in accordance with the procedure, there were three options open to them concerning the Call - in, which were:

1. To accept the Cabinet's decision;
2. To refer the matter back to Cabinet for re-consideration (with reasons)
3. To refer the matter to Council for consideration.

As background to consideration, the following documents were submitted to the committee;

- A copy of the Call-in request
- A copy of the Decision Log and Cabinet Report dated 6th November 2013
- Exempt background documents relating to this matter considered by Cabinet on 6th November
- Details of the Call-in Mechanism

With regard to the Call-in request, it was highlighted that the Call-in related to the following decisions made by the Cabinet on 6th November 2013:

- (1)To agree to vary the Property Maintenance Capital Programme by viring funding from the Schools Kitchen Budget to undertake the required Fire Safety Works at Park Street;***
(2)That the lease to ACT is completed as soon as possible.

The reasons for the request were listed as :

“The uncertainty of the viability of the Park Street School project means that the viring of the funding from the schools kitchen maintenance budget is an unjustifiable risk.

Following on from this information, the members who had submitted the Call-in request were invited address the committee on the reasons for calling in the Cabinet decision.

County Councillor Blakebrough explained that she welcomed the exciting and ambitious project for the future use of the Park Street School building and supported the sentiment of the business plan. However, in spite of her enthusiasm for the project, she was concerned about its' viability because there was now a climate of cuts in public expenditure and there was pressure to keep costs low. Councillor Blakebrough was also concerned that money had been vired from the Schools Maintenance Capital Programme.

County Councillor Hayward contended that there was a need to be clear about the question of supporting the project and he felt that the business case was aspirational, relying on a considerable amount of money coming in and involving the

employment of some staff. He also suggested that the Council should look beyond supporting this as a project for a community building and that there was a need to establish that the project was backed by a clear budget, which could provide long term financial support and uphold funding for staffing needs at the site.

County Councillor Wintle expressed support for the points raised by County Councillors Blakebrough and Hayward, particularly in terms of concern about taking money from the Schools Kitchen Maintenance Budget and the potential cost implications for the County Council if the Community Trust project went wrong. Consequently, he suggested that it might be more appropriate for the Community Trust to take on the building as it was, bearing in mind that the County Council was struggling to reduce its' expenditure budget. He also highlighted that there appeared to be a lot of questions to be resolved about the project, including the need to secure grant support.

County Councillor Howarth echoed the concerns raised by County Councillor Blakebrough, Hayward and Wintle about the Cabinet decision to vire funds for Health and Safety Works at the Park Street School site and the financial viability of the Community Trust Project.

The following points were raised in response to the issues raised by members who had submitted the call in request:

- ❖ The proposals put forward by the Community Trust were acceptable in terms of Community Development and the focus of the call-in was to question the viring funding to enable Health and Safety works, rather than to challenge the viability of the project;
- ❖ The Council had made a clear decision to support this project and the decision to vire money was fundamentally about ensuring the project was Health and Safety compliant;
- ❖ The money for the virement would not disadvantage the Schools Budget because it was being taken from within the County Council's general maintenance regime, which included maintenance for school kitchens;
- ❖ It was questioned why the Health and Safety issue had not been raised at the time when the project was initially discussed and concerns were raised about the lack of progress on obtaining grant support.
- ❖ In response it was highlighted that the Health and Safety issue relating to the kitchen had only recently emerged as preparations for the lease of the property were being taken forward and the County Council had a legal obligation to ensure that its' properties were Health and Safety compliant, hence the necessity for the virement.
- ❖ It was highlighted that, if the ACT project did not succeed, the expenditure on Health and Safety compliance would not be wasted because such compliance would make the property more marketable.
- ❖ It was also highlighted that the project had attracted support from a number of organisations, including Abergavenny Town Council and a playgroup which was keen to make a regular commitment to using the proposed community facilities at the Park Road School site.
- ❖ Arising from concern about the viability of the project, attention was drawn to the success of a similar community facility projects at Drybridge House

Monmouth and the Drill Hall, Chepstow, which had had attracted grant support and had succeeded.

County Councillor Susan White declared a personal interest in relation to this topic of discussion in line with paragraphs 10,11 and 12 of the Members Code of Conduct as set down in the Local Government Act 2000, as a trustee of Drybridge House, Monmouth.

- ❖ Reference was also made to the fact that grant aid for such projects did not tend to emerge until a lease arrangement was in place.
- ❖ Looking to the long term, members were informed that the Monmouthshire enterprise would be working with the Abergavenny Community Trust on “whole place” planning to attract appropriate grant support for the Park Street School project.
- ❖ In spite of the information which emerged from this discussion, the members who had requested the call-in remained concerned about the viability of the project, particularly in terms of the fact that the project had not moved forward and a lease had not been signed, in spite of the original business plan being submitted to the County Council eighteen months ago.
- ❖ In rounding off discussion, attention was drawn to the fact that there were already a significant number of buildings in Abergavenny set aside for community activities.

At the conclusion of discussion it was proposed by County Councillor A. Easson and seconded by County Councillor A. Wintle that the decisions made by the Cabinet on 6th November 2013 concerning the Park Street School Project as detailed above be referred to the full council for consideration.

It was then proposed as an amendment by County Councillor V. E. Smith and seconded by County Councillor M. Powell that the decisions made by the Cabinet on 6th November 2013 concerning the Park Street School Project be accepted.

On being put to the vote 4 votes were registered in favour of the amendment and 4 votes were registered against. Accordingly, the Chairman exercised his casting vote against the amendment and the amendment was therefore lost.

Voting was then undertaken on the motion to refer the matter to the Council for consideration and 4 votes were registered in favour and 4 votes against. Accordingly, the Chairman exercised his casting vote in favour of the motion and the motion was duly carried.

SUBJECT:	21st CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME
MEETING:	Council
DATE:	16th January 2014
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

To seek approval of the initial two (of the four secondary schools cluster programme) Strategic Outline Cases (SOC) and changes to the original Strategic Outline Proposal (Council report on 10th November 2011), associated with Monmouthshire's 21st Century Schools Programme.

To outline projects relating to the capital expenditure programme targeted at the re-development of Monmouthshire's Secondary Schools estates, for funding under the Welsh Governments (WG) 21st Century Schools Programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

To endorse the phased building approach advocated in delivering the whole schools programme.

Approval of the revised Strategic Outline Proposal (SOP) for the 21st Century Schools Programme, all changes since the previously approved SOP (November 2011) . (See Appendix A)

To approve the two SOC's in advance of receiving Welsh Government (WG) approval of them estimated to be achieved by the end of January 2014 and the approval to commence on the development of the next stage (stage 4 of 5) the Outline Business Cases (OBC) for the first two bids. (See Appendix B and C)

To receive further reports as progress is made through the process and funding from WG is confirmed, in order to approve the inclusion of the projects in the capital programme.

3. KEY ISSUES:

This paper updates the Council on changes to the programme taken since Council approval on the 10th November 2011 (Agenda item 10 – stage 1 and 2 of WG funding process) . All changes to the programme have been developed in collaboration with

WG to provide MCC with the best opportunity to meet the revised funding and assessment requirements of the revised WG programme.

Key changes since the last paper are:

- Proposal is to provide new build solutions instead of extensive refurbishment and part new build. The revised proposal provides in the long term better value for money, modern teaching and learning environments and a more sustainable and responsive building stock.
- Phasing the programme to meet WG funding strategy/ timescales. This means delivering the four secondary school programme in two phases of two.

All changes to the original Strategic Outline Proposal (agreed by council on the 10th November 2011) are identified in detail in the revised Strategic Outline Proposal document dated 3rd October 2013. (see Appendix A)

The programme of secondary schools projects has been amended to meet the revised Welsh Government Funding strategy, with regards to:

- Maximise the opportunity /availability of WG funding streams.
- To meet the key assessment criteria with regards to the reduction of surplus places, estate inefficiencies and suitability with regards to meeting the needs of new / modern 21st Century teaching and learning environments.
- Development of the schools cluster model (primary and secondary) to meet:WG / MCC's transformational teaching and learning agenda. To promote and support knowledge share, good teaching and learning practices between all schools. To develop efficiencies in the management and running of the schools estates.

The four Secondary Schools cluster programme includes the following. The clusters include primary feeder schools associated with each comprehensive.

- Monmouth Comprehensive School Cluster. - SOC submitted to WG (October 2013),WG approval estimated in February 2014 – See Appendix B
- Caldicot School Cluster. – SOC submitted to WG (October 2013) WG approval estimated in February 2014 – See Appendix C
- King Henry VIII Comprehensive School Cluster. – Abervageny - WG to confirm timescale for submission of the SOC.
- Chepstow Comprehensive School Cluster. – WG to confirm timescales for submission of the SOC.

Extensive feasibility studies have been undertaken on all the existing secondary schools estates which has informed /prioritised the first wave of bids.

The funding process from Welsh Government for the 21st Century Schools Programme is broken down into five key stages; the SOC (current stage) is stage three of the WG

funding process. The approval of these two SOC's is required / essential from Council in advance of receiving approval from the Welsh Government (WG).

The five stages of the funding process are:

1. Identification/ assessment of need.
2. Strategic Outline Proposal.
3. Strategic Outline Case.
4. Outline Business Case.
5. Full Business Case.

Structure of the SOC's has been developed in the required format for full assessment of the documentation by WG. These key areas of assessment being:

- The Strategic Case – Educational / organisational / service need.
- The Economic Case – Identifying measures of success - educationally, socially, community benefits as well as optioneering to ensure suitability and sustainability of the proposal moreover the ability of the project to achieve real and measurable outcomes.
- The Commercial Case – Ensuring that all project risks are identified and managed. Identification of the most beneficial procurement process and that the right design and construction partners are identified. To ensure “value for money” is achieved through the programme.
- The Financial Case - Identification of total project costs and how the revised 50% / 50% funding is to be achieved and delivered.
- The Management Case- The appropriate structures, processes and procedures are in place to ensure the perfect delivery of the programme.

The priority of the SOC's and WG funding is to meet the needs of the secondary schools, a financial allowance has been identified in each SOC's to meet some of the needs of the primary schools within the clusters to meet this transitional agenda, the OBC will define this in more detail.

Submitted SOC's have been reviewed and assessed for validity by an external third party consultant prior to submission to the WG.

4. REASONS:

The 21st Century Schools programme for Monmouthshire has been revised to suit the WG funding requirements and revised prioritisation/ funding criteria. This is captured in the revised SOP attached to this report (Appendix A)

The first part of the programme (captured in the first two SOC's) is due now to commence in February 2014. WG extension to the overall 21st Century Schools Programme now until 2020 has facilitated a rolling programme of work throughout this period. The SOC's for the remaining two clusters will be commenced once approval to

do so is received from WG. All schools to be engaged in the programme to ensure lessons learnt, good practice is shared and outcomes are achieved.

Full Council approval of the first two SOC's is essential before WG approval is provided and programme is maintained.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

WG funding is fixed at £40m for the first two clusters, and on a 50% WG 50%MCC basis, this effectively caps our projected modernisation of schools agenda at £80m initially.

The gross cost of this first element of the programme of works is still as reported at £79.5m. As required under the programme a 50% contribution from MCC is required, this amounts to £39.75m.

