

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held
at Conference Room - Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 6th December, 2018 at 10.00 am**

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

County Councillors: L.Jones, R.Roden, L. Guppy, V. Smith,
A. Easson, R. Harris, L.Brown, S.B. Jones and B. Strong

Also in attendance County Councillors: L.Brown, S.B. Jones and
B. Strong

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Paula Harris	Acting Scrutiny Officer
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer
Carl Touhig	Head of Waste and Street Scene
Frances Williams	Chief Officer, Enterprise

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor L.Dymock

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Open Public Forum

Jenny Carpenter, Chair and Peter Sutherland, Vice Chair of Llanbadoc Community Council attended the meeting to raise the following three points:

1. Information was sought on the progress and outcomes arising from the Road Safety workshop held earlier in the year. The Head of Operations responded that it was a positive workshop that has resulted in a draft speed management strategy. This will now be considered by Area Committees in January 2019 and then the revised procedure will be returned to the authority. A Member advised that the draft report does not as yet contain any updates from the workshop.
2. Clarification was sought on the proposals to improve the working relationship between County and Town and Community Councils and proposed engagement. It was responded that this will be considered by Area Committees.
3. It was commented that there had been no response to several requests regarding grant applications which was problematic due to deadlines. The Chief Officer Enterprise agreed to pick this matter up with the member of staff concerned. Advice was provided that Town and Community Councils may contact the Members' Secretaries who will assist in chasing responses as necessary. A separate response will be provided outside of the meeting.

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The Chair thanked the representatives of Llanbadoc Community Council for their hard work, attendance and contribution to the meeting.

3. Pre-decision scrutiny of changes to food waste and recycling collection

Purpose:

This report seeks to update members on savings, reduction in costs and potential for increased income generation as a result of changes to the types of bag we use to collect recycling.

Key Issues:

The key issues are for the Select Committee to undertake pre-decision scrutiny ahead of recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Operations to

1. Approve the move to reusable bags for dry recycling to improve the quality of recyclate achieve savings and maximise income generation; and
2. Approve the use of recycled plastic bags for food waste collections to improve the quantity of food waste being reprocessed and achieve savings in support of budget pressures.

Member Scrutiny:

The Head of Waste and Street Scene introduced the report and provided a presentation. Following the presentation, Members were invited to ask questions and to comment on recycling collection:

1. A Member questioned why the lead authority of the 3-county arrangement has not attended a Strong Communities Select Committee meeting. An offer of a presentation from the Chief Officer Enterprise and Officers from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council on Joint Waste Procurement at a future meeting made by the Chief Officer Enterprise was made and accepted.
2. The Chair asked for information about the changes to the recycling market in recent years since the introduction of the cellulose bags. It was responded that the recent recycling review highlights that contaminated recyclate will be less desirable to the market.
3. A Glass trial has taken place over a wide area in the County where glass is collected separately and returned to Cwmbran to be recycled which will save costs. Outside of the trial area, glass is collected in the purple bags, split sorted and returned for recycling.
4. In response to a question it was explained that the existing bags would remain in circulation until approximately May 2019.
5. A Member questioned the suitability of the proposed larger capacity bags for elderly and infirm residents. The Select Committee was informed that smaller bags can be provided as necessary and there is also an assisted service available. Residents that need help to recycle will be supported as necessary. A reference will be added to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Assessment.
6. A question was asked residents in flats and replied that communal bin collection points would be made available where separate recyclate will be deposited. Non-compliance will be dealt with by education first then through enforcement action being taken.
7. A Member queried if the views of staff have been taken into account and it was explained that some staff are in favour of the new bags, others are concerned about the longer rounds. Training has been undertaken including customer care.
8. It was confirmed that the number of bags for collection will be limited because one bag will be delivered. There is flexibility for e.g. larger families. It was confirmed that abuse of the current bags is common, with evidence of them being used for many purposes.

