

# MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 20th July, 2017 at 10.00 am

**PRESENT:** County Councillor J.Pratt (Chairman)  
County Councillor A. Webb (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: L.Dymock, L.Jones, R.Roden, L. Guppy,  
A. Easson, D. Blakebrough and S. Jones

Also in attendance County Councillor(s):

### OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Rachel Jowitt	Head of Waste & Street Services
Richard Jones	Policy and Performance Officer
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Matthew Gatehouse	Policy and Performance Manager

### APOLOGIES:

County Councillors A.Davies and V. Smith

#### **1. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

#### **2. Open Public Forum**

David Farnsworth introduced himself to the Select Committee and advised that his questions related to the Community Engagement Review.

- The first question asked was whether the review had defined the term “the community” and who “the community” refers to, as it suggests engaging with partners but does not give a sense that it is reaching out to residents.
- The second question asked related to the mechanisms for the public to engage with the Council. Mr Farnsworth highlighted that the public need clarity on the mechanics of how to engage with the Council, but also on how they can participate in key projects and matters that affect their communities. He suggested that the public need to be able to input into issues that will affect them in an accessible way and that very detailed reports can make it difficult for the public, who are unlikely to be able to engage in significant policy issues at that level.

The Chair thanked Mr Farnsworth for his highly relevant questions and suggested the answers would arise from discussion of the review. She invited Mr Farnsworth to remain for the presentation and discussion on the review and for the duration of the meeting if he wished. It was recognised that discussions today would take place on the strategic direction and that the mechanics of the future clusters would need further consideration, taking into account the issues raised.

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 20th July, 2017 at 10.00 am**

Peter Sutherland, representing Llanbadoc Community Council, asked for an update on Llanbadoc speed limits since the last meeting. The Head of Operations updated Mr Sutherland on progress since they met to discuss speeding in the Usk and Llanbadoc area and advised that a design suitable for this area has been commissioned and will be consulted upon. Mr Sutherland queried if there would be any involvement from Llanbadoc Community Council and local residents in view of the significant delays and local frustration about the matter and was reassured that the proposed scheme would be consulted upon. The chair reaffirmed that the role of the Road Safety Task and Finish Group is to consider a county wide road safety policy that would include speed management and not to consider specific instances and cases in any depth. She reminded members that the Task Group was due to meet the following week and highlighted that a public workshop would be organised during October to consider the views of the public to inform the policy and that when a date was agreed, Mr Sutherland would be invited to attend and participate in the development of the policy.

Secondly, it was queried if there would be any involvement from Llanbadoc Community Council and local residents in view of the significant delays and local frustration about the matter.

The Chair announced that there would be a public meeting on speeding for Town and Community Council and members of the public to attend in September.

A Member, who is a member of the Community Health Council, referred to the Health and Care White Paper "Services Fit for the Future" and sought the support of the Select Committee, and the Adult Select Committee, to ensure the continuation independent patient voice and circulated a summary of concerns.

The Chair thanked the Member for his work on the Community Health Council and expressed her wish to hold a Joint Select meeting to discuss this important matter.

#### **3. To confirm minutes of the previous meeting held on the 15th June 2017**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

#### **4. Action list**

Public Open Forum: A question was raised at the last meeting regarding the container park opposite Usk Island and a response was provided that a planning and enforcement officer has reported no record or recent evidence of overnight sleeping at the site.

Referring to the Alternative Delivery Model, a Member questioned what proposals are under consideration to run the Borough Theatre, Abergavenny in the future.

The Chair suggested that the matter should be raised at the Joint Select Committee meeting on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

#### **5. Community Engagement Review**

##### **Context:**

To present the findings and recommendations of the draft Community Engagement Review for scrutiny, requesting Members consider:

- the findings of the Review and associated conclusions / recommendations; and

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 20th July, 2017 at 10.00 am

- the proposed 'Way Forward' for a newly defined Community and Partnership Development Team (Appendix B).

#### **Recommendations:**

The Select Committee scrutinises the findings of the review, making recommendations as appropriate.

#### **Key issues:**

In October 2015, a review of community governance was undertaken to analyse the role of local decision making within Area Committees and to understand the Authority's level and type of community engagement and its direct relationship to how local needs and solutions are identified, developed and delivered.

Monmouthshire has four area committees; Bryn y Cwm; Severnside; Lower Wye and Central Monmouthshire. Their purpose is to:

- engage the community in area working to help the council shape major proposals affecting specific areas advising the Authority of the associated implications for the area;
- lead the community planning process;
- ensure services are properly co-ordinated on a local level;
- encourage effective cross sector collaboration; and
- provide a forum for community debate and to make Executive decisions on matters within areas provided they are within the Council's policies and budgetary allocations and do not adversely affect other areas.