This is broken down as follows:

- Monmouth Schools Cluster Project – Value £36.9m
 1. New 1600 pupil secondary school. (approx. £33.0m)
 2. Works to feeder primaries (approx. £3.9m)
- Caldicot Schools Cluster Project - Value £34.9m
 1. New 1500 pupil secondary school. (approx. £31.0m)
 2. Works to feeder primaries (approx. £3.9m)

- Welsh Medium secondary school provision – Value £5.0m

- Raglan Primary School – Value £4.7m

(figures above include an additional £2.0m approved by council to fund the overall programme, not included in the SOC's)

Funding sources principally comprise of capital receipts generated from the Authorities school and general land and property portfolio. A large proportion of these receipts are forecast and remain to be banked and therefore risk remains in the current economic climate. However, the Authority could look at alternative financing options in the event that capital receipts do not materialise in timescales required, such as efficiency savings from schools. It is expected that the remaining shortfall in funding will come from prudential borrowing.

WG have advised that there is a second round of funding within the whole programme. The Council will need time to consider how it could fund its share of the proposed 2nd round of works, when further information on the next phase is available.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

An outline Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out in the original Strategic Outline Programme (SOP). This will require further review and development before commencement of the Outline Business Case (OBC). The EIA will form an integral part of the project and will be monitored throughout the programme as projects are considered and progressed.

7. CONSULTEES:

- 21st Century Schools Project Board.
- Programmed Members Seminars.
- Headteachers, staff and community focus groups.
- MCC Cross Service providers.

8. APPENDICES:

- a. **Appendix A** - Proposed changes to 21st Century Programme, the revised Strategic Outline Proposal (SOP) (in line with WG advice) submitted with the SOC's – dated 3rd October 2013 (attached).
- b. **Appendix B** - Monmouth Schools Cluster Project – Strategic Outline Case.
<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/meetings/event/county-council-16-january-2014/>
- c. **Appendix C** - Caldicot Schools Cluster Project – Strategic Outline Case.
<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/meetings/event/county-council-16-january-2014/>

Background papers

- d. Members seminar presentation 1 – 22nd October 2013.
<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/meetings/event/county-council-16-january-2014/>
- e. Members seminar presentation 2 – 16th December 2013.
<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/meetings/event/county-council-16-january-2014/>

9. AUTHOR:

Simon Kneafsey. Programme Manager for the 21st Century Schools programme, Children and Young People.

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PAPER TO WELSH GOVERNMENT OUTLINING THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO BAND A PROPOSALS SUBMITTED BY MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL IN THE STRATEGIC OUTLINE PROGRAMME

PURPOSE

The purpose of the paper is to inform Welsh Government of the proposed changes to the Band A proposals submitted by Monmouthshire County Council in The Strategic Outline Programme.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation is that Welsh Government considers and approves the changes to the revised Strategic Outline Programme that was submitted to WG in 2011.

This will allow Monmouthshire to proceed with the step change in delivering its vision for learning and teaching.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Since submitting the revised Strategic Outline Programme in 2011 Monmouthshire has undertaken a significant amount of research to determine its overarching vision for learning and teaching and the impact this has on the design of new schools.

A number of public engagement workshop sessions have been undertaken with the staff and students in the 4 Secondary Schools which have contributed greatly towards our intention to create flexible facilities and environments that facilitate new pedagogical approaches and ways of working. In addition we aim to create enterprising, successful and sustainable communities. This approach has already been adopted in the more recent primary schools that we have opened.

Officers have also visited a number of educational establishments across the United Kingdom to observe best practice in delivering a curriculum that is suitable for the 21st century and beyond. We have also undertaken global research which has influenced our developing approach. Representatives from the 4 secondary schools have also had the opportunity to visit these establishments with officers.

As Caldicot and Monmouth are the priority projects within our programme, the outcome of the above work has resulted in the formulation of an Education and ICT Design Brief, which outlines the strategic vision we need to adopt in order for us to achieve our overarching aim of raising standards of achievement and attainment across the County.

Key to the success of our vision is the incorporation of a cluster model approach which will support the whole education model change.

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

Welsh Government will be aware that Monmouthshire has made significant progress in upgrading a number of its primary schools. It now needs to address the suitability of its secondary schools and utilise the same criteria to review the remaining primary schools.

Due to funding constraints the replacement of Caldicot and Monmouth Secondary Schools would be the Authority's first priority, however, it is essential that we adopt a strategic view in delivering our needs. To achieve this we recognise that a step change is required which will deliver learning and teaching environments in both primary and secondary phases that promote and support:

- a system wide collaborative research, development, implementation and evaluation of technology-rich personalised models of learning and teaching. Also, a curriculum is required that enables students to develop knowledge, skills and innovative attributes for effective lifelong learning and employment;
- the development of community focussed learning campuses where the school is a resource to the community and the community is a resource to the school bringing reciprocal benefits through the sharing of expertise, provision and facilities.

We also need to narrow the gap between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 results, fulfilling the requirements for transitional work between schools.

It would be beneficial to develop the above objectives on a cluster basis to ensure that the strategic vision is achieved.

Transition from primary to secondary school is an important stage in a child's education and our updated proposals will assist and support this step, promoting the new pedagogical approach to learning. The cluster groups of schools already work closely together to produce their Transition Plan and this revised programme will result in a breadth of provision that further enhances the already established collaborative working.

Transition was a key issue that was raised in our public engagement/workshop sessions that were held with stakeholders, and the incorporation of low cost/no cost lifecycle initiatives in the Caldicot and Monmouth primary cluster schools will provide the strategic approach that is required to raise standards of achievement and attainment within both areas.

In order to further enhance this transition work it is recognised that Change Management and Continuing Professional Development for staff is also central to the success of our programme and we will be ensuring that staff will be provided with the relevant skills to deliver the new pedagogical approach to learning and teaching. The cluster model will create collaborative opportunities for staff to work together across all key stages, sharing good practice and next practice.

It is essential that the Change Management Programme commences immediately in order to gain ownership and commitment from staff, whilst the building programme is being progressed. The Authority also intends to fully engage with relevant Trade Union representatives, with the support of The Employee Services Department.

The proposals will equip students of all ages with the relevant skills and qualifications required in a technologically-evolving society. They will also provide increased opportunities for learners to engage in enquiry-based approaches that develop transferable thinking and learning skills across the curriculum to raise standards.

Students and staff require learning environments that inspire and motivate learners of all ages and support innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Presently, the above developments are being held back by a lack of suitable environments to support the different types of learning activities that are required to develop these skills.

THE PREFERRED WAY FORWARD

The following changes are proposed:

To remove the under-mentioned projects from Band A that were included in our revised SOP, 2011:

King Henry V111 Comprehensive School, Abergavenny

Chepstow Comprehensive School, Chepstow

Thornwell Primary School, Chepstow – Phase 2

Ysgol Y FFin, Caldicot – Phase 2

Castle Park Primary School – Phase 3

Llanfair Kilgeddin Voluntary Aided Primary School

LlanvihangelCrucorney Primary School, Abergavenny

Goytre Primary School – Phase 2

The revised SOP (2011) states that we will be investing £60 million in our 4 secondary schools and £5 million contribution towards a South East Wales solution for Welsh Medium Secondary provision. In addition, we allocated £14.5 million to be spent across our identified primary projects. This amounted to a £79.5 million programme, which was approved, in principle, by Welsh Government.

To agree to the following amended Band A projects:

Caldicot School and Cluster Primary Schools - £35,000,000.00

Monmouth Comprehensive School and Cluster Primary Schools - £37,000,000.00

Welsh Medium Secondary Provision - £5,000,000.00 (as part of a South East Wales solution). Discussions are ongoing with the 5 South East Wales authorities in an attempt to resolve this issue

Raglan Voluntary Controlled Primary School - £4,500,000.00 – Project already approved following the successful submission of A Business Justification Case.

In addition to the above £79.5 million programme Monmouthshire has invested a further £1,000,000.00 in 2012/13 and £1,000,000.00 in 2013/14 from within our Capital budget to commence work on our programme. As a result of this we are confident that in April 2014 we will have reached RIBA Stage D on the Secondary School projects together with work being undertaken in the associated primary partners.

It should be noted that at this stage the above changes are subject to Member approval.

CONCLUSION

The main impetus for our School Development Programme is to raise standards of achievement and attainment. This is driven by developing a fundamental shift in learning and teaching across the whole of the authority. The revised Band A proposals will contribute towards our overall aim, placing a greater emphasis on personalised and independent learning in all key stages.

Our revised programme will also address the issue of surplus places in both the primary and secondary sectors.

The cluster model will emphasise the importance of collaborative working creating increased opportunities for learning and teaching. The schools within the area will be

seen as” hubs” that deliver an education provision that is fit for the future, builds community cohesion and contributes to the regeneration of each town. More importantly, it will allow us to provide each individual child with the opportunities that they deserve that will assist them in life, learning and employability.

This paper has been approved by the Councils 21st Century School Project Board, which has Member representation, however is subject to political approval within the next month.

SIGNED.....

SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER..... MARK FOWLER

DATE..... 3/10/2013

REPORT

Agenda Item 12(a)

SUBJECT:	FOOD HYGIENE RATING (WALES) Act 2013
DIRECTORATE:	REGENERATION AND CULTURE
MEETING:	COUNCIL
DATE:	16 JANUARY 2014
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. Purpose:

- 1.1 To agree the Authority's approach to implementing its duties under the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 To delegate the powers set out in Schedule One to this report to officers duly authorised by the Head of Regulatory Services.
- 2.2 To set a fee for re-rating of businesses upon request at £150, subject to annual review by the Public Protection Manager (and revision if deemed by them to be appropriate) in consultation with the directorate accountant.

3. Key Issues:

- 3.1 Monmouthshire County Council, like all Councils in Wales, has statutory responsibilities as a *Food Authority* to enforce relevant food law in its area.
- 3.2 The day to day discharge of the Authority's duties are undertaken by officers of the Public Protection Department who are authorised under various statutory provisions including: Section 5(6) of the Food Safety Act 1990, regulations made thereunder, the European Communities Act 1972, including the Food Hygiene (Wales) Regulations 2006 and the Official Feed and Food Controls (Wales) Regulations 2009
- 3.3 Welsh Government has recently introduced new legislation under the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013 to establish a mandatory food hygiene rating scheme. This sets out statutory obligations on local authorities to inspect and rate the hygiene of food business in their area in accordance with the requirements of Welsh Government and the Food Standards Agency. Whilst the programme of inspections will largely be aligned with existing inspection responsibilities, the Act and Regulations thereunder introduce additional responsibilities upon the Authority in relation implementation and enforcement of the scheme. The framework for the scheme is set out in detail in the Act and food teams across Wales have received guidance and training to support consistent implementation. The scheme is based on the voluntary Food Hygiene Rating scheme which has been in place since October 2010. A summary of the mandatory scheme is attached as an attachment, entitled "Mandation Leaflet for LA's, Food hygiene is getting easier to spot in Wales"
- 3.4 The Act also imposes a legal requirement on food businesses to display their rating and provides enforcement duties and powers to Food Authorities and their Authorised Officers in relation to these requirements.

- 3.4 The practical implementation of the Authority's day to day duties, requires the delegation of powers to officers as set out in Schedule One to this report.
- 3.5 Under the Act and subject to certain conditions, businesses have the right to request a further inspection with a view to a re-rating being carried out. The authority may recover the costs reasonably incurred in undertaking such a re-rating. To ensure a consistent approach across Wales, officers have liaised, together with Welsh Government and the Food Standards Agency to calculate a standardised fee based upon reasonable costs. This has been agreed at £150. (This is VAT exempt). Whilst the Authority may wish to review its fees each year, these will need to be based upon a calculation of costs and ideally reflect a consistency across Wales. Inasmuch this report recommends that the fee be reviewed and if deemed by them to be appropriate, revised each year by the Public Protection Manager in consultation with directorate accountants.

