

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held on Thursday, 24th May, 2018 at 10.00 am

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

County Councillors: L.Dymock, R.Roden, V. Smith, A. Easson and
R. Harris

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Hazel Clatworthy	Sustainability Policy Officer
Rebecca Blount	Education And Awareness Officer
Carl Touhig	Head of Waste and Street Scene

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors L.Jones

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations made by Members.

2. Open Public Forum

We noted the appointment of County Councillor J. Pratt as Chair of Strong Communities Select Committee. County Councillor A. Webb was appointed as Vice Chair.

County Councilor Easson referred to part A of the agenda and the lack of items brought forward under crime disorder matters. The Scrutiny Manager explained this a statutory responsibility of the committee, but items have not always been separated for the agenda. When necessary, representatives would be invited to the committee. The Scrutiny Manager also noted the need for a refresher training session and would organise accordingly.

The Chair welcomed to the Public Open Forum Mr. Peter Sutherland. Mr Sutherland thanked the Committee for the opportunity and stated on 9th May the Clerk for Llanbadoc wrote to the Council regarding the speeding through Llanbadoc and expressed disappointment in the lack of officer response. Secondly, he welcomed a comment on thoughts on the illuminated speed signs.

In response to the speeding issues, the Head of Operations agreed to pursue progress on the letter submitted by the clerk, and ensure the clerk receives a response. With regards to the illuminated speed signs there are differing views on those highlighting the speed limit and those highlighting the speed of traffic and varying types have been placed around the County. It is

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held on Thursday, 24th May, 2018 at 10.00 am

thought both are effective, but it was recognised there is more work around speeding to be done, with a future public workshop.

The Head of Operations would provide an email response to a residents query to the Community Council regarding slow moving traffic around Llanbadoc Church.

Mr. Sutherland added that the Steam Heritage Railway has offered to remove and refurbish the old weighbridge office by Usk station. It will be relocated in Monmouthshire. The SHR have encountered problems regarding Construction Design and Management Regulations and Mr. Sutherland asked if this could be resolved.

The Chair also welcomed guests, Councillors Jackie Charlton and Edwin Roderick, from Powys County Council who were in attendance to gain an understanding of scrutiny in Monmouthshire.

3. To confirm minutes of the previous meeting held on the 29th March 2018

The minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select held on 29th March 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Action list

Noted.

The Action List would be addressed under the Work Programme on the agenda.

5. Plastic Free County

Context:

To advise the Select Committee of:

- The efforts being undertaken within Monmouthshire communities to reduce the use of single-use plastics
- The progress the Council is making in reducing the use of single-use plastics.

Key Issues

There has been a huge increase in interest in reducing the use of single-use plastics in the last few months, not least because of the shocking scenes of plastic contamination in our oceans shown on the BBC's Blue Planet series. Single use plastics use precious fossil fuels, take hundreds of years to break down, injure wildlife on land and at sea, blight the landscape as litter, block drains and cost money to buy, clear up and dispose of.

This has resulted in actions being taken at local, regional and national levels.

Local Action: Abergavenny, Chepstow, Monmouth and Usk all now have active and enthusiastic Plastic Free community groups in operation, often as an offshoot of the Transition Town and local litter groups. The groups report more public interest in Plastic-Free than in any other previous Transition Town campaign. As part of the Plastic-Free work happening in the towns, some (but not all) of the towns are working towards becoming Plastic Free communities, under an accreditation scheme run by Surfers

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held on Thursday, 24th May, 2018 at 10.00 am

Against Sewage.

The steps to get Plastic Free status include:

1. Local Governance - Local Council (County, Town, Parish or Community) passes a resolution to support Plastic Free Coastlines, committing to plastic free alternatives and supporting plastic free initiatives within the constituency.
2. Local Businesses - At least three single-use plastic items removed from local businesses and retailers; replaced with sustainable alternatives. Target number of businesses are determined by population.
3. Allies/Local Community – gain widespread community support for Plastic Free Coastlines, spreading the Plastic Free message and establishing the call to arms e.g. schools, community groups, community spaces etc.
4. On the Ground Action - At least two local community events arranged and made open for all to attend, in one calendar year e.g. litter picks, beach cleans
5. Strategic Group - Local group of stakeholders to meet at least once per year to discuss the progress of Plastic Free Coastlines locally; agreeing and setting direction, meeting objectives, and completing application for official Plastic Free Coastlines status.

Member Scrutiny

The Chair welcomed Sue Harrison of Plastic Free Abergavenny, Graham Neal and Tim Melville of Plastic Free Chepstow, and Vivien Mitchell of Plastic Free Monmouth, who were in attendance to highlight the work of community groups being undertaken to achieve a plastic free status.