In October 2016, there was a recognition that in light of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act and the Authority's evolving Future Monmouthshire programme, there was a need to extend the review to address the following objectives:

- Clarification of the strategic direction required to meet legislative requirements and enable asset and place based delivery;
- Repurposing of the Authority's Whole Place team;
- Identification of joint working opportunities internally to enable a streamlined approach;
- Assessment of new roles in the provision of impartial advice across the county's five strategic settlements – Abergavenny, Monmouth, Caldicot, Chepstow and Usk;
- Understand how Section 106, the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy and Area Committee Grants can be used strategically to address resource implications for a sustainable, place and asset based approach; and
- Reconfiguration of the community governance model to preserve the leadership role of Council Members and encourage wider community participation.

Following presentation of the Community Engagement Review, its length and complexity were acknowledged and questions, and requests for more detail, were welcomed:

#### **Member Scrutiny:**

A Member recognised that there is a lot to do in terms of community engagement and asked if there were any examples of best practice encountered in members' wards and their engagement with the public, in clusters and area committees. It was responded that there are pockets of good practice e.g. Llanybi which has put forward community led plans by focusing on what's important to residents. Here, the work of the people involved was vital in achieving a high return of surveys. It is hoped that its plans going forward will align with the Public Service Board and our partners so more assistance can be provided.

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 20th July, 2017 at 10.00 am**

Secondly, it was asked how lack of awareness in other areas will be addressed. It was explained that cluster work is in progress, where representatives of town and community councils are brought together to discuss their priorities. Currently, work is being completed with Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) using a Rural Development Plan bid to produce a toolkit to enable community groups, with the support of their town and community councils, to undertake asset based community development plans. There will be a Community Leadership Award that will offer funding for training to fill skills gaps within community groups.

A Member asked what the difference between consultation and engagement is. It was responded that consultation is where there is a definitive proposal, with recommendations. Engagement is where there are no pre-drawn conclusions, and the opportunity is provided to develop and co-produce solutions. Historically, councils undertook more consultation but there are now more complex challenges and a wealth of experts in communities to engage with and involve as enshrined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

The Member promoted the need to listen (not just talk) to communities to develop a relationship of trust and respect. Examples of good practice and engagement by Trellech United Community Council were provided. It was queried how success in developing an engaged culture in Monmouthshire will be identified. It was responded that there would be reduced demand on council services, a community will take pride in itself and will progress its own future plans. It was added that there would be changes noted in the responses in the National Survey for Wales to questions such as ability to influence decisions and assessing sense of belonging in a community.

A question was asked about level of engagement and engagement improvement and how these aspects are assessed, citing the example of Monmouth Town Council changing its way of engaging with the community (using e.g. Twitter and Facebook). It was queried if there are any toolkits to enable improvements in engagement. It was explained that, the last Democratic Services Committee had representation from a person involved in Monmouth Town Council's campaign which provides an opportunity to explore what can be learnt from the Town Council's experience. It was asked if it was likely that there will be engagement facilitators in the team and responded that all the teams are familiar with facilitating engagement, and will be available to assist with key projects by continuing to work very closely with clerks to town and community councils.

A Member commented that the report had a lot of detail and repetition, and expressed concern that it can be perceived as difficult for people to attend area committee meetings. It was noted that cluster working worked for a while and the opinion was expressed that this approach should have been further developed. It was explained that dates have been circulated for cluster meetings to consider priorities in September. These meetings are open to the public. Work has been undertaken to explore and address reasons why there was poor attendance at meetings previously. The Committee were advised of good work in identifying priorities in Usk and narrowing the list to the top 3 items.

A Member queried if the reason for the report was because of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, if it was for the future of our Council and the cost of the report. A diary note of all meetings in future for town and community council meetings, cluster meetings etc. was requested. It was confirmed that the Act was not the main driver for the proposals but was timely as a review of community engagement had been identified as a priority for the council. The complexity of the report was recognised but noted that the covering report highlights the key points and recommendations. In response to a request, a sheet of definition of terms mean will be circulated.

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 20th July, 2017 at 10.00 am**

A Member questioned who leads the communication between various committees and observed that a simpler report with key messages and timelines should be available to seek views from town and community councils (via their websites), and Monmouthshire residents. This could assist the work of the Public Service Board. It was agreed that an easy read version could be produced with glossary and updates to assist wider future engagement.

The Chair referred to the quoted 63% of residents involved in volunteer activities and asked how the figure was determined. It was confirmed that the figures were obtained from a national survey that had a small sample size and whilst it is possible that it is a high estimate, it is accepted that volunteering in Monmouthshire is amongst the highest in Wales.

