

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Lower Wye Area Committee held
at Chepstow Leisure Centre - Chepstow on Wednesday, 17th April, 2019 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Dovey (Chair)
County Councillor A. Webb (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: J. Becker, L. Brown and P. Murphy

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. A. Newman	
Mrs. S. Dovey	
Melanie Laidler	Associate Director of Integration and Innovation, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
Councillor G. Down	Matheron Community Council
Inspector D. Sowrey	Heddlu Gwent Police

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor P. Pavia and Mr. G. Sumner

1. Declarations of Interest

Item 7: Chepstow Police Station: Closure of Front Desk – County Councillor A. Easson declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a Member of the Gwent Police and Crime Panel.

2. Public Open Forum

Mr. A. Newman requested feedback from a previous question regarding vehicles being parked by rock climbers at the side of the A466 in the traffic lights coned areas and outside the roadworks. Mr. Newman was worried that this practice will continue when the road re-opens and the cones are removed fearing that the vehicles will be parked on the verge creating patches of bare earth and mud.

The Head of Operations advised that this matter will be addressed when the work is completed, possibly using the stone removed during the work. Members agreed that the use of natural local stone in this way would be preferred.

With regard to waste management, a member of the public expressed concern about the proposed changeover from plastic to fabric bags that are open at the top and therefore wet and heavy in the rain when filled e.g. with paper. It was observed that the new bags will blow around if left out and this will not help residents' co-operation. The Head of Operations explained that the decision had been taken by Cabinet and these points were raised at the time. The bags will be weighted to limit blowing around and will be available in various sizes. Design

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has not been finalised and some designs under consideration include the ability to close. The decision to make changes will save the Council money.

A Member of the public expressed concern about the difficulty of storage in flats, apartments and terraced houses.

3. Chepstow Hospital: Existing and future services - Melanie Laidler, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

The Chair welcomed Melanie Laidler, Associate Director of Integration and Innovation, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, to the meeting to answer questions. Her kind offer to return to the Area Committee with regular updates was welcomed.

- In response to a question about intentions for the future for the Community Hospital, it was explained that it is one of several across Gwent provided under the ethos of Care Closer to Home and to address problems such as the large numbers of outpatients in the Royal Gwent Hospital.
- It is proposed that there will be a graduated care model e.g. if a patient doesn't need acute care, they can be admitted to Chepstow Hospital, be nearer to home and there is the option to step up or down to or from the Royal Gwent Hospital as needed. This model in Chepstow will be replicated across Gwent. Dr. A. Gray, Neighbourhood Care Network will be co-ordinating this care model which will be rolled out to all community hospitals in Gwent.
- The Health Board is working with Council staff on an integrated service model of wellbeing. Some local authority staff will be based in Chepstow Hospital.
- There are plans for DVT Pathway to be moved within 6 months and Audiology has already moved. There will be a carefully planned shift of services over the next 12 months.
- Regarding Care of the Elderly, a model has being developed that has moved outpatient services to Chepstow Hospital. It was confirmed that staff will be there more often. It was confirmed that there is some space within the hospital that is suitable for outpatient appointments.
- A Member noted that staff at the Hospital has declined and asked if staff numbers will increase to deliver outpatient services. It was emphasised that there is a national shortage of nurses, medical staff and social workers etc. To address this shortage, the Health Board (with Monmouthshire County Council) has set up an academy to build staff resources and has secured funding for two years.
- In response to a question, it was confirmed that consultants will not be based at the Hospital but will travel there 1 or 2 times a week. GPs will be based in the hospital and will oversee the step up beds. There is the opportunity to increase frailty consultants and possibly base them in the hospital.
- It was responded that the X ray service will continue at Chepstow Hospital.
- A member of the public was sceptical about the plans and expressed specific concerns about adult mental health, and moving dementia services to St. Woolos Hospital. It was responded that the intention is to provide continuity and integrated services. It was added that there is an opportunity for the day hospital to start opening for third sector organisations to provide services.
- A Committee Member also expressed uncertainty about the plans in view of previous promises and asked if there are any plans to move services away. If so, it is important to ensure that the most appropriate services move to the hospital to add value to the community.
- The Health Board is keen to promote the ethos of care closer to home and hopes to continue to reduce DNAs (Did Not Attend). There has been a reduction since services

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have moved to Monmouthshire. This has encouraged staff in others services to embrace the move and staff now want to provide outpatients clinics in Monmouthshire.

