

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at on Thursday, 15th November, 2018 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,
V. Smith, A. Easson and R. Harris

Also in attendance County Councillors: B. Strong and D. Jones

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Mark Cleaver	Environmental Officer
David Jones	Head of Public Protection
Carl Touhig	Head of Waste and Street Scene
Cath Fallon	Head of Economy and Enterprise
Gareth Walters	Trading Standards & Animal Health Team Leader
Susan Parkinson	Education And Awareness Officer

APOLOGIES:

There were no apologies for absence.

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Public Open Forum

The Chair introduced Mr. D. Jackman, Mrs A. Jackman and Mrs. M. Collins, members of Crucorney Environmental Group, who addressed the Select Committee in respect of the item to consider the draft Litter Strategy.

Mr. Jackman explained that the Group:

- Has many volunteers who are involved in litter picking and other environmental activities in the Crucorney community, collecting 350-400 bags of litter annually;
- Is frustrated at the lack of support received from the Council;
- Wants more prominent signage to seek the co-operation of visitors to the National Park to maintain the natural beauty of the area; and
- Asks that the council fulfils its responsibilities to keep its roads and land clean and litter free.

The Group requested that the Council uses its authority and resources to deliver a more effective anti-litter strategy to include:

- Education – aimed at secondary schools and colleges in particular;

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- A publicity campaign to raise public awareness of the menace caused by littering and the cost to the environment;
- Wardens and Police Community Support Officers to be given powers and training to enforce fixed penalty notices for littering (research confirms that enforcement and penalties must be part of any effective litter prevention campaign);
- Partnership with local businesses to show a united front against litter (particularly fast-food, convenience shops, supermarkets and service stations); and
- A measure of litter that is better than LEAMS to include rural areas.

3. Public Protection Performance Report

Purpose:

To undertake scrutiny of service delivery across Public Protection services in the first six months of the 2018/19, with comparison to previous years. The Public Protection division comprises of Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Animal Health and Licensing.

Recommendations:

1. To consider and comment on the contents of the report entitled 'Public Protection Performance report 2018/19, first 6 months'.
2. Members receive one annual performance report in future years, to be scheduled in May of each year. In this way, Officers will be able to avoid duplication by sourcing performance information from annual statutory returns. The Division's 2018/19 performance would therefore be reported to this Committee in May 2019.
3. Members receive one further report each year, to focus on a specific area of interest, adding value to service prioritisation. Officers will be guided by Members as to their particular areas of interest. On this occasion, a service focus on a Trading Standards topic will supplement the six month performance report.

Key Issues:

1. In January 2015 Cabinet requested that Public Protection performance was reviewed regularly by this Committee to assess progress over time. As a consequence six monthly reports have been provided to Strong Communities Select committee, together with annual reports to Licensing & Regulatory committee. As per recommendation 2.1 above, it is suggested this becomes one annual report, noting services are largely compliant with regulatory expectations, and customer satisfaction levels are typically high.
2. The attached report summarises performance over the first six months of 2018/19, and highlights the following:

- The four service teams, for the vast majority of the services they deliver, meet the Authority's legal obligations in relation to Public Protection services.
- As detailed in Appendix A, there has been an increase in reactive work over the first months of 18/19, to the detriment of some of our proactive work. An example would be a 29% increase in Public Health service requests equates to less proactive private water supply work, (as both functions provided by same Officers). Managers will continue to prioritise workloads and improve performance where required.
- Annual reports will continue to be made to this Committee to assess performance over time and help inform future priorities, noting the competing demands.
- Services may struggle to take on any new statutory duties that protect the public and the environment, and therefore funding must be sought to support any new work.

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- Future strategies for sustaining Public Protection services will be developed, (to include further income generation and collaboration), locally, regionally and nationally.
- Services will improve linkages to the Authority's Corporate Business Plan 2017/22 and other key drivers, for example the Chief Medical Officer Wales' priorities. The Head of Public Protection and the Trading Standards and Animal Health Manager provided a presentation summarising the performance report and focussing on scams in particular.

Member Scrutiny

The Chair acknowledged the wide portfolio held by the team and the increased pressures and demands that they face. Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking was highlighted as a future item.

- **Reporting:** The proposal to move to annual reports instead of 6 monthly in a time of change was queried. The Head of Public Protection agreed to provide an interim exception report each November to provide assurance to the Select Committee. Members wanted to know where and when pressures occur.
- **Ask for Angela:** A Member supported the "Ask for Angela" scheme that enlists the assistance of pub staff to provide an escape for vulnerable persons (e.g. those persons who may have met online or other circumstances). The Head of Public Protection confirmed that we support PubWatch schemes especially to encourage the safety of vulnerable individuals.
- **Car parking:** It was questioned how the change in responsibility for parking from the Police to the authority would be resourced. The Head of Operations explained that there is a small enforcement team to manage car parks. The change has the capacity to generate income where offenders are found and hoped to fund six enforcement officers. There will also be an opportunity to work with Public Protection colleagues on civil enforcement matters such as litter and dog fouling.

Committee Conclusions:

The Officers were thanked for an excellent presentation.