Also raised was the need to address the effectiveness of area committees which can become "talking shops" that don't address strategic and long-term planning, preferring to concentrate on smaller issues. It was suggested that the newly appointed Cabinet Member for Governance will want to develop area committees to align with proposed changes. The cost of area committees was also queried and assurance sought that the public receive value for money. It was explained that, to an extent, it depends on the attendance of officers and if attendance is out of office hours.

The Cabinet Member for Social Justice and Community Development acknowledged the comments and questions asked stating that they will be helpful when considering streamlining objectives. It was added that it will be important to define how to measure success and to report progress. It was recognised that ongoing engagement is a key driver and it will be important to identify, and engage with, other groups and individuals who feel isolated and disenfranchised from the process. The key role of volunteering was recognised and it was suggested that it should be the subject of a future meeting or Member seminar. Production of a summarised version of the report was welcomed. The Cabinet Member appreciated the discussion to support her strategies on social and economic inclusion, and helping children have the best start in life.

A Member observed that awareness of what is being done is paramount and praised the work of the Communications Team in promoting the Council as one that wishes to engage, particularly through the use of social media platforms. It was also suggested that online access amongst residents should not be assumed and that consideration should be given to publication of a biannual newsletter.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 20th July, 2017 at 10.00 am

#### **Committee Conclusions:**

The committee acknowledges the findings of the community engagement review and supports the strategic direction and the recommendations on the operational structure proposed in the report.

The Committee heard some good examples of successful community engagement and challenged how lack of awareness in other areas would be addressed, and how success will be measured.

The Committee commented on the complexity of the report and welcomed the production of a summarised version.

The Committee spoke of the key role of volunteers, and this aspect was suggested as the topic for a Members seminar or a single subject meeting.

The Chair questioned the effectiveness of area committees and suggested that the Cabinet Member for Governance should consider developing area committees to align with the proposed changes.

The Committee will receive a list of dates of forthcoming meetings of area committees, town and community council meetings and a short note to provide definitions of all terms used.

The Chair thanked the officers for their contribution to the meeting.

#### **6. Performance Report 2016/17**

##### **Context:**

To ensure that members understand the Council's performance framework.

To present the 2016/17 performance information under the remit of Strong Communities Select Committee, this includes:

- Reporting back on how well we did against the objectives which the previous Council set for 2016/17; and
- Information on how we performed against a range of nationally set measures used by all councils in Wales.

##### **Key Issues:**

The Council currently has an established performance framework, this is the way in which the Authority translates its vision - *building sustainable and resilient communities* - into action and ensures that everyone is pulling in the same direction to deliver real and tangible outcomes.

Over the coming years the shape of public services in Wales is likely to change significantly influenced by two very significant pieces of Welsh legislation, The Well-being of Future Generations Act and The Social Services and Well-being Act, as well as financial pressures, demographic changes, changes in customer needs and

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 20th July, 2017 at 10.00 am**

expectations and regulatory and policy changes. Services need to continue to think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities, look to prevent problems before they arise and take a more joined-up approach.

The Council has recently completed two substantial assessments of need as a result of this legislation. This information has provided a much deeper evidence base of well-being in the County and, as required by the Future Generations Act, this has been used to produce the Council's well-being objectives and statement 2017.

The shift in focus in the well-being objectives means that activities will need to be focused on longer term challenges at a community level rather than some of the internal process issues and outputs that could sometimes be found in its predecessor, The Improvement Plan. When dealing with more complex societal challenges it will take longer for measurable change to come about and longer still to be able to evidence those changes in a meaningful way. In the short-term there will continue to be milestones that can be used to track the Authority's improvement journey. This will be supported by a range of performance reports select committee can request as part of its work programme and the structure of performance reports received by committee will be revised to reflect this emphasis.

Appendix 2 of the report sets out performance achieved in 2016/17 against the actions and performance measures approved by Council in May 2016 as part of its Improvement Plan. As well as being presented to select committees the objectives will be included alongside a further evaluation of performance in 2016/17 that will be reported to Council and published by October 2017. The Welsh Government has recently consulted on plans to repeal the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 which means this is likely to be the final plan and report in this format.

Appendix 3 sets out further key performance indicators from the national set that are under the committee's remit.

Activity that contributes to the delivery of some objectives cross cuts select committee remits and these have also been reported to the other relevant committees.

#### **Member scrutiny:**

It was questioned if every member of staff had an appraisal in 2016/17 to tie in with performance targets and responded that the report provides a snapshot of Check in-Check out (CICO) from December 2016 that records 70% completion within one year. It was highlighted that there were some issues with recording processes but there was anecdotal evidence from operational managers that CICO is taking place to align with their planning.