4. Reasons:

- 4.1 The authorisation of officers under the legislation is required to enable the council to fulfil its statutory duty as a Food Authority.
- 4.2 The fee reflects the recovery of reasonable costs calculated to be incurred in carrying out re-ratings upon request.

5. Resource Implications:

- 5.1 Implementation will be carried out primarily within the normal statutory work programme. However, it is unclear how many applications for revisits for re-rating might be received. The cost of that additional work would be recovered by the fee recommended in this report. Any significant increase in revisit applications could have a negative impact on the ability of the service to meet inspection obligations under the Code of Practice, where the priority is dealing with high risk and non-compliant businesses. The workload will be monitored and consultation with staff and their representatives will be undertaken as appropriate.
- 5.2 A small grant of £5,000 for 2013-14 and the same for 2014-15 has been made available by Welsh Government to assist the introduction of the scheme.

6. Sustainable Development and Equality Impact Implications:

- 6.1 Any decision taken in relation to recommendation one of this report relates merely to the implementation of Government policy through the delegation of powers and as such is not considered to have any Equality or Sustainable Development Impact. In relation to recommendation two, any fees set will be payable only by those requesting a revisit and should not impact, particularly, on any specified group.

7. Consultees:

Senior Leadership Team
Cabinet Members
Head of Legal Services
Head of Finance
Head of Public Health & Culture
Equality@monmouthshire.gov.uk

8. Results of Consultation:

There have been no adverse comments made. An appendix has been added to provide additional information to clarify the key elements of the Scheme.

9: Background Papers:

Single Member report 24th March 2010 which recommended and gained agreement on adoption within Monmouthshire of the then discretionary National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

10. Author:

Gillian Dicken, Principal EHO tel 5701 gilliandicken@monmouthshire.gov.uk
Graham Perry, Public Protection Manager grahamperry@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Schedule One: Powers to be delegated too officers.

The following powers are to be given to Food Law Enforcement Officers considered by the Public Protection Manager to be competent, duly authorised by the Head of Regulatory Services:

“To discharge the general duties and powers of the Authority under the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013 and any regulations made thereunder, including but not solely:

Section 3: to assess the food hygiene standards of a food establishment and produce a rating (a “food hygiene rating”) for that establishment scored against criteria set out by the Food Standards Agency (the “rating criteria”).

Section 17 Power of entry.

(1) An authorised officer of a food authority may, on production of the officer’s written authority if demanded, enter at all reasonable hours a food business establishment for the purpose of— .

- (a) producing a food hygiene rating; .
- (b) carrying out a re-rating; .
- (c) determining an appeal under section 5; or .
- (d) enforcing any of the requirements in section 7.

(2) But in the case of entry into any part of an establishment used only as a private dwelling 24 hours’ notice of the intended entry must be given to the operator.

Section 21 Fixed Penalties.

(1) Where an authorised officer of a food authority has reason to believe that a person has committed an offence under section 9, the officer may give a notice to the person offering the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for the offence by payment of a fixed penalty. .

(2) Where a person is given a notice under this section in respect of an offence— .

- (a) no proceedings may be instituted for the offence before the end of a period specified in the notice, and .
- (b) the person may not be convicted of the offence if the person pays the fixed penalty before the end of that period.

(3) The Schedule (fixed penalty notices) has effect. “

MCC Equality Impact Assessment process guidance document

Appendix A“Equality Challenge” – guidance notes

Name of the Officer completing “the Equality challenge” G Perry, PPM		Please give a brief description of the aims proposed policy or service reconfiguration To levy a fee to recover costs of re-rating food businesses at their request	
Name of the Division or service area Public Protection – Env Health		Date “Challenge” form completed 23.12.13	
Protected characteristic affected	Negative impact Please give details	Neutral impact Please give details	Positive Impact Please give details
Age		yes	
Disability		yes	
Marriage + Civil Partnership		yes	
Pregnancy and maternity		yes	
Race		yes	
Religion or Belief		yes	
Sex (was Gender)		yes	
Sexual Orientation		yes	

Transgender		yes	
Welsh Language		yes	

What are the potential negative Impacts.	Ideas as to how we can look to MITIGATE the negative impacts (include any reasonable adjustments or engagement with affected parties).
➤	➤
➤	➤
➤	➤
➤	➤

The next steps

- If you have assessed the proposal/s as having a **positive impact** please give full details below:

- If you have assessed the proposal/s as having a **Negative Impact** could you please provide us with details of what you propose to do to mitigate the negative impact:

Signed G Perry

Designation Public Protection Manager

Dated 23.12.13

Appendix A

The “Sustainability Challenge”

Name of the Officer completing “the Sustainability challenge”		Please give a brief description of the aims proposed policy or service reconfiguration	
Name of the Division or service area		Date “Challenge” form completed	
Aspect of sustainability affected	Negative impact Please give details	Neutral impact Please give details	Positive Impact Please give details
PEOPLE			
Ensure that more people have access to healthy food			Yes – provides resources to ensure that food hygiene rating scheme can be implemented within available resources.
Improve housing quality and provision		Yes	
Reduce ill health and improve healthcare provision			The scheme enables people to make an informed choice about where they purchase their food.
Promote independence		yes	
Encourage community participation/action and voluntary work		Yes	

Targets socially excluded		Yes	
Help reduce crime and fear of crime		Yes	
Improve access to education and training		Yes	
Have a positive impact on people and places in other countries		Yes	
PLANET			
Reduce, reuse and recycle waste and water		Yes	
Reduce carbon dioxide emissions		Yes	
Prevent or reduce pollution of the air, land and water		Yes	
Protect or enhance wildlife habitats (e.g. trees, hedgerows, open spaces)		Yes	
Protect or enhance visual appearance of environment		Yes	
PROFIT			
Protect local shops and services		Yes	
Link local production with		Yes	

local consumption			
Improve environmental awareness of local businesses		Yes	
Increase employment for local people		Yes	
Preserve and enhance local identity and culture		Yes	
Consider ethical purchasing issues, such as Fairtrade, sustainable timber (FSC logo) etc		Yes	
Increase and improve access to leisure, recreation or cultural facilities		Yes	

What are the potential negative Impacts	Ideas as to how we can look to MITIGATE the negative impacts (include any reasonable adjustments)
➤	➤
➤	➤
➤	➤
➤	➤

The next steps

- If you have assessed the proposal/s as having a **positive impact** please give full details below

Ensuring that a fee is levied to recover costs enable the service to deliver sustainable service going forward thus contributing to health protection and informed citizen choice.

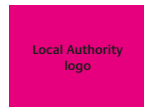
- If you have assessed the proposal/s as having a **Negative Impact** could you please provide us with details of what you propose to do to mitigate the negative impact:

none

Signed

G Perry, PPM Dated 23.12.13

Food hygiene is getting easier to spot in Wales



Local Authority
logo



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Food
Standards
Agency
food.gov.uk

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

The Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013 and associated regulations come into force in November 2013. The Act establishes a mandatory food hygiene rating scheme for Wales that will replace the scheme currently operated by local authorities and the Food Standards Agency. The new scheme is designed to help consumers choose where to eat out or shop for food by providing information about the hygiene standards in restaurants, pubs, cafés, takeaways, hotels etc, as well as supermarkets and other food shops.

As a food business operator you will need to be aware of some important changes, introduced by the legislation, which are summarised in this leaflet.



Ratings

The hygiene standards found at the time of inspection are rated on a scale. At the bottom of the scale is '0' – this means urgent improvement is necessary. At the top of the scale is '5' – this means the hygiene standards are very good.

The rating you are given shows how well you and your business are complying with food hygiene law.

To get the top rating of '5', businesses must demonstrate a high standard of compliance in all three elements of the inspection (see below).

Inspections

When carrying out a food hygiene inspection an officer will consider the following elements, which will then determine the business' food hygiene rating:

- hygiene – how the food is prepared, cooked, re-heated, cooled and stored
- the condition of the structure of the buildings – including the cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation and other facilities
- how food safety within the business is managed and how the business records what it does to make sure food is safe

Following inspections food safety officers are required to inform you of your rating and, if you didn't get the top rating, improvements needed to achieve that. You will receive this in an inspection report letter, along with your food hygiene rating sticker.

Following notification of your food hygiene rating, and once the period allowed for appeal has ended (21 days after you receive the notification), your rating will be published on the Food Standards Agency website at: food.gov.uk/ratings

Display

Following notification of your rating you will be required under the Act to display the sticker provided by your local authority. You will normally need to do this 21 days from the date you receive notification (this is how long you have to make an appeal). You may display your rating before the end of this 21 days period if you decide not to make an appeal.

The Act requires that you must display your sticker at or near each entrance to your premises that is available for use by customers. Stickers must be in a conspicuous place where they are capable of being easily read by customers before they enter the establishment when it is open for business.

Telling the customer

Under the Act you and your relevant employees must also tell customers, if asked, the rating the business has received. This applies in a face to face situation as well as over the phone.

Removal of Sticker

You must remove your food hygiene rating sticker from display, and destroy it, once it is no longer valid. The sticker will no longer be valid 21 days following notification of a new rating or when there has been a change in ownership of the business.

Appeal

You can appeal against a rating if you believe it does not accurately reflect the hygiene conditions at the time of the officer's inspection, or that the rating criteria were not correctly applied. This appeal must be made, in writing, on the standard appeal form to the local authority within 21 days from the date that you receive the notification of rating. Details of where to find the form and where to send it once completed can be found in the inspection report letter.

The appeal will be considered by an officer from the authority, who was not involved in the original assessment of the food hygiene rating being appealed. The local authority must decide the appeal and notify you of the outcome within 21 days of receiving the appeal.

If you do make an appeal you will need to display the relevant sticker after the appeal has been decided.

Re-rating

You can ask the local authority for a visit to be carried out before the date of the next food hygiene inspection so improvements can be checked and a new rating given if appropriate.

Your request must be made in writing, on the standard revisit request form and you must provide information on the improvements that have been made to the hygiene standards. You must continue to display your current rating sticker as required, at the time when making the request for a re-rating, until you have been notified of the outcome of the re-rating visit.

The re-rating revisit will take place within three months of the request being made by the business, and you will not be informed in advance of the specific date and time of the visit. Although it is anticipated that most re-rating revisits will lead to an improved rating it is possible for a lower rating to be given if standards have otherwise fallen.

There will be a charge for the re-rating visit, further details of the costs will be provided by the local authority prior to inspection.

Right to Reply

Businesses have a "Right to Reply." The Right to Reply allows a food business operator to comment on the rating given to the business. For example, a business may wish to publish information in relation to what they consider to be particular circumstances at the time of the inspection that affected the rating. These comments must be made in writing to the local authority using the standard Right to Reply form. The form should be forwarded to the local authority who will forward to the FSA who may publish the comments on the Agency's website, along with the rating. Further information on where to find the form and who to send your completed Right to Reply form to, can be found in the inspection report letter.

Failure to display your rating sticker

The local authority has powers if you fail to display your sticker, display an incorrect sticker or mislead customers in relation to the food hygiene rating. This may be through the use of fixed penalty notices. A fixed penalty notice will offer the opportunity for a person to pay a penalty of £200 within a period of 28 days, from the day that the penalty notice is given, or a reduced penalty of £150 if payment is made within 14 days. The Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act also allows for prosecution where necessary through Magistrates Court.

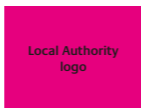
What you'll need to do:

- Consider any action you may want to take to improve your food hygiene rating
- Display the sticker after your next inspection
- You and your relevant staff must advise customers of the rating when asked

Further Assistance

For further advice on the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013 or any other queries relating to food law you should contact your local authority.