Members were keen to congratulate the community groups involved and a question was raised to ask what needs to be done further for the County to be considered plastic free. The Sustainability Policy Officer explained that there are five specific criteria for a town to become plastic free. Surfers Against Sewage are keen for people to collaborate and work at a County level and have indicated the following requirements to become plastic free:

- Make a commitment to work towards plastic free status.
- Review its own use of single-use plastics and take steps to identify unnecessary plastic use and reduce this.
- Support voluntary and community action to reduce plastic use, undertake litter picks etc.
- Work with schools, businesses and other partners to reduce plastic use.
- Work with organisers of events on MCC property to reduce single use plastics to a minimum (and ensure that effective recycling for necessary plastics is in place).
- Participate in meetings to support and co-ordinate plastic free activities across the County.

The Officer suggested that the role Strong Communities Select Committee should be to receive community group updates and scrutinise what is being done in the Council capacity.

A Member applauded the work of community groups and expressed frustration around the use of plastic takeaway food cartons, and suggested there should be a facility for

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held on Thursday, 24th May, 2018 at 10.00 am

these to be returned and somehow re-used. He added that we need to reduce the amount of recycling, and should concentrate on producing products that do not need to be recycled.

A Member questioned how Monmouthshire County Council compare to other authorities, and if there is anyone leading the way to being plastic free. We heard that Carmarthenshire had recently passed a similar resolution. Many coastal towns are signed up to becoming plastic free. MCC could become the first authority to sign up to the Surfers Against Sewage model.

A question was raised regarding the attitudes of the public and what problems are being faced. In response, education, information and awareness raising were highlighted as main issues encountered.

A Member expressed that 5 pence carrier bags should be abolished altogether. It was explained that Welsh Government are looking at a tax on plastic, and it is inevitable the cost will rise. As well as raising awareness, there needs to be legislative support for change.

Members reflected on the importance of education in schools. The Education and Awareness Officer explained that children have been taught about marine litter for many years at the One Planet Centre, with some seasons busier than other. Officers also undertake outreach work with schools, and have received invitations to attend school fetes, providing opportunities to engage with parents.

We heard the community groups have enjoyed working with schools, and recognised their active programmes.

The Public Protection Manager advised there are 119 takeaway restaurants and 1200 food businesses across the County, recognising the importance of linking with waste colleagues in terms of food waste and licensing. Environmental Health could also link in with the supply chain.

Recommendations

That Select Committee consider making a policy commitment to become a 'plastic free county' through reducing single use plastics, in line with the Plastic Free Coastline campaign run by Surfers Against Sewage

That Select Committee agree to keep informed of community developments to reduce plastic and to scrutinise the Council's progress towards becoming a Plastic Free County.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held on Thursday, 24th May, 2018 at 10.00 am

Committee Conclusion

The Chair concluded by confirming the commitments as highlighted by the Sustainable Policy Officer:

- Make a commitment to work towards plastic free status.
- Review its own use of single-use plastics and take steps to identify unnecessary plastic use and reduce this.
- Support voluntary and community action to reduce plastic use, undertake litter picks etc.
- Work with schools, businesses and other partners to reduce plastic use.
- Work with organisers of events on MCC property to reduce single use plastics to a minimum (and ensure that effective recycling for necessary plastics is in place).
- Participate in meetings to support and co-ordinate plastic free activities across the County.

The Chair confirmed that Strong Communities Select Committee resolved to agree the recommendations, and commend the report to Council.

Members agreed with a suggestion of a visit to the recycling centre.

Upon the suggestion of a seminar, Members were advised of a Waste Workshop taking place on 5th June 2018.

6. Air Quality Management & Role of Environmental Health

Context

To consider the role of Environmental Health in relation to air quality in the county. To highlight the current work undertaken including the ways other agencies are engaged to seek improvements.

Key Issues

Air Quality is a key influencing factor on public health, and an important part of the work Environmental Health do to protect public health. There has been increased media and government attention given to air quality in recent years.

Air pollution results from the introduction of a range of substances into the atmosphere from a wide variety of sources. It can cause both short term and long term effects on health, but also on the wider environment.

Government statistics estimate that air pollution in the UK reduces the life expectancy of every person by an average of 7–8 months, with an associated cost of up to £20 billion each year.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held on Thursday, 24th May, 2018 at 10.00 am

Legislation and Policies aiming to minimise and track the impact of air pollution on health and the environment have been introduced in Europe, the UK and Wales.

Generally air quality in Monmouthshire is good, however there are some areas of concern in Usk, Chepstow, Monmouth and Abergavenny due to road transport emissions, where houses are close to busy or congested roads. Bridge Street in Usk and Hardwich Hill in Chepstow have exceeded the UK's objective levels for nitrogen dioxide, and have therefore been declared Air Quality Management Areas.