Select Committee Members looked forward to a debate on Brexit in the new year as the implications are far reaching for our rural communities.

4. Litter Strategy

Purpose:

To present to the Select Committee a draft of a new Litter Strategy and to obtain support and direction on priority areas for work so that the strategy can be finalised for submission to Cabinet.

Recommendations:

For Members to provide guidance to Officers on the areas within the action plan that should be prioritised over the next three financial years.

Key issues:

1. In recent years, public concern about the impact on litter has increased as have the public demands on the county council to improve its performance in managing litter. This increase in demand reflects changes in the types of litter, the causes of litter, and wider understanding of the impact of litter on the environment, economy and wellbeing.

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2. Despite best efforts in constrained times, last year the independent audit of street cleanliness in the county identified an increase in litter in our communities for the first time in a decade. Given the challenges faced by the Waste and Street services department over the last five to ten years, performance has held up well. However, with further cuts expected and increasing calls for action from the public, the department has reviewed its activity to ensure that its work appropriately targeted the challenges of today and in the coming years.

3. The outcome of the departmental review is to produce a litter strategy. Currently, there are national litter strategies for England and Scotland but not for Wales. Furthermore, this will also be the first publicly available local authority litter strategy in Wales.

Member Scrutiny:

The representatives of the Crucorney Environmental Group, having addressed the Select Committee in the Public Forum, remained for consideration of this item.

Questions were asked of the Group by Members as follows.

- **Signage:** A Member asked the Crucorney Environmental Group where a sign could be best placed to indicate the location of the National Park. It was responded that there are already signs in place but they should be more prominent and contain information about maintaining the special characteristics of the National Park.
- **Bins:** A Member enquired if bins are available on the route in question. It was responded that bins had been set up by the Environmental Group in laybys and litter hotspots. Volunteers monitor them and empty as necessary. It was explained that the Group funded four bins, McDonalds a further three bins and Landmark (Llwyn Celyn) funded one bin. The Head of Operations confirmed that bins are provided by the Council but it is also arguable that provision does not encourage refuse to be taken home and may encourage fly tipping. Trunk roads don't have bins provided.

The Recycling Strategy Manager, Environmental Officer and Education and Awareness Officer provided a presentation on the Litter Strategy and Members asked questions as follows:

- **Bins:** Members considered if provision of bins was the Council's responsibility noting that town and community councils often provide them. A Committee Member encouraged all Members to have a good relationship with their area supervisors who can advise on sites for dog bins and refuse bins and will tackle indiscriminate littering and fly tipping. It was explained that transparent bins are a cheaper option and easier to identify if they require emptying.
- **Pilot Scheme:** The Chair asked about the Llanvihangel Crucorney pilot scheme. Some signs printed on Correx boards ("Volunteers have recently litter picked this area") have been erected and environmental statements will be added to the new refuse collection vehicles. Litter levels will be monitored in the area to see if this is an effective deterrent and, if so, this approach can be rolled out across the county.
- **Litter:** The Officer offered the opinion that levels of litter in Monmouthshire are not particularly high but appear so because of its rural nature. Resources to address litter are mainly used within the towns and there is limited resources for rural areas. The litter strategy considers where the resources should be best spent. A Member supported the strategic placing of litter bins, in liaison with town and community councils, and more education particularly for secondary age pupils. Members agreed there is no excuse for littering, and advocated fixed penalty fines.
- **Enforcement:** The Chair asked if consideration had been given to issuing fines, noting that some Welsh councils use agencies to monitor and fine litterers. It was responded that there are options within the Litter Strategy. The Head of Public Protection informed the Select Committee that only a small number of fines have been issued for litter offenses but there have been eight prosecutions for fly tipping over the last four years. The change

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of responsibility for on street car-parking enforcement in April 2019 may provide some additional capacity to issue fixed penalty notices. The role of staff managing off street parking may be extended to issue fixed penalty notices for dog fouling, littering and on street parking.

Mr. Jackman provided some statistics that Monmouthshire County Council was the only Welsh Council not to have issued fixed penalty notices during a three year period and advised that successful Litter Strategies have fines and enforcement as a deterrent.

The Environmental Officer introduced the Litter Strategy, and answered questions as follows:

- **Chewing Gum:** A Member raised the issue of persons discarding chewing gum. It was explained that some of the manufacturers have a fund to which applications can be made mainly to encourage behavioural change.
- **Education:** A Member advocated the option for enforcement and infrastructure, and emphasised the importance of education of young people. It was suggested that a poster competition could be sponsored by businesses. In response to a question, it was confirmed that more work should be done with businesses in terms of education in terms of customers' disposal of packaging and employee behaviour. It was confirmed that those businesses contacted have been supportive. It was suggested that good behaviours could be successfully promoted through social media, and also that the housing associations could take a larger role e.g. to address refuse being put out too early. Members agreed that prevention is crucial and reported that the housing associations in some areas were very helpful.
- **Fly tipping:** It was explained that identification of perpetrators of industrial waste fly-tipping is difficult and prevents enforcement. The Recycling Strategy Officer said that the main enforcement areas are for fly-tipping, industrial waste, putting refuse out early and also litter. It was agreed to review strategy for siting and purchasing bins, and to include promotion involving businesses. County Councillor D. Dymock offered to be involved in consideration of partnership with businesses. Members also accepted the role of the community in eradicating litter. In response to a question, it was explained that fly tippers have been identified through intelligence gathered from the discarded waste with addresses on e.g. letters.
- Deposits on bottles and cans were suggested to encourage their collection.
- Litter must be addressed at source and it was questioned how to measure success.