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9. It was observed that increasing the size of the bag will reduce the number of bags to be collected by the teams, and could contribute to a shortened round. Regarding abuse of the bags, it was explained that procurement options include a bag with a pocket included for the resident to add their name and address or a design that can be directly written on with a permanent marker.
10. A Member asked about arrangements for the provision of a replacement or second bag and it was confirmed that there are no plans at present to make a charge. The cost of a replacement bag every three years has been accounted for.
11. A Member asked questions about the bags and was satisfied that 2 smaller bags can be provided if there is an issue with size and weight of the bags. Assisted collections are available to help those who need this service. Regarding odour, it was explained that bags can be washed to reduce residual odours; bags should be stored outside. In terms of recycling, it was explained that during the pilot scheme, there was no reduction in the amount of recycling. It was acknowledged that experience in other authorities has shown that use of a single bag can cause increased litter and this is a point to be addressed.

Members were invited to ask questions and comment on food recycling:

1. Members were generally happy with the proposal.
2. A Member questioned why plastic bags have to be used as the Council is committed to reduce single use of plastic. It was clarified that reasons include that they are suitable for fluids, the crews prefer not to collect loose material and there is evidence that where bags are provided, there is increased yield though better participation. There is also a 5% reduction in costs through using the Anaerobic Digestion (AD) process. The ability to use other bags should see a reduction in the amount of bags supplied. It was agreed that education is key.
3. A Member was opposed to using plastic bags, stating that their use should be discouraged to assist a reduction in the numbers produced by the industry. It was explained that any bags processed by AD will contribute to Energy from Waste. It was explained that any plastic bags purchased would have a high recycled content.
4. A Member stated that the starch bags are only suitable for composting not AD and encouraged residents to reuse other plastic bags e.g. bread and potato bags for food waste.
5. In response to a question, it was explained that dog waste bags are only provided as part of "Give Dog Fouling the Red Card" enforcement via Community Councils.
6. It was explained that the number of plastic bags to be purchased is under consideration but that any excess can be stored and used as per demand over many years unlike the starch bags that decompose after 3 months.

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Committee Conclusion:

The Chair, on behalf of the Strong Communities Select Committee, commented that there have been considerable changes in a rapidly changing recycling market with the recent recycling review highlighting that contaminated recyclate will be less desirable to the market. As a result it is necessary to keep abreast of future changes and encourage more recycling in the County to produce greater yield and reap the benefits accordingly. The Committee looked at the various wet and dry bag options available to residents at the meeting and discussed with waste officers a number of differing options that would be available to residents with bespoke needs.

The Chair thanked waste officers for facilitating a recent visit to an anaerobic digestion plant to allow Elected Members to see the difference in yield that would be made by moving to recycled plastic bags from the current corn-starch bags for food waste.

In regard to recommendation 1.1, upon being put to the vote, it was unanimously agreed to approve the move to reusable bags for dry recycling to improve the quality of recyclate, achieve saving and maximise income generation.

In regard to recommendation 1.2, upon being put to the vote, it was agreed (seven votes for, one against and no abstentions) to approve the use of recycled plastic bags for food waste collections to improve the quality of food waste being reprocessed and achieve saving in support of budget pressures.

4. Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) - Permits, Procurement And Provision

Purpose:

This report seeks Members' views on the procurement activity in relation to the management of our Household Waste & Recycling Centres HWRC, future provision of the sites and the introduction of a permit scheme for Monmouthshire residents.

Key Issues:

- Council budgets are under increasing pressure and services must look to innovative and new ways to achieve savings or deliver services with reduced funding. Monmouthshire has an excellent recycling rate record but we must be aware of changes in markets, public perception and the political landscape as well as innovation and legislative context when considering service changes.

This is an opportunity for the Strong Communities Select Committee to scrutinise proposals to:

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1. Introduce of a resident permit scheme for use at the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) sites;
2. Introduce day closures as set out in report:
3. Continue procurement and related activities in relation to the HWRC sites and to present the options to Council for decision following full analysis.
4. Consider options for full closure of HWRC sites (in particular the Usk HWRC given operational issues and usage), acknowledging that the authority is legally required to only offer one site within the county, and to agree what proposals to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Operations.