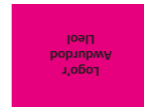
Local Authority contact details



Rhagor o gymorth

I gael rhagor o gynngor ar Ddeddf Sgorio Hylendid Bwyd (Cymru) 2013 neu os oes gennyh chi unrhyw gwestiynau eraill yn ymwneud â chyfratth bwyd, dylech gysylltu â'ch awdurdod lleol.

Manylion cyswilt yr awdurdod lleol



Rhoi gwybod i gwsmeriaid

O dan y Ddeddf, mae'n rhaid i chi ac unrhyw staff perthnasol hefyd roi gwybod i gwsmeriaid, os ydynt yn holi, pa sgôr y mae'r busnes wedi'i chael. Mae hyn yn wir wneub yn wneub a dros y ffon.

Cael gwared ar hen sticeri

Pan na fydd eich sticer hylendid yn ddilys rhagor, mae'n rhaid i chi ei dynnu i lawr a'i ddiinstrio. Ni fydd y sticer yn ddilys 21 diwrnod ar ôl i chi gael eich hysbysu am sgôr newydd neu pan fydd gan y busnes berchennog newydd.

Apelio

Gallwch apelio yn erbyn sgôr os nad ydych yn credu ei bod yn adlewyrchïad teg o'r amodau hylendid adeg yr arolygiad, neu os na chatodd meini prawf y sgôr eitha rholi ar waitth yn gywir. Mae'n rhaid i chi gyflwyno apelio ysgrifenedig ar y ffurflen apelio safonol, a'i chyflwyno i'r awdurdod lleol o fewn 21 diwrnod i'r dyddiad y cawsoch wybod am eich sgôr. Mae'r manylion am sut i ddod o hyd i'r ffurflen a ble i'w hanfon ar ôl i chi i llenwi wedi'u nodi yn llythyr yr arolygiad.

Bydd yr apel yn cael ei hystyried gan un o swyddogion yr awdurdod nad oedd yn rhan o'r aseciad gwreiddiol o'r sgôr sy'n destun yr apel. Mae'n rhaid i'r awdurdod lleol benderfynu a rhoi gwybod i chi am y canlyniad o fewn 21 diwrnod wedi i'r apel ddod i law.

Os ydych chi'n apelio, bydd yn rhaid i chi arddangos y sticer perthnasol ar ôl i'r broses ddod i ben.

Ail-sgorio

Gallwch ofyn i'r awdurdod lleol gynnal ymweliad cyn dyddiad yr arolygiad hylendid bwyd nesaf i wirio unrhyw welliannau a rhoi sgôr newydd os yw'n brodol.

Mae'n rhaid i chi gyflwyno cais ysgrifenedig ar y ffurflen ailymweliad safonol gan nodi beth ydych chi wedi'i wneud i wella'r safonau hylendid. Mae'n rhaid i chi barhau i arddangos eich sticer hylendid presennol, a hynny o'r adeg pan fyddwch chi'n gwneud cais ail-sgorio hyd nes y byddwch yn cael eich hysbysu am y canlyniad.

Bydd yr ymweliad ail-sgorio yn cael ei gynnal o fewn tri mis i'r adeg y byddwch yn cyflwyno'r cais, ac ni chewch wybod ymlaen llaw am ddyddiad ac amser yr ymweliad.

Er y rhagweli'r y bydd y rhan fwyaf o ymweliadau ail-sgorio yn arwain at well sgôr, mae'n bosibl y byddwch yn cael sgôr is os yw'r safonau wedi gostwng.

Bydd tali yn cael ei godi am yr ymweliad ail-sgorio a bydd rhagor o fanillion am y costau yn cael eu darparu gan yr awdurdod lleol cyn yr arolygiad.

Hawl i Ymateb

Mae gan fusnesau 'Hawl i Ymateb'. Mae'r hawl hwn yn galluogi gweithredwr busnes bwyd i gyflwyno sylwadau ar y sgôr a roddwyd i'r busnes. Er enghraifft, etfallai bod busnes yn dymuno cyhoeddi gwybodaeth am unrhyw amgylchïadau anarferol a oedd ar waitth yn ystod yr arolygiad a effeithiodd ar y sgôr yn eu barn nhw. Mae'n rhaid cyflwyno'r sylwadau hyn yn ysgrifenedig yn y ffurflen 'Hawl i Ymateb' safonol. Dylid anfon y ffurflen at yr awdurdod lleol a fydd yn ei hanfon ymlaen i'r Asianataeth Safonau Bwyd. Yna, etfallai bydd yr Asianataeth yn cyhoeddi'r sylwadau ar ei gwefan, ochr yn ochr â'r sgôr. Mae rhagor o wybodaeth am ble i ddod o hyd i'r ffurflen 'Hawl i Ymateb' ac at bwy i'w hanfon ar gael yn llythyr yr arolygiad.

Busnesau nad ydynt yn arddangos eu sticeri

Mae gan awdurdodau lleol bwerau i gosi busnesau os nad ydynt yn arddangos eu sticeri, os ydynt yn arddangos sticeri anghywir neu os ydynt yn camarwain cwsmeriaid am eu sgôr hylendid. Gallant ddefnyddio hysbysïadau cosb benodedig i wneud hyn. Os bydd busnes yn cael hysbysïad o'r fath gallant ddefnyddio hysbysïadau cosb lai o £150 os ydynt yn talu o fewn 14 diwrnod. Mae Deddf Sgorio Hylendid Bwyd (Cytru) 2013 hefyd yn caniatáu ar gyfer erlyn drwy lys yr Ynadon lle bo angen.

Beth fydd angen i chi ei wneud:

- Ystyried a oes unrhyw gamau y gallwch eu cymryd i wella eich sgôr hylendid bwyd
- Arddangos y sticer ar ôl eich arolygiad nesaf
- Mae'n rhaid i chi ac unrhyw staff perthnasol roi gwybod i gwsmeriaid am y sgôr pan fyddant yn holi

Y Cynllun Sgorio Hylendid Bwyd

Daw Deddf Sgorio Hylendid Bwyd (Cymru) 2013 a rheoliadau cysylltiedig i rym ym mis Tachwedd 2013. Mae'r Ddeddf yn sefydlu cynllun sgorio hylendid bwyd gofodol i Gymru a fydd yn disodli'r cynllun sy'n cael ei weithredu gan awdurdodau lleol a'r Asiantaeth Safonau Bwyd ar hyn o bryd. Bydd y cynllun newydd yn helpu defnyddwyr i ddewis bwr i fwyta neu siopa am fwyd drwy roi gwybododaeth i ddwynt am safonau hylendid mewn bwytai, tafarnadau, caffis, siopau tecawê, gwستا ac ati, yn ogystal ag archfarcnadaoedd a siopau bwyd eraill.

Fel rhywun sydd â busnes bwyd, bydd gofyn i chi fod yn ymwybodol o rai newidiadau pwysig y mae'r ddeddfwriaeth yn eu cyflwyno. Mae'r rhain wedi'u crynhoi yn y daflen hon.



Sgoriau

Caffi y safonau hylendid a gantfyddir adeg yr arolygiad eu sgorio ar raddfa o '0' ar y gwaelod, sy'n golygu bod angen gwella ar frys, i '5' ar y brig, sy'n golygu bod y safonau hylendid yn dda iawn.

Mae'r sgor a roddir i chi yn dangos pa mor dda y mae'ch busnes chi yn cydymffurfio â chyfratith hylendid bwyd.

Er mwyn cael y sgor uchaf o '5', mae'n rhaid i fusnesau ddangos eu bod yn cydymffurfio â phob un o dair elfen yr arolygiad, a hynny i safon uchel iawn (gweler isod).

Arolygiadau

Wrth gynnal arolygiad hylendid bwyd, bydd swyddog yn ystyried yr elfennau canlynol a fydd yn cael eu defnyddio i bennu sgor hylendid bwyd y busnes:

- hylendid – sut mae'r bwyd yn cael ei baratoi, ei goginio, ei ailgynhesu, ei oeri a'i storio
- cyfiwr strwythur yr adeiladau – gan gynnwys glanweithdra, cynllun, goleuadau, system awyru a chyffleusterau eraill
- sut mae diogelwch bwyd o fewn y busnes yn cael ei reoli a sut mae'r busnes yn cofnodi'r hyn y mae'n ei wneud i sicrhau bod bwyd yn ddiogel.

Ardangos

Ar ôl i chi gael gwybod beth yw eich sgor, mae'r Ddeddf yn datgan bod yn rhaid i chi arddangos y sticer a ddarparwyd gan eich awdurdod lleol. Fel arfer, bydd gofyn i chi wneud hyn o fewn 21 diwrnod i'r dyddiad y cawsoch eich hysbysu (dyma faint o amser sydd gennych i apelio). Gallwch arddangos eich sgor cyn diwedd y 21 diwrnod hwn os nad ydych chi'n apelio.

Mae'r Ddeddf yn datgan bod yn rhaid i chi arddangos y sticer wrth bob mynedfa a gaffi ei defnyddio gan gwsmeriaid. Mae'n rhaid i'r sticeri fod mewn lle amlwg lle gall cwsmeriaid eu darllen yn hawdd cyn camu i mewn i fusnes pan fo'r busnes hwnnw ar agor.



Mae'n dod yn haws
adnabod hylendid bwyd
da yng Nghymru

SUBJECT:	MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL RESPONSE TO WELSH GOVERNMENT M4 CORRIDOR AROUND NEWPORT CONSULTATION
MEETING:	FULL COUNCIL
DATE:	16th January 2014
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

To update the Council on the proposed Monmouthshire County Council response to the Welsh Government's consultation on the "M4 Corridor Around Newport".

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Council approves the response submitted to the Welsh Government.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Following a number of long standing proposals and earlier consultations for a new M4 motorway, in March 2013 the Welsh Government concluded that the only solution to the traffic problems around Newport was via construction of a new 3-lane motorway to the south of Newport. In September 2013, the Welsh Government commenced consultation on the "M4 Corridor around Newport".

The consultation document and supporting information is still available at <http://www.m4newport.com/>

The current consultation has seen a number of drop-in sessions held, the first in Magor Ebenezer Chapel and both Members and Officers have attended some of these events. Additionally, further workshops on the Health Impact and Environmental Liaison have been held with representation from various MCC Officers. On 13th December 2013 a Special Members Briefing was held in County Hall, Usk and observations and comments from these events have been incorporated into this response.

4. REASONS:

The Council's response has been already been submitted to Welsh Government subject to any further amendments that members may wish to make that are approved at this Council meeting.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None in the drafting of this response, although as the M4 project progresses there is likely to be staff resource needed to deal with any design and statutory requirements from the project.

7. CONSULTEES:

Member and officer briefing has been held with feedback incorporated within the response attached.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix A – Draft MCC Response to M4 Around Newport Consultation – 6th January 2014

9. AUTHORS:

Mark Youngman, Transport Policy and Compliance Manager
Roger Hoggins, Head of Operations

10. CONTACT DETAILS:

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E-mail: MarkYoungman@monmouthshire.gov.uk

General Comments

Monmouthshire County Council welcomes the opportunity to participate in the M4 Around Newport consultation process. Our response will focus on the economic, transport and sustainability issues, using the information provided within the current consultation document and supporting studies provided as part of the earlier 2012 M4 Corridor Enhancement Measures consultation.