Environmental Health monitor, review and assess air quality in Monmouthshire, and work with the Planning Authority, Highways, Welsh Government, Town and Community Councils and other local stakeholders to work towards improving local air quality. Integral to this Environmental Health report on current air quality conditions in the county, which is assessed by Welsh Government and is available on the Council's website, write the Action Plans for air quality management areas, and facilitate steering group meetings for the stakeholders involved in delivering the actions to improve air quality. The presentation will help gain further insight into the work being done, the reasons why and future challenges to secure against potential increases in pollution arising from new developments, infrastructure etc and ensure that air quality improvements are long-lasting.

Member Scrutiny

The Chair thanked officers for the presentation adding that a preview of the slides would have been beneficial. She asked that the slides be circulated to Members following the meeting.

A Member asked for clarification on the five areas of the County being considered for speed limits. Officers confirmed these were across Wales rather than Monmouthshire, and included the M4 reducing to 50mph in parts.

Frustrations were expressed around air quality problems across the County that remain unresolved. Officers agreed with the comment and noted the need for a Government wide approach.

We heard that the Chepstow Steering Group are working with WG, Forest of Dean Environmental Health and Gloucestershire Highways, with input from planning sections. A Member asked the effect of the building of houses on the Mabey Bridge site, and we heard air quality reports from the developer tend to prove impact would be negligible, however there were concerns of the cumulative impact of a number of developments.

A Member asked how well the bodies react to the information provided. The Environmental Health Officers explained that they chair the Air Quality Steering Groups and present data. The stakeholders at these groups engage with the issues under discussion. It is Environmental Health's role to carry out the monitoring and present the data, along with proposals. Welsh Government have attended regularly as a result of officers input. Inevitably resources and funding are often an issue.

In response to a question we heard that Usk and Chepstow areas were identified in 2005 with a peak in 2008, and air qualities have been improving since, probably as a result of improved vehicle technology. In terms of future issues, Officers were concerned about the additional developments in Chepstow and Merthyr Road in Abergavenny, due to the developments in Llanfoist.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held on Thursday, 24th May, 2018 at 10.00 am

A Member expressed interest and asked if there is a Monmouth Steering Group he could join. It was explained that Monmouth had not been declared as an air quality management area.

A Member referred to the problem in Usk, and suggested this could be resolved by traffic management and double yellow lines at the exit of the town.

Recommendations

To receive and comment on the presentation provided titled 'Air Quality in Monmouthshire'.

Committee Conclusion

Members welcomed the report and looked forward to receiving the presentation via email also.

Members resolved to accept the recommendations.

7. Roadside Advertising - verbal update

Members received a verbal update from the Head of Operations on roadside advertising. The Committee had agreed previously discussed the issue and had agreed they did not wish to see additional charges, and wished to see increased footfall.

The Head of Operations provided apologies on behalf of the Cabinet Member.

Members were informed that it had cost just over £8600 in 2016/17 and 2017/18 to install posts, planting areas and advertising areas. The cost of each location, from planning to installation, is approximately £550, with ongoing maintenance. This would reduce to £100 per year when advertising space is utilised. Approximately 30 businesses have enquired about advertising. In order to increase interest officer are looking to offer two signs for one year.

The Chair clarified that information was sought around advertising using A-Boards on pavements. The Head of Operations explained that a policy is currently being rolled out throughout the County.

A Member raised concerns regarding 23 roadside signs, questioning if this was the best use of resources and providing return on investment. He added that rather than us carrying costs, should we consider other options. The Head of Operations responded that as we have provided the space we should now continue to promote the facility. In comparison to Cwmbran, who advertise on roundabouts, it was recognised that Monmouthshire do not have the same spaces.

A suggestion was made to sell advertising spaces on bus shelters and public toilets. The Officer explained this had been done under Highways, and could offer income opportunities, but there are much wider advertising opportunities to generate income.

A member requested a list of sites, which would be circulated to Members.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held on Thursday, 24th May, 2018 at 10.00 am

Colleagues from Powys County Council commented on the issue of A Boards, and mentioned the opportunity to advertise on litter bins.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the update.

8. Strong Communities forward work programme

Members discussed the Work Programme for the Strong Communities Select Committee. In doing so, it was noted that a special meeting is proposed for 14th June 2018 at 10am to discuss staff absence and the People Strategy.

9. Cabinet & Council forward work programme

Noted.

10. Date and time of next meeting

We noted the next meeting would be held on 12th July 2018 at 10am.
A special meeting is to be held on 14th June 2018

The meeting ended at 1.50 pm