- A Member asked if reports of cold meals in Royal Gwent Hospital can be investigated and a response was promised from the Director of Facilities.
- It was reiterated that there are no plans in Clinical Futures to reinstate the Minor Injuries Unit at Chepstow Hospital.
- It was confirmed that there were regular meetings on cross border issues and that differences in staff terms and conditions was not currently a recognised problem.
- Regarding plans to accommodate population growth due to housing development in Chepstow and Sedbury, it was explained that the regional partnership board brings all stakeholders together to share information which is a benefit and avoids decisions being taken in isolation.
- The Chair requested a list of new and planned outpatients' services, and respective timescales.
- It was requested that defibrillation facilities are made available at the hospital that are accessible at night. It was responded that a bid has been made to the integrated care fund for the provision of defibrillators in community hospitals and also for third sector organisations plus training equipment. The help of the Lions Club was offered.

The representative of the Health Board was thanked for her contribution to the meeting and for the offer to attend meetings regularly.

4. Chepstow School: Band B Funding/Redevelopment - Will McLean, Chief Officer, Children and Young People

The Chief Officer, Children and Young People attended the meeting in response to our questions about Band B funding and the redevelopment of Chepstow School. The Chair declared an interest as governor of Chepstow School and took no part in discussions.

Whilst admitting there was little news, it was explained that Monmouthshire County Council is committed to the renewal of its four secondary schools, of which two are nearly completed. King Henry VIII Comprehensive School has been considered for Band B due to building condition and the opportunity to create 3-19 through provision. Funding options are being explored such as Capital Investment plus Welsh Government intervention (65%) and Mutual Investment Model (MIM).

Chepstow School was considered in Band C because the existing buildings are in better condition than King Henry VIII Comprehensive School (informed by an independent survey). It was added that, at the time of the decision, it was also not known what size of school was required in view of additional housing demands and due to parental choice including Wyedean School.

It was clarified that the work carried out under Band A Funding was afforded through capital receipts and that, unfortunately, the Council is not now in that position.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that an annual report is made on the affordability of prudential borrowing and that the position is currently satisfactory.

A member of the public expressed the opinion that trends involving Wyedean School should not affect planning for Chepstow School; planning should be based on the towns' own population and needs. It was explained that a key driver is to reduce surplus school places in Wales so there is a need to have the correct stock for the population. It was confirmed that school place planning uses live birth rates and calculations to determine how many children are likely to come from housing development.

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A Member asked how much account is taken of development on the county boundary noting that Wyedean School is oversubscribed. It was confirmed that account is not taken of development around Wyedean just on our borders.

A member commented on the new Welsh Government intervention levels for Band C noting that it is not retrospective so bids can't be added. It was queried if there are any costings available on the Abergavenny build. It was explained that there are different approaches and a formula is used related to number of children and space allocation. The design will be fitted to the funding allocated.

The pros and cons of the different funding approaches were debated. The MIM approach could lack flexibility with a pattern book approach whereas a single provider will determine what the build will look like. It was confirmed that no design has been developed at this point in time.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer for his attendance and contribution.

5. Mounton House Special School: Proposed Closure - Will McLean, Chief Officer, Children and Young People

The Chief Officer, Children and Young People attended the meeting to address our concerns regarding the proposed closure of Mounton House Special School.

It was explained that this was a decision not taken lightly and background information was provided that the school had originally been set up to serve the needs of the whole of Gwent for one section of Additional Learning Needs (ALN). It was explained that there is a significant cost attached to the running of the school that effectively means that other children who need support cannot be supported. The costs and numbers of pupils were shared. The good work of the school staff was recognised.

The school provides a service to other authorities. The pupils supported there have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and are boys of 11 and over. It was explained that SEBD accounts for the 4th highest level of ALN, the most prevalent being Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The need to support a broader group of pupils was emphasised.

It was explained that the ALN Review last year suggested using the school as a hub but the original costings have since been significantly upgraded and the funding is now unavailable.

The Committee was advised that a petition was presented to Council in support of the school remaining open.

A Member agreed reluctantly with the proposal in financial terms whilst acknowledging the good work carried out over the years. The Chief Officer assured that, if the proposal was agreed, the necessary steps would be taken to secure the right level of support and provision going forward for each pupil.

A Member referred to the availability of prudential borrowing and supported the broadening of provision as proposed in the ALN review and urged officers to rethink. It was responded that broadening provision/extending services and prudential borrowing has been considered but once the £6.4m cost was identified, it was suggested that the scheme wouldn't self-finance and the revenue tail would be too big.

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A Member stated that there has previously been strong arguments for option 3 to expand provision to age 3-19 mixed gender, ASD and SEBD and that financial savings are possible by increasing out of county admissions and to address the growing demand in county.

In response to a question about school categorisation, it was confirmed that it was right to draw attention to the improved status of Yellow. The Chief Officer explained that following the school in category Red, some other counties increased use of their own provision which created uncertainty. It was also explained that it was not possible for a child to be brought back as this would be too disruptive. The suggestion of growing in county placement would create a shift in costs and increased transport costs.

A Member of the public asked what would happen to the children if the school closes and commented that this should be the first consideration. In response, the timeline was explained and during this time, detailed plans will be made for the pupils to be most appropriately placed.

