

**Minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting
held at the Hilston Park Outdoor Education Centre
on Wednesday 29th April 2015 at 2.00 p.m.**

PRESENT: County Councillor S. White (Chairman)

County Councillors: P. Jones, R. Edwards, R.J.C. Hayward, V.E. Smith, B. Strong and A.M. Wintle.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. P. Keeble - Traffic and Network Manager
Ms. A. Perrin - Car Park Manager
Mr. R. Williams - Democratic Services Officer

OTHER ATTENDEES:

Councillor D. Politt - Llantrisant Fawr Community Council
Councillor J. Hall - Monmouth Town Council
Councillor D. Pugh - Llangattock Vibon Avel Community Council
Ms. L. Watkins - Monmouthshire Beacon

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors P.R. Clarke and E.J. Hacket Pain.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor R. Edwards declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of minute 7 - Car Parking in Monmouth, as she is a Member of the Planning Committee.

County Councillor S. White declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of minute 7 - Car Parking in Monmouth, as she is a Board Member of Monmouth Citizens' Advice Bureau and also a Board Member of Monmouthshire Housing Association.

County Councillor A.M. Wintle declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of minute 7 - Car Parking in Monmouth, as he is a Trustee of Monmouth Citizens' Advice Bureau and also a Member of the Planning Committee.

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3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Closure of Monmouth Citizens' Advice Bureau

The Chairman read out a letter written by the Clerk to Llangattock Vibon Avel Community Council regarding the closure of Monmouth Citizens' Advice Bureau. The content of the letter was as follows:

'As a community council, the only thing we know for certain is that the Monmouth CAB office at Whitecross Street is closing on 30th June 15.

Despite very extensive enquiries, the only information we have is that there will be a '2-hour drop-in' at Wyesham and a '3-hour drop-in' each week at Bridges.

What we urgently wish to know, please is whether Monmouthshire County Council intends to become involved with any CAB activities at Monmouth where arrangements would cater for the needs of the persons within our community area who wished for advice in line with that previously available at Whitecross Street.

Could this information be sent to me at the earliest opportunity, please?

Having received the letter, the following points were noted:

- The Monmouth CAB has been very successful and has been self-funding.
- The CAB will be closing at the end of July 2015 with all remaining funds being spent by this time.
- An office will be available at Bridges with potentially providing answers to questions on line or volunteers might be able to provide a service.
- There was some uncertainty at this stage regarding the future of the premises at Whitecross Street and what will happen to the equipment currently held in the offices.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee meeting dated 11th February 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- The issue regarding air quality pressures in Usk was still prevalent.

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- Yellow lining was scheduled to be undertaken next month on Bridge Street, Usk.

5. PROPOSED TRIAL OF NEW TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS AT THE TOP OF MONNOW STREET, MONMOUTH

We received a report by the Traffic and Network Manager in which Members received an update regarding the positive observation of traffic movements during the recent encroaching of scaffolding on the highway at the top of Monnow Street and to seek support to proceed with a trial of a pinch-point arrangement. This design will allow the Highways Department to accommodate wider footways at this narrow location which in combination with other proposals for improved pedestrian facilities within the town offers an opportunity to create a safer environment for non-motorists.

The Committee was informed that the Council had previously proposed to widen the footways on Monnow Street between Agincourt Street and St. John Street on an experimental basis, but the proposal was not implemented after concerns were raised about the impact on traffic movements. Officers have recently observed the impact on traffic of two sets of scaffolding erected at nearby properties. Protective barriers to safeguard the scaffolding extended into the carriageway reducing the available carriageway width, in a similar manner to the experimental layout. Officers considered the resulting traffic conditions were acceptable and recommended that the experiment be implemented.