Committee Conclusions:

The Chair concluded that this had been an interesting debate and summed up that:

- The Select Committee would welcome feedback on the outcome of the pilot in the Llanvihangel Crucorney area;
- It would be more relevant to have our own measure of cleanliness;
- It would be appropriate to have a further meeting to follow up on working with businesses and schools to receive an update on e.g. a poster competition
- In terms of options appraisal, that priority should be given to consideration of enforcement and infrastructure.

The Chair thanked the Crucorney Environmental Group Members for their attendance, ideas, contribution and for holding the Council to account and looked forward to future working together.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance and contribution.

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5. Usk in Bloom - Performance Report

The Chair welcomed Mr. A. Kear, Usk in Bloom Chairman, and Cath Fallon, Head of Enterprise and Community Development who provided feedback on the success of the organisation over many years focussing on the £3000 one off contribution from the Council.

The Committee congratulated Usk in Bloom on its most recent accolade of being the Winner of Communities in Bloom (World) Small International Category 2018 awarded in Canada which was won on first time entry. It was agreed that this was an amazing achievement that puts us on the world stage and has increased visitor numbers to our county.

- Members paid tribute to the hard work of the Usk in Bloom volunteer team, appreciated the work with the children at Usk Church in Wales Primary School and the rebranding to Town of Flowers. It was suggested that there is an annual contribution as there is a great return on the investment.
- A Member asked for advice for other towns and villages that wish to participate and was informed that it has to be a shared community goal, and that the project is paid for through the goodwill of volunteers, work in kind and the support of businesses.
- It was noted that Llanbadoc Community Council contribute financially.
- A Member expressed interest in a peat free and bee friendly approach and was advised that Usk in Bloom has links with Bee Friendly and the Civic Society, and liaison with the County Council encourages a bee friendly environment in the town.

Committee Conclusions:

The Chair, on behalf of the Select Committee, thanked Mr. Kear for attending the meeting. The work of Usk in Bloom epitomised exactly what the Select Committee wants communities to be and it is hoped to continue financial contribution where possible.

6. To confirm minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed and signed as a true record.

The Head of Operations referred to an action point from the last meeting following a presentation by Mr. Rogers regarding large vehicles in narrow lanes. It was explained that following correspondence, the local member and Head of Operations had met with Mr Rogers and a decision was taken to not impose any limit on the road. There was further correspondence via the complaints procedure, with Welsh Government and the Countryside Division. Correspondence continues and the Committee will be kept updated.

A Member was interested in the solution to this issue as there is a similar problem in Manson Lane, Monmouth.

7. Strong Communities forward work programme

The Chair commenced by stating that Officers are reminded to provide presentations suitably in advance of the meeting (so that e.g. font size can be checked) and preferably circulated with the agenda papers.

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The next meeting on the 6th December 2018 will be to consider Waste and Recycling only.

Suggestions for the forward work plan include:

- Highways Management Plan ~ Paul Keeble
- Large vehicles on small roads policy
- Chepstow and Monmouth Wye pedestrian
- Open Space Review ~ review of open spaces and the prioritisation and management of highways ~ strategic review rather than operational.
- Gwent Refugees and Asylum Seekers ~ progress report ~ Scrutinised by CYP Select on 29th November 2018. Committee to attend.
- Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking ~ topic raised by the Chair for in-depth scrutiny. The Chair and relevant Officer to meet initially with a view to initiating further work in the new year.
- Rights of Way – approval of review after formal consultation in spring ~ scrutiny of the policy that is likely to fall out of the review – prioritisation for public path orders; modification orders.
- Cremations and Burials
- Strategic Equality Report ~ 18th April 2019
- Welsh Language Monitoring Report ~ 6th June 2019
- Fire Service ~ Review by Welsh Government of the governance and funding ~ implications for Monmouthshire.
- Review grounds maintenance service

Thursday 29th November 9.30a.m.-4.30p.m: Visit to an anaerobic waste digestion facility and recycling processing plant (Open to all members).

An update was provided on the Speeding workshop attended by members to assess a process developed by the Road Safety Speed Steering Group. This work now needs to be completed.

It was explained that the authority will undertake more work to co-ordinate enquiries between the Police, Go Safe and Council. This will provide a better opportunity to manage enquiries better. The completed work will be considered again by the steering group before returning to Strong Communities Select Committee for scrutiny. Additionally, the Head of Operations explained about a pilot scheme in Gloucestershire that links automatic number-plate recognition and speed cameras. It was agreed that this may be of interest in Monmouthshire in the future.

8. Cabinet & Council forward work programme

The Cabinet and Council forward work programme was noted.

9. To note the date and time of next meeting as Thursday 6th December 2018 at 10am

The meeting ended at 12.50 pm