Member Scrutiny:

The Head of Waste and Street Scene introduced the report, welcoming the scrutiny of the Select Committee before consideration by full Council. Questions and comments were invited, as follows:

Introduction of a resident permit scheme:

1. Members were in agreement with a measure to reduce non-resident use of HWRC sites and the consequent savings to keep sites open for residents.
2. Members were in favour of a visible resident permit displayed on a vehicle dashboard or hooked over the rear view mirror on entry to a site and suggested that the permit was distributed in the most cost effective manner e.g. via Council Tax demands. In response to a question, it was confirmed that a resident could present alternative photo identification if the permit was lost or unavailable.
3. Members suggested that out of county border residents could be offered the option to buy an annual or single use permit for economic, convenience and environmental reasons. It was agreed that handling money on site was not feasible.
4. A Member requested clear signage to explain the sites are for the use of Monmouthshire residents only, opening times and rules. It was confirmed that the changed arrangements would be publicised through a marketing strategy, signage and the availability of site attendants to provide advice.

Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation to introduce a resident permit scheme for use at the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) sites was unanimously supported by the Select Committee.

Day/full closure of sites/Procurement:

1. A Member was not in favour of the closure of Usk or Mitchel Troy HWRC sites and was concerned, in particular, that all three options included the closure of the Usk site which is a valued and well-used facility. The Local Member agreed with the points made, referred to the town and outlying area's future needs and suggested a closure of two days a week (Sunday, Monday) to make savings.
2. The Chair noted that legally the Council only has to provide one facility and commented that if this were to be the site at Llanfoist, there would be a considerable travelling time from the south of the county. The cost of bringing the Usk site up to standard was requested. It was responded by the Officer that there is investment each year into the Usk Site and it is maintained to be kept

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open and compliant. The site is limited by lack of space, however. Other work such as resurfacing and fencing is required and an estimate of costs was provided.

3. A Member did not agree that the Usk site should be closed, and suggested looking at Mitchel Troy and Usk together offset by Five Lanes and Llanfoist sites. It was commented that Sundays are a busy day for residents and the site should be open whilst accepting that businesses would not use the facility on a Sunday.
4. A Member was in favour of the matter being debated by full Council and also put forward a suggestion of residents paying towards use of a HWRC facility. A Member requested more detailed costs to bring the Usk site up to standard.
5. A Member stated that Monmouth residents would not be in favour of closures at Mitchel Troy site.
6. A Member commented that day closures would be confusing for residents and suggested shortened hours instead. The Member added the opinion that usage at Usk is low and it is expensive to run, coupled with safety issues, loss of car parking places and the large lorries transporting skips through the town. The Member also asked about progress with the recyclable goods shop in Llanfoist and was informed that building is under way and discussions well progressed with Homemakers. It is hoped to open the shop in April for two days a week.
7. The Head of Operations explained that a fund is to be created to strategically explore issues around the future development of Usk Town in terms of future prosperity and traffic etc.
8. Referring to a possible future strategy of a one large central HWRC to replace the existing sites, a Member, preferred the current site locations for residents' convenience
9. Regarding arrangements for future procurement, it was agreed to refer this matter to full Council..

Committee Conclusion:

The Chair summarised on behalf of the Select Committee that this matter was such an important matter affecting all residents and should therefore be considered by Full Council as soon as possible.

Regarding the recommendation to introduce a resident permit scheme for use at the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) sites, upon being put to the vote, this was unanimously supported by the Select Committee providing a clear steer for Council.

The Select Committee welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise the remaining recommendations and referred them to full Council.

5. To confirm minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true and correct record.

6. Action list

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The Action list was noted. In doing so the following matters were discussed:

Litter Strategy: Arrangements to be made to work with schools – an update on progress will be sent to Select Committee Members by e mail.

7. Strong Communities forward work programme

The Strong Communities Forward Work Programme was noted.

The Chair had met with officers regarding modern day slavery and trafficking and it was decided that this important topic will be the subject of an all Members' workshop

A Member asked that the costs of funerals (Cremations and Burials) should be added to the programme. It was agreed that an invitation would be sent out to all Members to meet informally to discuss this matter.

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be exclusively to conduct budget scrutiny.

8. Cabinet & Council forward work programme

The attention of Select Committee Members was drawn to the proposals for a collaboratively provided Post Office service in Usk. The matter will be presented to Cabinet on 19th December 2018 and Select Committee Members were encouraged to provide comment.

9. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 31st January 2019 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 12.43 pm