A proposed layout for the trial could be introduced in May 2015 or alternatively later in the year. It was suggested that the trial should last for at least two months to allow both pedestrians and motorists to familiarise themselves with the changed street features, before being assessed to consider whether or not to retain on a permanent basis, with potential to be incorporated into wider street scene improvements in the centre of the town. The trial would be funded from the Council's highways revenue budget at an estimated cost of £10,000. Any permanent arrangement could then be incorporated as part of future major resurfacing works along with other improvements to make better use of road space and enhance the town centre through better crossing facilities in order to create an enhanced and safer environment for all users.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Concern was expressed that vehicles on Monnow Street between the junctions of Agincourt Street and St. Johns Street would need to mount the kerb, though it was noted that the kerb would be a dropped kerb. Concern was also expressed that this might lead to a build-up of traffic. However, the Traffic and Network Manager stated that he could provide evidence where shared space worked well. Shared space was used frequently on the continent.

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- The proposal was designed to create an area of uncertainty whereby both motorists and pedestrians were made aware of the of the shared space concept.
- There might be a need to create an informal line along the route to encourage vehicles to come through.
- Since the original proposals were identified, the pinch point has been shortened and the footway lowered. Observations from the CCTV cameras indicated that the proposal worked during the period when the scaffolding was erected.
- A trial would be a positive way forward.
- The work undertaken would be carried out in house.
- The proposal would fit in with other works being carried out within the town.
- The Area Committee considered that the trial should be implemented to ascertain whether it would work and benefit the town.

We resolved:

- (i) to note the observations of traffic movements under a give and take arrangement during the recent placement of scaffolding at the top of Monnow Street;
- (ii) to support an experimental narrowing arrangement, as indicated in the report, and that the trial extends for a minimum period of two months commencing in May / June 2015.

6. GATEWAY MONMOUTH PROJECT

We received a brief update report by the Whole Place Officer regarding the current issues relating to the Gateway Monmouth Project.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

7. CAR PARKING IN MONMOUTH

We received a report presented by the Car Park Manager in which the Area Committee received an update on car parking in Monmouth. Members were provided with the following information:

- Rockfield Road Car Park (New Car Park) – Planning permission has been submitted. The Bat Survey for Rockfield Road Car Park will take

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place May 2015, once this has been completed, it will satisfy the planning application. Then Projects may proceed.

- The Rear of the Queens Head Car Park (New Car Park) – Discussions have taken place with Monmouthshire Housing Association regarding acquiring a piece of land to create access alongside the Queens Head. A meeting took place last week which was quite productive. A representative from Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA) will take the proposal forward for approval. Once this has been undertaken, Projects will need to apply for consent as it was a listed building. Planning permission has not yet been submitted as there were some outstanding issues that needed to be resolved.
- When Rockfield Road Car Park is created, this will be a free of charge car park. It is then proposed to turn Cinderhill Street into a Pay & Display car park.
- Recommendation subject to consultation - The Car Park at the Sports Ground will be a Permit Parking only car park.
- Recommendation subject to consultation - For the creation of a number of 30 minute spaces at Glendower Street Car Park (Free of charge parking).

Having receive the report, the following points were noted:

- Work has been undertaken at the Rowing Club Car Park. Parking will remain free for the time being.
- In response to an Area Committee Member's question regarding decriminalising car parking to allow Monmouthshire County Council traffic wardens to undertake enforcement in conjunction with the car parks, the Car Park Manager stated that powers currently resided with Gwent Police. However, she would make enquiries with Gwent Police to ascertain whether it might be possible for local authorities within the Greater Gwent region to have these powers transferred to local authority control.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

8. UPDATE ON THE PORTAL ROAD DEVELOPMENT SITE

We received a brief update report by the Estates Manager, which updated on the Portal Road Site in Monmouth.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

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9. WORK PROGRAMME

We received and noted the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee Work Programme. In doing so, the following item would be added to the work programme.

- Update regarding the suitability of land at Meand Farm.

It was noted that Usk Town Council had asked whether the loose cobbles in Usk Square could be reinstated which had been costed in the region of £30,000. The Area Committee expressed its support for this project subject to funding being available.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

We noted the next meeting of the Central Monmouthshire Area Committee will be held on Wednesday 10th June 2015 at 2.00pm and will be held at County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, subject to availability.

The meeting terminated at 3.30 pm.