A Member questioned the comment that progress was on target for delivering councils services within budget, citing that £916,000 savings weren't achieved, schools' budgets are in deficit, the council is at the at top end of its borrowing ability and using its reserves. It was explained that the judgement was based on the fact that the overall budget was underspent. Metrics regarding the net cost of delivering services were circulated with parameters of 0.5% (+ or -) and resulted in 0.6%. Given the range of services provided, 0.6% is a reasonable level of performance but it should be noted that the wider judgement may have to reflect the factors highlighted, and suggested that financial colleagues may wish to consider this point.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 20th July, 2017 at 10.00 am

The Head of Operations advised the committee that, whilst the majority of staff undertake the process, the CICO model is amended to reflect some circumstances and different categories of workforce. To compensate, team briefings and the opportunity to provide feedback and raise issues are provided to improve communication with staff.

A Member, referring to the Cardiff City Region City Deal and Metro, questioned if the Committee should scrutinise the transport policy to ensure implications are addressed. The Head of Operations explained that the Strategic Transport Group was established with members and officers (and members of the public by invitation) to scrutinise transport policy, opportunities and initiatives regionally, locally and nationally and that a note will be provided from the Group regarding information from the City Region shadow authority.

Following discussion, it was noted that transport is a key priority of the Economy and Development Committee and that the Strategic Transport Group will feed its findings into the Economy and Development Select Committee. To avoid duplication, it was noted that Committees members can be involved in the lead up to the review of LDP through Joint Select Committee scrutiny.

#### Committee's Conclusion

- The Chair thanked officers for presenting the report to the Committee.

It was resolved to receive the report, noting its content.

#### 7. Work Programme Report

##### Context:

A 'planned approach' to Scrutiny Forward Work Programming in order to maximise the effectiveness and added value of scrutiny activity, ensuring focus upon topics of the highest priority for the Council and those which reflect the public interest.

##### Key Issues:

Work programme discussion meetings have taken place between the new Chair of the Select Committee and the former chair and chief officers have highlighted the following topics for consideration for future scrutiny:

- Volunteering Policy
- Waste:
- Recycling
- Anaerobic Digestion
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Gypsy and Traveller Provision
- Flood Risk Management Plan
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan ~ joint scrutiny with Economy and Development (Jan / Feb 2018)
- Local Development Plan ~ joint scrutiny with Economy and Development
- Affordable Housing ~ joint scrutiny with Economy and Development and Adults



## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 20th July, 2017 at 10.00 am

- Cardiff Capital Region City Deal ~ joint scrutiny
- Cycling and Walking Product ~ joint scrutiny with Economy and Development
- Outdoor Education Review ~ joint scrutiny with Economy and Development
- Alternative Service Delivery Model ~ joint scrutiny ~ all select committees
- Road Safety Policy ~ ongoing Task and Finish Group

#### Member Scrutiny:

The Head of Waste and Street Services made the following suggestions of topics for scrutiny:

- Waste Management: Long term waste contracts, Anaerobic Digestion, more re-use at Civic Amenity sites
- New waste service collection model.
- Grounds and Open Spaces
- Management of Trees

Select Committee Members identified the following topics for scrutiny:

- Public Toilet Provision across the County: It was agreed Committee Members would be kept up to date through briefing notes.
- Waste Management: Anaerobic Digestion
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers, to include Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking
- Open Spaces
- Road Safety: It explained that a final report of the Task and Finish Group containing a draft strategy, will be brought to this Committee for consideration with the Cabinet Member present. The Select Committee will be asked to make suggestions and recommendations, and to endorse the report.
- Outdoor Education: A review is in progress and may be a future topic for joint scrutiny with Economy and Development Select.
- Protection of Dark Skies

The following topics were identified by the Head of Operations:

- Traffic Management
- Prioritisation: Management of the Highways (in view of reduction of Welsh Government support for capital budget)

Annual update

- People Services Annual Report: It was suggested that this report could be circulated to Committee Members.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 20th July, 2017 at 10.00 am

#### **Committee's Conclusions**

The Chair thanked Select Committee Members and Officers for submitting the topics for consideration by the Select Committee.

The Committee agreed to balance future agenda with one of the topics suggested as a major item with subsidiary reports such as performance and finance reports as required.

The Committee agreed the recommendations that it adopts the process suggested in the report to develop the Select Committee work programme, taking into account:

- The responsibility to scrutinise performance and key risks in order to provide effective challenge to the Council's Executive;
- The duty to scrutinise wider public services provided to Monmouthshire residents as a result of powers afforded to them through the Local Government Measure;
- Capacity/resources when prioritising topics for scrutiny and agreeing their inclusion into the work programme.

#### **8. Strong Communities forward work programme**

The forward work programme will be derived from the discussion of the previous item.

#### **9. Cabinet & Council forward work programme**

A reminder was given for Committee Members to closely monitor the Cabinet and Council Forward Work Programme.

#### **10. Date and time of next meeting 28th September 2017 10am (pre-meeting at 9.30am)**

**The meeting ended at 12.45 pm**