The response has also been informed by a full discussion amongst senior officers and members, our involvement with work associated with upgrading of the Steelworks Access Road and other transport proposals along the corridor, and not forgetting our experience in managing maintenance of the road for SWTRA undertaken by our Highways Department.

It is fair to say that there is a spectrum of views on the matter within the Council ranging from fully fledged support for the proposal to strong opposition. In between, there are a range of perspectives that include the need to strengthen public transport; focus on the need for economic prosperity, which some suggest can only be achieved by providing adequate highways capacity and resilience, and to consider a range of other less intrusive options which should be explored alongside the highways proposals.

One view is that the M4 Around Newport proposals at best would simply offer a medium-term solution as there is no such thing as a long-term solution to road traffic and wider strategic transport issues. The highways proposals presented as part of this consultation should not be looked at in isolation and need to be considered amongst a range of transport interventions and the daily operational needs of any transport network and the economy and communities it serves.

Notwithstanding, we have previously welcomed some of the enhancements already implemented and continue to recognise that further investment is needed to ensure the M4 continues to meet the needs of South Wales.

We are particularly pleased to see the case for a new link between the M48 and B4245, having sent separately the results of our latest work and would welcome a discussion on this and proposals to increase parking at Severn Tunnel Junction.

That said, there is an argument that the rationale presented for each of the highways options is not as strong as it should be. We also feel that the traffic data analysis could be more robust, as it does not take into account the managed motorway; changes in the cost of and demand for car travel; and demand in the last five years for passenger transport along the M4 corridor. Whilst understanding the challenges in forecasting future traffic levels, we still believe that updating the traffic related analysis would be useful in making the case for many of the measures being proposed.

Similarly, the reference to public transport measures being considered separately as part of the Metro project potentially undermines a full appraisal of the merits of such schemes alongside highways options. Furthermore, the brief mention of walking and cycling friendly infrastructure potentially underestimates the potential these measures in complementing the highways options. For example, we have previously commented on the impact the existing M4 has in separating the communities of Magor and Undy from the open countryside to the north of the proposals.

Any new road proposals, including the plans for new junction alignments at junctions 23 and 23A should not ideally add to this separation, but look to resolve longstanding issues. A perfect example is offered by Community Path 372/69 which was diverted when junction 23A

was constructed, but which now suffers from having no footway or anything than could be classified as a suitable route.

It is important that existing rights of way and other potential walking and cycling linkages are incorporated into the proposals, in a manner which retains their convenience and amenity for users. At a detailed level there may well be opportunities to enhance the local access network, especially in relation to any additional land take required for water management, mitigation, landscaping and such like.

We would be pleased to discuss these as any scheme design progresses, so that a fully integrated “green infrastructure” approach, which we looking to adopt within our own LDP, can be taken.

The final observation relating to walking and cycling concerns the Wales Coast Path. The creation of which has led to significant increased usage of the surrounding rights of way network, with new links and loops being created of the Wales Coast Path. We suggest the potential of the Coastal Path needs to be taken into account as design progresses, and although it is outside Monmouthshire, we would wish to see the section of the Wales Coast Path in Newport dealt with in a way that enhances the user experience and protects the path. Doing so is important to ensure the whole Newport to Chepstow section of the Coast Path remains an attractive visitor experience and thus retains the economic and other benefits it is generating.

A last general comment concerns the level, or lack of concise detail presented for each of the three highways routes. More detail on the routes would have provided residents with either greater confidence or understanding, allowing them to be more informed in their responses. Similarly, the lack of any indication as to if or where any new junctions will sited, or existing junctions reconfigured, potentially undermines the ability of people to make fully informed responses to the consultation.

Should the highways options be progressed, we would also welcome early discussion with you regarding a construction plan, given our experience during the building of the Second Severn Crossing.

We now turn to comment on each of three highways routes. As each of the routes, even with the amount of detail provided, broadly offers the same alignment within Monmouthshire our main comments will be concentrated on the answer to question 1

Question 1. Please provide any comments regarding the draft Plan (Black Route and its complementary measures) here. In particular, to what extent do you think that it will address the problems and achieve the goals of the M4 Corridor around Newport?

Turning specifically to answering the question if the draft plan and each of the three routes addresses the problems and goals, it is useful to crystallise the transport problems on the M4 of congestion, road safety and resilience of the current M4.

It is important to note the limitations in design of and access to the M4, but acknowledge that it provides for a large number of journeys made along the corridor. For example, we would note that a number of the traffic flows for Monmouthshire to the likes of A449 and A4042 will still be met by the current M4 and there is a need to ensure that capacity and resilience issues associated with it remain in focus. Similarly, there will still be an element of road safety measures, perhaps best delivered as part of a softer package through educational programmes along the corridor that would be needed to ensure the new M4 does not incur some of the casualty numbers incurred along the M4.

In our response to the M4CEM, we noted that analysis should be made of the impact of congestion on important feeder corridors. The A4042 to Abergavenny and A40/A449 through Monmouth have the most direct linkage with the current M4, but even locations such as the A48 Chepstow (an Air Quality Management Area) and B4245 (Caldicot to Magor) all feel an impact of issues which occur on the M4. However, there are a number of other highways solutions at different stages of development, such as the A40 and A4042 which if progressed quickly would alleviate some of the concerns made by people travelling on the M4 through Newport.

In economic terms, each of the three routes could have a potential impact on the tourist industry in the Usk Valley and A4042. Moreover, there is the potential impact that businesses may experience with a worsening of access to the motorway. As such there is a view that the WELTAG assessments do not give sufficient weight to some key important local economic issues. We do however acknowledge the case that the current problems, and thus solutions to them, are barriers to economic development in South and West Wales, and by linkage to the economic benefit of Monmouthshire.

Similarly, we note the WELTAG environmental assessment of the whole route balances out impacts with benefits. We however are concerned that the WELTAG does not sufficiently illustrate the impact that will occur around Magor and Undy, not just after any new road is built, but potentially occur from the start of construction. We would suggest an approach setting out a baseline of current conditions, a forecast and agreement of targets as to likely conditions, and clear agreement in any mitigation measures to keep the impacts down, before the M4 proceeds.

In summation for each of the three routes and complementary measures present we support the need to do something along the M4 corridor. We also understand the case made for highways options, and argue the case for similar improvements on the local highways network. There is also a role for more sustainable transport options and welcome ongoing dialogue with the Welsh Government on all these aspects.

Question 2. Please provide any comments regarding the Red Route and its complementary measures (a reasonable alternative to the draft Plan) here. In particular, to what extent do you think that it will address the problems and achieve the goals of the M4 Corridor around Newport?

Question 3. Please provide any comments regarding the Purple Route and its complementary measures (a reasonable alternative to the draft Plan) here. In particular, to what extent do you think that it will address the problems and achieve the goals of the M4 Corridor around Newport?

Question 4. Please provide any comments regarding the 'do minimum scenario' here. In particular, to what extent do you think that it will address the problems and achieve the goals of the M4 Corridor around Newport?

In answering question four, it is difficult to say with 100% confidence if the current range of planned or committed interventions will address some of the problems and reach the goals for the M4. As we set out earlier, the narrowness of the local highways options being looked at – above and beyond the M48 to B4245 Link Road, the general omission of passenger transport measures and need for further assessment of the likely demand for car travel support one view that there is a range of transport interventions that could be made within a relatively short timescale.

Some are presented in the do-minimum scenario. In doing this, this would allow for a continuing assessment and impact of those options on demand for additional highway capacity, addressing the need for more reliability of journey times. Some examples illustrate this point. Anecdotal evidence during the period when there was a fixed 50mph speed limit through the Brynglas Tunnels, suggested that traffic flowed more smoothly, more reliable journey times, and coincidentally fuel consumption improvements. Similarly, early signs suggests that the benefits of the Steelworks Access Road – are being enjoyed by a growing number of people with lower journey times for some journeys, which when made on the M4 would have been horrendously long.

An alternative view shared by some within the Council is that for too long, nothing has been done to properly address the deficiencies in the resilience of the transport network along the M4 Corridor around Newport. Furthermore it is only one of the three Highways Options which provide the significant additional capacity and stronger resilience needed ever more often on the M4. Therefore, the do minimum option is merely putting off the inevitable and there is a case that we cannot delay any longer for the wider well-being of South Wales and Monmouthshire.

Question 5. Please provide any comments regarding the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the draft Plan here.

You will have received separately details of environmental constraints and assessments within Monmouthshire's boundaries relevant to the three routes. However we emphasise the interest locally regarding nature conservation, the immediate proximity to the proposed route of sites which could potentially be affected. They include the Gwent Wildlife Trust's Magor Marsh Reserve and SINC's at Grange Road, Upper Grange Farm, Bowkett Field and Barecroft. At a detailed level consideration should be given to opportunities to mitigate or compensate for impact on this local nature conservation interest and would wish to discuss these as any scheme design progresses. More widely if compensatory measures are required this Council has landholding interests e.g. Rogiet Countryside Park which may be suitable for enhancement to accommodate such measures.

In terms of landscape and visual impacts, at the next stage of the design process the following issues need addressing. First is the existence of the Gwent Levels Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest, Magor Conservation Area and potential impacts on the settings of listed within the proposed routes' curtilages. Moreover, in the Council's current UDP and emerging LDP, we have policies regarding the Designation of Green Wedge, Amenity open space, Special Landscape Area, Coastal Protection Zone.

Our draft LDP also looks forward to take forward a Green Infrastructure Policy to inform a Supplementary Planning Guidance. In considering these issues, processes such as a LVIA, using data from LANDMAP for Monmouthshire, an ASIDHOL assessment. Alongside reference to MCC's Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study 2010), a ZVI, and Mitigation Plan and Management Plan. Taking forward these issues, could be helped the setting up of a similar heritage environmental group as provided for the HOV A465 dualling which has proved to be most helpful and allowed a positive and productive engagement with the contractors and Welsh Government.

Question 6. Please provide any comments regarding the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the draft Plan here.

We have the following comments on the consideration of the options in relation to the requirements of the Habitats Regulations:

River Usk SAC (Section 10.1)

“Statement: The safe movement of otter would be ensured through the inclusion of adequate mitigation in line with the requirements of DMRB as described above.”

There is only emphasis on otter movement and no consideration of supporting habitat for otters associated with the SAC. This cannot be mitigated for. It may be ambitious to assume that otters will still move up and down river if dark corridors are maintained, sound and vibration from the actual works would also be detrimental.

Severn Estuary SPA (Section 10.2)

“Statement : At present there is not a large scale use of the Gwent Levels by bird species from the Severn Estuary EMS. In our experience, SPA bird species can rely on relatively small areas of the levels and loss of such habitat could be significantly detrimental to the estuary population and cannot be mitigated for. Therefore, it is impossible to be certain that there will not be a significant effect at this stage. “

There is a concern relating to the uncertainty of the adverse effects on the integrity of the European Protected Sites as concluded in 11 Summary of Findings and Next Steps. The acceptability of leaving a more detailed consideration until such a time that the schemes are developed is questionable and does not give sufficient weight to the European sites as a consideration in the appropriateness of the proposals.

Question 7. Please provide any comments regarding the Health Impact Assessment of the draft Plan here.

In the absence of any detail as to the route and locations of junction, we can only provide general comments on the Health Impact Assessment as it impacts upon residents of Monmouthshire.

For any noise implications, and whichever option is progressed, we would be looking for assurances that the following are addressed.

Noise from construction impacting on MCC residents . We would be looking for best practice to be followed to minimise impact on nearby residents as far as possible , together with appropriate mitigation measures to be employed .

