

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held
at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 30th April,
2019 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: County Councillor L. Brown (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: R. Edwards, M.Groucutt, R. Harris, J.Pratt and
S. Woodhouse

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Stephen Griffiths	Strategy & Policy Officer
Shirley Wiggam	Senior Strategy & Policy Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors D. Blakebrough, L.Dymock and P.Pavia

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

2. Public Open Forum

There were no matters for the public open forum.

3. Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing Commuted Sums

Context:

The purpose of the report was to inform Adults Select Committee of the preparation of the Revised Draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) which is currently subject to public consultation, and to seek any comments from the Committee.

Key Issues:

As identified in the report.

Member Scrutiny:

The Senior Strategy and Policy Officer explained the reasons and highlighted the changes to update the Supplementary Planning Guidance due to the fact that successful commuted sums on single dwellings were not being achieved.

When between £25,000 and £30,000 was being asked, each one was generating a viability appraisal which proved to be not viable. A lesser sum would make it more difficult to have a viability appraisal which is a consideration that should be taken into account when buying the land. By changing the way small commuted sums are calculated, larger sites would remain unchanged.

Members were provided with a detailed presentation.

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Questions that arose highlighted a number of scenarios with regard to barn conversions and whether they were exempt from contributions towards affordable housing or not. Also the number of barn conversions per year compared to officer resources around viability assessments was considered.

During discussions a number of alternatives were discussed relating to consideration to floor area and suggestion was made to include information from the District Auditor and the District Valuation Officer prior to the report being presented to Cabinet.

Concern was raised that the council tax band these buildings fall under is only attracting affluent end interest and is not assisting with the lower end first time buyers and affordable housing occupants stepping onto the housing ladder.

With regard to the listed buildings, it was reported that costs are extremely high to renovate and get these properties back into good condition as they are an asset of national importance. However asking for contributions would be a barrier to conservation.

Following discussions, the Chairman thanked Officers for their work and agreed to reconsider the issue of the viability of the size of single barns and larger conversions.

4. Eco Flex Policy

Context:

To inform Adult Select of the Council's "Statement of Intent" that will allow Monmouthshire residents access to funding under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO): Help to Heat programme. The statement will support households who are most likely to experience fuel poverty and those vulnerable to the effects of a cold home.

Key Issues:

As identified in the report.

Member Scrutiny:

Eco Flex Policy is an energy efficiency scheme started in 2013. Local Authorities now have authority to set their own criteria based on the health of applicant, age of applicant and type of property.

For households to access this flexibility the Local Authority has to publish a Statement of Intent which sets out the criteria. The final decision remains with the installer once they have visited the property in question. If we do not produce a Statement of Intent and publicise our policy then we will not be able to participate in the flexi scheme.

Members asked who would inspect the property, the officer explained that the Council would determine the eligibility, and the installer would inspect the property. Concerns were raised about the system being open to abuse and but it was stated that the installer would need to be registered and licenced. Also, if firms will be open for competition, these are all areas that need further investigation.

It was agreed that there were still areas of the scheme that needed further information but the aim was to adopt policy and Statement of Intent.

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In summary, Members are in favour of the system and want to proceed with the Statement of Intent. They asked if the scheme should be communicated to the Town and Community Councils, voluntary organisations i.e. GAVO, Action UK. Members asked for an update in 12 months to explain how the scheme is working.

Chairman thanked the officer for his report.

5. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29th January 2019

The minutes of the Adults Select Committee Meeting dated 30th April 2019.

6. Adult Select Committee Forward Work Programme

We received the Adults Select Committee Forward Work Planner and the following were noted:

A workshop and visit for Gypsy and Travellers Needs Assessment to be arranged.

Following the special Adults meeting of 29th April from Aneurin Bevan Health Board – the key outcomes were requirement of action plan, information sources to be shared with public and for health board to be invited back within the next 6 months possibly October meeting

The Scrutiny Manager to follow up on the special meeting and send email to Health Board to follow up on the actions plans.

At the next meeting of 18th June discussion on Universal Credit, members felt it would be useful to for the Trussel Trust to attend to discuss their report just published regarding the rise in the use of food banks which clearly states that the main factor for the increase is the introduction of Universal Credit – it would be helpful if they could discuss the North and South areas of Monmouthshire.

7. Council and Cabinet Forward Work Programme

Noted.

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Tuesday 18th June 2019 at 10am

Noted.

The meeting ended at 11.30 am