A Committee Member expressed concern about the capacity for disruption if placed in mainstream and sought assurance that the pupils will be appropriately placed and supported. It was explained that these most vulnerable pupils are statemented and will not be placed in mainstream.

A member of the public expressed the importance of pupils being able to access the curriculum suitable to their needs and commended the value of the outreach work provided by the school to support mainstream schools

A Member did not support the alternative proposal to extend provision, age range etc. commenting that it would cause disruption to vulnerable pupils.

The Chair declared an interest as previous Chair of Governors at the school and expressed his wish that the process is exhaustive and not based completely on funding.

The Chief Officer was thanked for his input to the meeting.

6. Chepstow Police Station: Closure of Front Desk and other matters

The Chair welcomed Inspector Damien Sowrey to the meeting to discuss the closure of Chepstow Police Station front counter.

The Committee was informed that Gwent Police had reviewed front counter provision and reduced them from 13 to 6 in response to a national trend of reduced footfall and use for non-urgent enquiries in favour of online reporting, social media and phone calls. This has created a saving of £700,000 pa and it was confirmed that affected members of staff have been redeployed.

It was emphasised that members of the public, who need to visit the Police Station, can still do so via a phone outside the building direct to the control room, and via a door bell for general enquiries.

It was explained that there are five new officers in the south of the county providing a slightly improved policing position in the area.

A Member commented that there is a higher presence of officers in the Abergavenny and Monmouth area and this needs to be discussed further with commanders. It was added that ward members need to be aware that the front desk has closed.

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It was confirmed that there are PCSO surgeries in Caldicot Library that are publicised on the website but take up is relatively low.

It was responded that staffing levels reflect that there are higher crime levels in Monmouth and Abergavenny currently. Rural communities and travelling times are a challenge on resources. Locally, two neighbourhood enforcement officers have been deployed to address important local issues such as drug use, drug lines etc.

A Member expressed concern about the staffing levels and lack of contact with communities. Staffing numbers in the area were confirmed including the neighbourhood policing team and schools liaison officers. Other specialist officers can be called upon as required.

A Member of the public asked if account had been taken of the extra cost of transporting and supervising individuals to custody suites to either Ystrad Mynach or Newport, and the impact on staffing. It was responded that it is easier to maintain safety centrally.

Regarding the availability of information on the website, a member of the public pointed out that not everyone has access. It was suggested that information could be made available to community councils for their noticeboards.

Members generally expressed a preference for seeing police officers out in the community. It was confirmed that all staff have laptops and are encouraged to be out locally. There are plans for staff to work in some village halls in isolated rural communities. It was requested that PCSOs provide an engagement session in Chepstow Library if possible.

The Inspector recognised that there are problems with young people in speeding cars and congregating in the car parks and play areas in the town. There is evidence of drug use and associated detritus. It was confirmed that these issues are a priority for the neighbourhood team. It was suggested that such areas could be defined as public spaces protection areas with prohibitions on some behaviours; making them a criminal offence.

The Inspector encouraged residents to inform the Police of issues of concern and they will do their best to address them.

The Inspector was thanked for his attendance at the meeting.

7. A466 Closure

The Head of Operations informed the Committee that the A466 would be closed from 7th May 2019 for up to 12 weeks. A schedule of diversions has been prepared and work completed on those roads to ensure they are of a suitable standard. Site 2 will be completed this year and Site 1 next year. The contract for the work has now been awarded.

County Councillor Webb thanked the Highways Department for arranging for her to travel the diversionary route.

In response to a request for an update on the Chepstow Transport Study, it was explained that the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) Stage 1 has been jointly undertaken by Gloucestershire CC and Monmouthshire CC to look at traffic matters in SE Monmouthshire. This has resulted in the identification of 3 long term priorities (to explore opportunities for a bypass, a new junction off the M48 and to improve public transport). A meeting will shortly take place with Welsh Government to discuss taking a scheme forward.

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Stage 2 WelTAG involves more detailed consideration of options and costs. The participating authorities are required to contribute funding. The estimated cost is between £900,000 and £1.2m.

More information will be reported back as it becomes available.

It was considered that this work is equally important in England and Wales. The Chair and other members had attended a Transition Chepstow event and some proposals were put forward including short term solutions to address traffic congestion in and around Chepstow particularly High Beech roundabout. This matter is also under discussion in the Strategic Transport Group.

The Head of Operations agreed to check the status of Welsh Government work to make improvements to Newhouse Junction.

8. Confirmation of the notes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed as an accurate record.

9. Items for next meeting: 1) Community Focused Schools

- Melanie Laidler – Regular update
- Community Focussed Schools

10. Date of Next Meeting: 17th July 2019 at Chepstow Leisure Centre

The meeting ended at 1.15 pm