Noise from traffic impacting on MCC residents. We would be looking for the potential impact to be carefully considered by WG / their agents and would welcome the opportunity to engage in the considerations . MCC’s Environmental Health would not be in a position to resolve any complaints of noise from road traffic as such noise is exempt under the statutory noise provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 .

For air pollution, similarly for whichever option is taken forward, we would be looking for assurances that the following are addressed

Air Pollution from road traffic . We would looking for the potential impact in MCC area to be considered in line with local authority air quality objectives , by WG / their agents and wish to be engaged in those considerations .

Dust during construction - We would be looking for best practice to be followed to minimise impact on nearby residents as far as possible , together with appropriate mitigation measures to be employed .

On the potential for contaminated land, we would be looking to engage with WG / agents re any areas of potentially contaminated land in the area of proposed development and any necessary mitigation measures.

Question 8. Please provide any comments regarding the Equality Impact Assessment of the draft Plan here

The Equality Impact Assessment notes the difficulty for non-car owning households to attain access to employment, education and retail facilities. We would concur that investment in alternative modes is essential to reduce such social exclusion. Whilst we acknowledge the benefits to car owners from highways options, we do have a concern that the focus in this consultation on measures which are predominantly car based, and removal of public transport measures, will increase the accessibility gap between car-owning and non-car owning persons.

The EIA makes reference is made to the provision of complementary measures improving access to public transport facilities. Whilst such enhancements to alternative modes are supported, it is difficult to assess the potential of such measures given the limited detail afforded to them, and lack of any reference to proposals to improve public transport services.

Question 9 Please provide any additional comments here.

Returning to our opening statement regarding the spectrum of views held by the Council, we offer two final observations.

First is to reiterate concern at the lack of specific consideration of a range of public transport measures and local highways measures, and not detailed enough analysis of improvements to walking and cycling access for local communities, particularly in light of the new duties being placed upon authorities by the Active Travel Act. As we set out earlier, we feel there are a range of opportunities to resolve longstanding issues of separation caused by the current road, but also the potential for new links to build on the success of routes such as the Wales Coastal Path. We feel it is important that existing rights of ways and potential walking and cycling routes are incorporated into the final proposals in a manner which retains and enhances their convenience and amenity for users. We welcome further discussion on these issues as the project progresses.

The second returns to the case that is presented for the three highways routes, made pertinent by a question put by a resident of Magor at a drop in session of “why don’t they divert the M4 from nearer the tolls?” Hopefully, there is a general acceptance that the design of the M4 does not meet current standards and demand for east west movement of goods and people. Normally, you would rectify this by widening of motorways but within the Newport area this is just technically not feasible and alternative solutions to the problems are rightly being looked at.

The opportunities afforded by these problems should have presented the circumstances for a strong case for a range of transport interventions – including the three routes to the south of Newport. The limitations of the datasets used, robustness of analysis, have all unfortunately resulted in a stifling of an informed debate about the benefits of those interventions. We therefore end suggesting there is still time to deal with some of those concerns, and we have to because of the importance of the M4 to South Wales.

Subject: ADOPTION OF THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2014/15

Meeting: Council

Date: 16th January 2014

Divisions/Wards Affected: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present arrangements for the implementation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and to approve it for 2014/15

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To note the making of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations ("the Prescribed Requirements Regulations") 2013 by the Welsh Government on 26 November 2013.

- 2.2 To recommend that full Council adopts the provisions within the Regulations above in respect of its Scheme for the financial year 2014/15 as the Council's local scheme from 1st April 2014, with the following conditions regarding the discretionary elements being consistent with arrangements in 2013/14.

- To apply a 100% disregard for war disablement pensions, war widows' pensions and war widowers' pensions, for both pensioners and working age claimants.
- Not to increase the extended reduction periods for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard 4 weeks in the Prescribed Scheme.
- Not to increase the backdate period for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard 3 months contained within the Prescribed Scheme
- To provide the minimum level of information to customers in order to ensure they are notified of their award in accordance with legislation

- 2.3 To note the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken by the Council on the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2014/15

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 On 28 January 2013, the full Council adopted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2013/14 in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2012. The Welsh Government put a "sunset clause" in those Regulations which means that they become invalid after 31/03/2014.

- 3.2 A Plenary meeting of the National Assembly for Wales on 26 November 2013 approved the 'Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013'

and the 'Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (Wales) Regulations 2013', The new regulations are substantially the same as those for 2013-14 with some minor administrative improvements. The sunset clause in place previously has now been removed. The Regulation approved by the Assembly is available as follows:

Prescribed Requirements Regulations: <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-laid-docs.htm?act=dis&id=251458&ds=11/2013>

Default Scheme Regulations: <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-laid-docs.htm?act=dis&id=251460&ds=11/2013>

- 3.3 A failure to adopt a 'local' scheme by 31 January 2014 will result in the Default Scheme being imposed on the Council.
- 3.4 The Welsh Government's regulations for 2014/15 do not contain any significant changes for recipients of Council tax reduction. Claimants can receive a reduction up to 100% of their Council Tax bill dependent upon their income and household circumstances.
- 3.5 Annual Up-rating regulations to increase benefits and personal allowances from April 2014 within the Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be considered by a Plenary session of the National Assembly for Wales on 14th January 2014. If approved we will apply them as part of our administration of the scheme from April 2014. If they are not approved figures from the Prescribed Requirement Regulations will apply.

4. Background - changes to the administration of Council Tax support

- 4.1 It was reported to the full Council on 28 January 2013 that the Welfare Reform Act 2013 included provisions to abolish Council Tax Benefit on 31 March 2013. From 1 April 2013, the responsibility for arranging support towards paying Council Tax and the associated funding transferred from the DWP to local authorities in England, and to the Scottish and Welsh Governments. The UK Government's policy intention was to reduce expenditure on Council Tax and therefore to implement a 10 per cent funding cut.
- 4.2 The original regulations for the 2013/14 scheme in Wales limited support to 90% of the tax, but in January 2013, the Welsh Government issued regulations amending the scheme allowing support up to 100% for claimants and financing the majority of the relevant cost.
- 4.3 A report to the full Council on 28 January 2013 referred to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Regulations 2012 and the amending regulations 2013. Those regulations were for implementation during the 2013/14 financial year only and the full Council must resolve to adopt a new scheme for 2014/15 in accordance with new regulations approved by the Welsh Government on 26 November 2013.
- 4.4 The regulations for 2014/15 again include provision for support up to 100% of council tax. As noted when presenting this issue in January, the regulations control the implementation of reduction schemes across the whole of Wales and are designed to ensure that each local authority consistently provides support for Welsh taxpayers.
- 4.5 Work is on going to draw up a different scheme and regulations for 2015/16 and beyond. From April 2015, it may not be possible to provide 100% support towards the tax, as it is now. More information will be provided as discussions develop.

5. The 2014/15 Reduction Scheme / discretionary areas

- 5.1 Although a national scheme has been approved, within the Prescribed Requirements Regulations there is limited discretion given to the Council to apply additional discretionary elements that are more generous than the national scheme and which provide for additional administrative flexibility. It is recommended that the discretions in the current scheme are

maintained for the new scheme. It should be noted that there are no additional monies available from the Welsh Government to fund the discretionary elements.

- 5.2 It is recommended to adopt the Scheme in the Prescribed Requirement Regulations and to exercise the available discretions as follows:
- 5.3 The ability to increase the standard extended reduction period of 4 weeks given to persons after they return to work where they have previously been receiving a council tax reduction that is to end as a result of their return to work (It is not recommended to increase the standard extended reduction period);
- 5.4 Discretion to increase the amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions which is to be disregarded when calculating income of the claimant (It is recommended to disregard the whole amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions)
- 5.5 The ability to backdate the application of council tax reduction with regard to late claims prior to the new standard period of three months before the claim (It is not recommended to increase the backdated period)
- 5.6 The Council proposes to provide the minimum level of information to customers in order to ensure they are notified of the award in accordance with legislation.
- 5.7 It should be noted the above recommendations follow existing practice. There are no additional monies available from the Welsh Government to fund discretionary elements. The cost of funding the discretionary elements recommended above is estimated to be in the region of £33,000 per annum.
- 5.8 The recommendations above for 2014/15 are in line with current arrangements in 2013/14. Should the Council decide to allow more generous elements in the local scheme (in 4.4 and 4.5 above) then that would increase the cost of the scheme.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 As per last year the Council has undertaken a public consultation via our website on the new regulations and scheme for 2014/15. This questionnaire based consultation was undertaken between 16th November 2013 and 13th December 2013.
- 6.2 As the scheme is largely the same as for last year the number of responses has been very limited, with just two responses. They are attached as Appendix 1.
- 6.3 A consultation response has been received from The Royal British Legion regarding maintaining the full disregard for War Disablement Pensions and War Widow's Pensions. This is part of our current discretions and will be maintained as part of the new scheme.
- 6.4 A consultation response has also been received from Diverse Cymru supporting the full disregard of war pensions and the standard level of notification to customers. However, they call for extended payment to be increased beyond four weeks to assist those transferring from benefits to work and for the backdating of Council Tax Reduction to be increased to 6 months. The Council believes the discretions it has proposed are balanced and cost-effective and consistent with the approach being taken by other Welsh local authorities.

7. Equality Impact Assessment / sustainable development

- 7.1 Other than funding at Council level, the scheme proposed for 2014/15 does not contain any significant changes from the scheme which is currently operational, hence the Council did not conduct a local Equalities Impact Assessment Study this year (as we did last year when significant changes were planned).

- 7.2 The Welsh Government has undertaken a detailed 'regulatory' impact assessment, which includes equality impact assessment, but we understand that the findings reported were in line with their expectations.

8. Resources

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The local government 2014/15 grant settlement from the Welsh Government states that the sum provided therein for Council Tax Reductions is at the same level as last year.
- 8.2 The Welsh Government's estimate of the whole cost of the scheme (at this time last year) was £244m. The Welsh Government's original intention was to finance 90% of the scheme; hence £222m was put into local government's 2013/14 grant 'settlement'. Later, a further £22m was paid via a specific grant, after the late change of mind to finance 100% in 2013/14.
- 8.3 The 2014/15 'settlement' included the commitment for local government to meet the full cost of the Council Tax Reduction scheme (which exceeds £244m)
- 8.4 The notional cost of the Council Tax Reduction scheme in Monmouthshire in 2014/15 (according to notional allocation of the total SSA between Services in the conditional settlement's tables) is £5.536m (a sum which corresponds with the national £244m). As well as Monmouthshire's share of the £22m (£549,000), the Council must meet the cost of growth in caseload or increases in entitlement attributable to an increase in the overall level of Council Tax. This has already been factored in to our budgetary calculations in 2014/15.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.5 The Council is obliged to make a Council Tax Reduction Scheme under the Prescribed Requirements Regulations. Although the legislation provides for a default scheme to apply in the absence of the Council making a scheme, the Council is nevertheless under a statutory duty to adopt its own scheme, even if it chooses not to apply any of the discretionary elements.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.6 The Council needs to manage the cost of Council Tax Support within its budget. The amount of government support is limited to £5.536 million through the RSG and a share of £22 million provided as specific grant funding. Even though the funding has increased it is provided on a fixed basis rather than the demand-led basis of support to council tax benefit.

9. CONSULTEES:

Strategic Leadership Team
All Cabinet Members
Head of Legal

10. Background Papers:

Appendix 1: Letter from the Royal British Legion
Letter from Diverse Cymru

11. Authors:

Joy Robson – Head of Finance
Email: joyrobson@monmouthshire.gov.uk



Patron Her Majesty the Queen

The Royal British Legion
15th Floor
Brunel House
2 Fitzalan Road
Cardiff
CF24 0EB
T: 02920 329086
Email: pevans@britishlegion.org.uk

5th December 2013

To:
Local Authority Leaders
Local Authority Chief Executives
Community Covenant teams

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to you regarding your Council Tax support scheme, specifically in relation to members of the Armed Forces community.

The National Assembly approved the draft Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (Wales) Regulations 2013 on Tuesday 26th November.

You will know that under the previous Council Tax benefit system, local authorities were required by law to disregard the first £10 of War Disablement Pension, War Widow's Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) payments when means testing for Council Tax benefit. Under the previous system we believe that all local authorities in Wales, using their discretionary powers, went further by disregarding in full all such payments from the means test. This was greatly welcomed by our beneficiaries and the sector.

The Legion is now calling for all local authorities to continue to maintain this position under their own schemes, by maintaining the full disregard. This will recognise the fact that War Pensions and AFCS awards are not an income support payment, but are paid as compensation for injury, illness or loss as a result of service in the Armed Forces.

We believe that by maintaining this full disregard, local authorities will be demonstrating their commitment to their local Armed Forces community. Local authorities across Wales have now signed Armed Forces Community Covenants and maintaining the full disregard will further highlight a real local commitment to supporting the Armed Forces community.

The Legion fully appreciates that new schemes must operate with a funding shortfall across Wales, which places authorities under major pressure to meet existing need. However we feel that failing to fully disregard these compensation payments would be a failure to recognise the commitment and sacrifice made by these individuals to the nation.

Shoulder to Shoulder with all who Serve

Registered Charity: The Royal British Legion, Haig House, 199 Borough High Street, London, SE11AA
Registered charity number: 219279

We ask for your support on this matter and thank you for your ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces community.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Evans – Public Affairs Manager Wales
Phil Jones – Wales Area Manager

Shoulder to Shoulder with all who Serve

Registered Charity: The Royal British Legion, Haig House, 199 Borough High Street, London, SE11AA
Registered charity number: 219279



Response to Monmouthshire County Council's consultation on Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2014/15

Respondent's name: Ele Hicks

Respondent's Role: Social Policy Officer

Organisation: Diverse Cymru

Contact details

Email: Ele@diversecymru.org.uk

Phone: 029 20 368888

Address: 3rd Floor

Alexandra House

307-315 Cowbridge Road East

Cardiff

CF5 1JD

Organisation Background

Diverse Cymru is an innovative new organisation in the Welsh Third Sector, created in recognition of the realities faced by people experiencing inequality in Wales.

Diverse Cymru promotes equality for all. We believe that we can work together to challenge discrimination in all its forms and create an equitable future for the people of Wales.

Diverse Cymru aims to make a real difference to people's lives through delivering services that reduce inequality and increase independence; supporting people to speak for themselves and to connect with decision makers; creating opportunities for participation and development; raising awareness of equality issues; and inspiring people to take action against inequality.

Our current services include direct payments, self directed and independent living support, befriending and advocacy. We produce information resources, run a service user involvement project and co-ordinate volunteer placements. We facilitate forums and groups that work on various issues, from improving disability access to equality impact assessments. We provide consultancy services and deliver a range of training courses on equality related topics.

This response focuses specifically impacts on people from protected characteristic (equality) groups. We would be delighted to assist with the development of specific work programmes, and with engaging service users in future. We are happy for our response to this consultation to be published.

What are your views on the areas of local discretion to Monmouthshire County Council?

a) The ability to increase the standard extended payment period of 4 weeks given to people after they return to work, when they have been in receipt of a relevant qualifying benefit for at least 26 weeks

The Council proposes that the existing 4 week standard extended payment should remain unaltered?

Do you think this is reasonable?

No

If you have indicated no, please state what you think is reasonable

We feel that 4 weeks is generally sufficient time for an individual to continue to receive a Council Tax reduction after commencing paid employment. However we do feel that there should be a robust mechanism in place to proactively identify individuals who are in debt and/or facing financial difficulties despite finding employment. In these cases there should be recourse for individuals to discretionary Council Tax Reductions or other financial support for those who are facing difficulties paying their Council Tax, despite being in paid employment with earnings above the earnings threshold for Council Tax Reductions.

For example some individuals will have accrued debts whilst unemployed that may result in a loss of heating or lighting to their home; homelessness; inability to feed themselves; inability to afford to travel to their workplace or other debts that cause not only distress and anguish, but also physical health and wellbeing concerns. In those situations individuals may require a longer period, in addition to independent advocacy and support, to address their financial difficulties before having to pay Council Tax.

Consideration should also be given to delays in notifying the Council immediately of a change in circumstances, especially where this is due to not understanding their responsibilities due to communication barriers or disability-related barriers. In such circumstances retrospectively applying full Council Tax liability could force an individual into poverty and debt through no fault of their own.

b) Discretion to disregard part or the whole amount of War Disablement pensions and War Widows Pensions when calculating income

The Council proposes to continue to disregard all of this income, as it currently is disregarded for Council Tax Benefit.

Do you think this is reasonable?

Yes

We welcome this proposed disregard. There is substantial evidence that pensioners are at greater risk of poverty, especially if they face unexpected costs or are disabled. This is also particularly pertinent at present as some individuals face significant changes to their pension funds within 10 years of reaching retirement age. This has a severely detrimental impact on their ability to plan

effectively for retirement. We would prefer to see higher disregards for pension income overall, but recognise that this is a matter over which Monmouthshire County Council has no discretion.

Many veterans find it difficult to find other employment when they leave the armed forces, which being a disabled person compounds further and war widows have often lost significant income from their partner or spouse. Therefore this disregard is vital to prevent veterans from falling into poverty.

c) The ability to backdate the application of Council Tax Reduction awards for working age customers more than the standard period of 3 months prior to the claim.

The Council proposes to keep the maximum backdate available to the 3 month statutory period. Do you think this is reasonable?

No

If you have indicated no, please state what you think is reasonable

6 months

We strongly believe Council Tax Reductions should be able to be back dated by 6 months if there are reasons for the delay, such as bereavement, mental distress, a hospital or hospice stay, caring for a family member, or disability-related barriers.

The circumstances which have led an individual to claim Council Tax Reduction can often be both complex and lead to situations where an individual is struggling to access other entitlements and to continue to afford housing, utilities, water, food and other basic costs. In these situations there may be a delay in applying for Council Tax Reduction, which should be accounted for and 3 months is not sufficient time in some cases.

Similarly many disabled people require additional time to complete forms either due to limited energy or time to fill in forms or due to not understanding the information or processes. Time limits can often place these individuals under extreme stress and anxiety and therefore any extension to backdating provisions, in order to account for these barriers and to prevent people falling into poverty and/or debt, is welcome.

d) Notifications of Decision – local authorities are free to provide more than the minimum information prescribed as part of their notification of decisions procedures.

The council proposes that it will simplify the notifications of CTRS award to customers where it is possible, whilst ensuring these letters comply with legislative requirements. Do you think this is reasonable?

Yes

We would encourage Monmouthshire County Council to ensure that all individuals applying for Council Tax Reductions, any benefit, or any concern from the Council are signposted to independent professional advocacy to ensure that they are able to understand and complete forms accurately, reducing administration costs for the Council and stress and anxiety for the individuals applying.

Accessible formats and community language information, documents and forms should also be proactively provided, including large print, Easy Read and audio documents. This should be in addition to providing all standard documents in Plain English and Cymraeg Clir as the usual format. This includes avoiding acronyms such as CTRS or MCC and using everyday language in all information provided to in response to enquiries and in standard forms and information leaflets and documents.



Equality Impact Assessment Form

and

Sustainable Development Checklist

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of policy or change to service (Proposal)	Directorate:	Department:
Adoption of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Chief Executives	Revenues
Policy author / service lead	Name of assessor	Date of assessment:
Joy Robson	Joy Robson	19 th December 2013

1. Have you completed the Equality Challenge form? **Yes / No.** If **No** please explain why

Yes

2. What is the **Aim/s** of the Policy or the proposed change to the policy or service (the proposal)

To continue with the CTRS scheme adopted for 2013/14

3. From your findings from the “Equality Challenge” form did you identify any people or groups of people with protected characteristics that this proposal was likely to affect in a **negative** way? Please tick appropriate boxes below.

Age		Race	
Disability		Religion or Belief	
Gender reassignment		Sex	
Marriage or civil partnership		Sexual Orientation	
Pregnancy and maternity		Welsh Language	

4. Please give details of any consultation(s) or engagement carried out in the development /re-development of this proposal.

Consultation on the scheme has been via the website and 2 responses have been received

5. Please list the data that has been used for this proposal? eg Household survey data, Welsh Govt data, ONS data, MCC service user data, Staff personnel data etc.

As above

6. As a result did you take any actions to mitigate your proposal? Please give details below.

N/A

7. Final stage – What was decided?

• **No change made to proposal/s – please give details**

N/A

• **Slight changes made to proposal/s – please give details**

N/A

• **Major changes made to the proposal/s to mitigate any significant negative impact – please give details**

N/A

Signed...Joy Robson.....**Designation**.....**Head of Finance**.....**Dated**...19th December2013.....

Appendix A

The “Sustainability Challenge”

Name of the Officer completing “the Sustainability challenge” Wendy Woods		Please give a brief description of the aims proposed policy or service reconfiguration To continue the Council Tax reduction scheme from 2013/14	
Name of the Division or service area Revenues		Date “Challenge” form completed 19 th December 2013	
Aspect of sustainability affected	Negative impact Please give details	Neutral impact Please give details	Positive Impact Please give details
PEOPLE			
Ensure that more people have access to healthy food		X	
Improve housing quality and provision		X	
Reduce ill health and improve healthcare provision		X	
Promote independence		X	
Encourage community participation/action and		X	

voluntary work			
Targets socially excluded		X	
Help reduce crime and fear of crime		X	
Improve access to education and training		X	
Have a positive impact on people and places in other countries		X	
PLANET			
Reduce, reuse and recycle waste and water		X	
Reduce carbon dioxide emissions		X	
Prevent or reduce pollution of the air, land and water		X	
Protect or enhance wildlife habitats (e.g. trees, hedgerows, open spaces)		X	
Protect or enhance visual appearance of environment		X	
PROFIT			
Protect local shops and		X	

services			
Link local production with local consumption		X	
Improve environmental awareness of local businesses		x	
Increase employment for local people		X	
Preserve and enhance local identity and culture		x	
Consider ethical purchasing issues, such as Fairtrade, sustainable timber (FSC logo) etc		X	
Increase and improve access to leisure, recreation or cultural facilities		x	

What are the potential negative Impacts	Ideas as to how we can look to MITIGATE the negative impacts (include any reasonable adjustments)
➤	➤
➤	➤
➤	➤

➤	➤
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The next steps

- If you have assessed the proposal/s as having a **positive impact please give full details** below

- If you have assessed the proposal/s as having a **Negative Impact** could you please provide us with details of what you propose to do to mitigate the negative impact:

Signed Joy Robson

Dated 19th December 2013

SUBJECT: Family Absence for Members
MEETING: County Council
DATE: 16 January 2014
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

The Family Absence for Members of Local Authorities (Wales) Regulations 2013, “(the Regulations”) made under Part 2 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (“the Measure”) require the Council to make Standing Orders as soon as practicable to give effect to the prescribed conditions to be satisfied to meet the entitlement to absence set out in the regulations.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Head of Democratic Services be granted delegated powers to carry out duties as required under the Family Absence for Members of Local Authorities (Wales) Regulations 2013.
2. That the role and function of the Chairman of the Council, as set out in the Council's Constitution, be amended to provide for the Chairman to carry out duties as required under the Family Absence for Members of Local Authorities (Wales) Regulations 2013.
3. That a politically balanced sub-committee comprising 3 members of the Democratic Services Committee be established to hear and determine any complaints from Members regarding a refusal by the Head of Democratic Services to grant family absence
4. That the Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to make such changes to the Council's Standing Orders as are necessary to give effect to the Council's decision and compliance with the Regulations. Members may wish, in this regard, to refer further consideration of the matters set out in paragraph 3.4 to the Democratic Services Committee
5. That members consider whether they wish to make any representations to the Independent Remuneration Panel on the matters set out in paragraph 3.5

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Legislation and Guidance

Part 2 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (“the Measure”) introduces an entitlement to a period of family absence for Members of local authorities, during which a Member is entitled to be absent from authority meetings. The entitlement created by the Measure is subject to Members satisfying conditions prescribed by the Welsh Ministers in the Regulations which came into force on 5th December 2013.

The Regulations prescribe the conditions that Members must satisfy to be entitled to a period of family absence, make provisions regarding the duration, start, cancellation and end of a period of family absence, and set out an administrative process for dealing with family absence. The Welsh Ministers have also published draft Statutory Guidance on Family Absence (“the Guidance” issued under section 30 of the Measure), to which the Council is required to have regard. The final Guidance is not yet available on the Welsh Government web-site.

3.2 Categories of Family Absence

There are five types of family absence to which a Member may be entitled under the Measure, subject to compliance with the Regulations:

(i) Maternity Absence – for the mother of a child, granted up to a maximum of twenty six weeks;

(ii) New-born Absence – for a Member who is either the father of the child or who is married to, the civil partner or the partner of, the child's mother, but is not the child's father, for a period of up to two consecutive weeks (N.B. in each case, the Member must have or expect to have, responsibility for the upbringing of the child);

(iii) Adopter's Absence – for the adopter of a child, for a period of up to two consecutive weeks;

(iv) New Adoption Absence - for the husband or wife, civil partner or partner of an adopter (and who has, or expects to have, the main responsibility [apart from the responsibility of the adopter] for the upbringing of the child), for a period of up to two consecutive weeks; and

(v) Parental Absence – for a Member who becomes responsible for a child (and does not meet the conditions for New-born Absence, Adopter's Absence or New Adoption Absence), for a period of up to three months.

3.3 The Process

The administrative process established by the Regulations provides:

(i) that the Member must give written notice to the Head of Democratic Services of his/her intention to take family absence and the intended start date (and any change or cancellation of the period of absence);

(ii) that the Head of Democratic Services must maintain a record (for at least 10 years) of all notifications and periods of family absence taken and must inform the Chairman of the Council, the Chairman of the Democratic Services Committee, and the Leaders of each political group of the Authority (the Guidance indicates that the Head of Democratic Services is also free to inform any other persons felt necessary, e.g. fellow Ward Members);

(iii) if the Head of Democratic Services informs the authority that he/she has reasonable grounds to suspect that a Member may not be entitled to the family absence notified, the local authority may cancel or end the family absence (and if the

Member then fails to resume duties, the local authority may withhold the Member's remuneration);

(iv) for the option for a Member to continue to attend particular meetings or perform particular duties during a period of maternity or parental absence, subject to permission from the Chairman of the Council (who must inform the political Group Leaders before granting permission);

(v) a requirement for the Council to make provisions regarding the extent of any duties which Members may still be required to perform during a period of family absence;

(vi) a Member may complain in writing to the Head of Democratic Services regarding a refusal to grant family absence. Any complaints received must be forwarded by the Head of Democratic Services to the Chairman of the Council.

(vii) for a requirement for the Council to appoint a Panel comprising three Members (which cannot include the Chairman of the Council) to hear and determine complaints from Members, the Panel's determination being final; and

(viii) for the right for a Member to complain to the Panel against a decision of the Authority that the Member is not entitled to a family absence; and / or against a refusal by the Chairman of the Council to grant permission for the Member to continue to attend particular meetings or perform particular duties whilst on family absence.

3.4 Standing Orders

The Council is required to make Standing Orders, as soon as reasonably practicable after the Regulations come into force, in respect of the matters set out in subparagraphs 3.3 (iv) and (v) above, that is:

(i) To describe the circumstances in which a Member on maternity or parental leave may continue to perform some duties if so desired.

The Guidance states that this may be "where the Member has a well-known particular interest in a matter of business or if urgent business affecting their local area is being considered"; and

(ii) To provide whether any duty conferred on Members should be performed during a period of family absence.

The Guidance states that this may "enable a Member on family absence to be asked to attend a meeting if it might otherwise be inquorate. The Standing Orders could enable different arrangements to be made for different Members. There might be a particular area of expertise possessed by a Member which would be difficult to replace on a temporary basis, which might suggest a limited commitment could still be expected of a Member in such defined circumstances. However, the effect of any such provision under the Standing Orders should not be contrary to the purpose of the Measure and the Regulations".

It should be noted that the Standing Orders may include other provisions relating to family absence, provided this is not contrary to the purpose of the Measure and the Regulations (for example, regarding temporary cover for Members who are on family absence).

3.5 Members Salaries

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales has issued a draft supplementary report on family absence requesting any representations by Friday 7th February 2014. The proposed determinations are that:

- a) A member is entitled to retain a basic salary when taking family absence under the regulations irrespective of the attendance record prior to the commencement of the family absence.
- b) When a senior salary holder is eligible for family absence, he/she will be able to continue to receive the senior salary for the duration of the absence if the authority so decides whether or not it makes a substitute appointment.
- c) The member substituting for a senior salary holder taking family absence will be eligible for a senior salary.
- d) If the paid substitution results in the authority exceeding the maximum number of senior salaries as set out in the Panel's Annual Report, an addition to the maximum will be allowed for the duration of the substitution.
- e) When an authority agrees a substitution for family absence, the Panel must be informed, within 14 days of the date of the decision, of the details including the particular post and the duration of the substitution.
- f) The schedule of remuneration must be amended to reflect the implication of the family absence.

4. REASONS:

To ensure the Council meets the requirements of the Family Absence for Members of Local Authorities (Wales) Regulations 2013.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no direct implications arising from the report. In the event of a Member in receipt of Senior Salary being granted family absence, there is no provision in the Regulations governing payment to another Member for assuming any temporary responsibilities.

6. EQUALITIES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS:

The Family Absence provisions apply to all Members of the Council, subject to the requirements of the legislation being met.

7. CONSULTEES:

Leadership Team
Political Leadership Group
Head of Legal Services (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Head of Local Democracy

The Standards Committee have received a copy of this report for information. Any comments will be communicated to members after the Committee has met on 13 January

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

DRAFT Statutory Guidance made under Section 30 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 available at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dsijlg/consultation/130322familyabsenceguideannex2en.pdf>

Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales draft supplementary report on family absence available at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/irpws/sub/home/publication/201415/draft-supp-report-family-absence/?lang=en>

9. AUTHOR:

S.M.W. Andrews, Monitoring Officer.

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SUBJECT: PAYMENT OF MILEAGE FOR CONSTITUENCY RESPONSIBILITIES
DIRECTORATE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
MEETING: FULL COUNCIL
DATE: 16th JANUARY 2014
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

To consider a scheme for the payment of mileage to members for mileage incurred in carrying out constituency responsibilities

2. RECOMMENDATION:

The Democratic Services Committee recommend that Council adopt the proposed scheme for payment of constituency expenses set out in appendix A.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales have accepted that elected members who represent rural wards face additional expense in carrying out their constituency responsibilities because of the often significant travel, and have stated that *“A local authority may make provision, subject to any limitations it thinks fit, for members to claim mileage expenses for official business in connection with constituency or ward responsibilities where they arise out of the discharge of the functions of the county”*

3.2 The County Council resolved *“that the Democratic Services Committee be requested to look at a scheme of travelling allowances for members, including whether to specify that “official business” (for the purposes of claiming travel allowances), includes members undertaking constituency responsibilities”*

3.3 The IRPW have highlighted concerns about how claims for reimbursement of travel costs while undertaking constituency responsibilities may be verified, and have said that *‘where a council chooses to extend its definition of official business to include constituency responsibilities it can impose such limitations as it thinks are appropriate to ensure that proper checks and balances are in place’*

3.4 Enquiries have been made of a number of other Welsh Authorities including some rural authorities, and none of the authorities contacted have adopted such a scheme, partly due to concerns about verification.

3.5 Members’ claims for travel expenses for attending meetings are normally verified by the Members’ Secretary by reference to the council diary, attendance lists, councillors’ and officers’ diaries, and if necessary phone calls to outside bodies to confirm member attendance at the meeting for which the claim is made. However, given that it will not always be possible for constituency mileage claims to be verified by reference to a third party, members submitting such claims will be required to self certify their claims.

3.6 At their meeting of the 4th November 2013 Democratic services committee considered the proposed scheme for payment of constituency mileage attached at Appendix A. Members expressed a variety of views and the committee agreed that the proposed

scheme, outlined in Appendix A, be recommended to full council for adoption. In addition the committee also recommended that a members expenses handbook be prepared outlining the expenses that members are entitled to claim.

REASONS:

The Council has recognised that there are occasions when it is necessary for a member to use his/her car for constituency business and asked the Democratic services committee to consider the issue and make recommendations to council on how to proceed.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There is no specific budget allocation other than members general travel expenses. The outturn budget for Members' travel claims in 2012/13 was £57,478.30 as against a budget of £50,804. It is likely that the adoption of the proposed scheme will lead to an increase in expenditure, although the figure is difficult to quantify at this time.

6. SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUALITIES:

The role description for councillors commits members *"To represent individual constituents and local organisations, undertaking casework on their behalf and serving all fairly and equally"*.

7. CONSULTEES:

Chief Executive; Head of Finance/Section 151 Officer;
Head of Democracy and Improvement; Chief Internal Auditor; Monitoring Officer
Comments will be reported to your meeting.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales-Annual Report December 2012
County Council Minutes 17th May 2012
Democratic Services Committee Minutes 10th June 2013

9. AUTHOR:

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DRAFT SCHEME FOR PAYMENT OF CONSTITUENCY MILEAGE

1. The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales have recognised that elected members who represent rural wards face additional expense in carrying out their constituency duties because of the often significant distance travelled.
2. As a rural authority, Monmouthshire County Council wishes to support elected members in carrying out their constituency responsibilities. The Council recognises that there are occasions when it is necessary to for a member to use his/her car for constituency business, and that it is reasonable for expenses incurred to be re-imbursed.
3. Members will be able to submit 1 mileage claim per month for constituency responsibilities.
4. Constituency mileage may be claimed only for the following purposes:
 - Attendance at the home of a constituent at the constituent's request.
 - Attendance at a meeting where requested by a constituent, an officer or a third party (eg a site meeting or a public meeting)
 - Given that in either case the mileage must be undertaken for the purpose of or in connection with the discharge of the functions of the council;
5. Claims must be submitted through the Council's my view system and should give details of the date, the journey, the reason for the journey, and the mileage incurred.
6. Where possible claims will be verified by the Members' Secretary on the basis of the information supplied by the member. However, given that it will not always be possible for such claims to be verified by reference to a third party, members submitting such claims will be required to self certify the mileage claimed, which will be subject to audit.
7. This policy will be subject to annual review by the Democratic Services Committee.

