

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Economy and Development Select Committee held at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd March, 2016 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor S. Jones (Chairman)
County Councillor S. White (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Dovey, D. Edwards, B. Hayward, J. Prosser, A. Watts and A. Wintle

Also in attendance County Councillor(s): A. Easson, R.J.W. Greenland and V. Smith

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Nicola Perry	Democratic Services Officer
Kellie Beirne	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Cath Fallon	Head of Economy and Enterprise
Dan Davies	Events Coordinator
Marie Bartlett	Finance Manager
Vanessa Janes-Evans	Business and Enterprise Manager
Huw Owen	Principal Environment Health Officer
Ian Saunders	Head of Tourism, Leisure and Culture
Paul White	Specialist Environmental Health Officer
Andy Smith	Strategic Investment and Funding Manager
James Woodcock	Business Insights Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillors D. Evans

1. Declarations of Interest.

County Councillor J. Prosser declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Members' Code of Conduct in relation to agenda item 5, due to involvement in the Agri-Urban Project as an Abergavenny Town Councillor.

It was agreed any further declarations would be raised under the relevant agenda item.

2. To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11th February 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

3. Scrutiny of the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy.

Context:

Members were presented with a report from the Principal Environmental Health Officer in order to inform Members of the options for revising the Authority's Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy prior to consideration by Cabinet.

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Key Issues:

The Authority has duties under Part 11A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to inspect its area for contaminated land in line with statutory guidance, which includes the development of an inspection strategy. In 2002 the Council approved a Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy setting out its plans for identifying potentially contaminated land and prioritising any identified sites for remediation action.

The report provided a summary of the current position of the work undertaken to date and the options for consideration in revising the Authority's Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy and Members were advised of the following key points:

- 2480 potentially contaminated sites in the authority have had an initial desk top risk assessment, which has enabled sites to be placed into risk category bands. Of the 2480 identified sites, 44 are categorised as 'very high' or 'high' risk.
- Identifying these potentially contaminated sites enables effective consultation between the Development Control Section and Environmental Health.
- If a site is identified as contaminated, the land has to be declared as 'Contaminated Land' and be placed on public register. The legislation allows for the Council to serve notice on the original polluter to require remediation, but in the quite likely event of the company no longer being in existence, the options remaining would be to serve notice on the current property owners to remediate or for the council to undertake the work. Remediating land is very expensive, although the costs do vary widely according to the nature of the site. Property depreciation and anxiety for the property owner(s) is a likely consequence of a declaration of 'Contaminated Land' until remediation is completed.
- From 2005 to 2011 Welsh Government provided Capital Support to local authorities to fund intrusive investigations at potentially contaminated sites and towards the cost of remediation. This funding stopped in April 2011.

The Options presented in the report for a revised strategy were:

- Option A. Dealing with land contamination through the planning regime.
- Option B. Limited intrusive site investigations.
- Option C. Full site investigations.
- Option D. Further desktop studies to refine the prioritisation of sites in readiness for limited / full site investigations.

Members Scrutiny

Following a request for clarification regarding the risk register, the Specialist Environmental Health Officers explained that it was the responsibility of the Authority to carry out inspections from time to time which would be defined by having an Inspection Strategy. The majority of work regarding the prioritisation of sites had been done and it was now time to decide whether to move on to the highest risk sites and carry out detailed inspections.

Members questioned if the risk register also covered Asbestos issues. It was confirmed that the register would only cover land. If a building had asbestos it would not necessarily mean the ground is contaminated. Asbestos should be removed prior to being demolished.

Officers stressed that no detailed inspections of any site had been carried out. Potentially this could involve external companies and run to costs of tens of thousands. There would be a challenge of requiring the land owners to rectify and remediate the land, or the Council itself to take on the responsibility. It had been estimated by officers at other local authorities that costs

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could run to £250,000 per hectare. Officers worked with Planning Department where there was development on potentially contaminated land, to ensure planning conditions were followed. Examples of such areas were the Coopers Filters site in Abergavenny, the old gas works sites in Chepstow and Abergavenny, which had been remediated under the planning regime.

Members asked the Officers what they considered to be the greater areas of concern. In response we heard that it was best to consider historical land uses such as Victorian gas works, and the legacy of the industrial revolution.

Members requested further information on any sites considered high risk, that were owned by the Council.

Members referred to the land at Llanfiostr School. Officers would provide further information following the meeting.

The Chair questioned if other local authorities were in a similar position and if any had adopted the strategy. Officers advised that all local authorities in Wales were in the same position. All have a responsibility to follow statutory guidance issued in 2012, and there had been no further legislative changes. Following the report going to Cabinet, Officers would consult with Welsh Government and liaise with the Environmental Health Technical Panel in preparation of the revised strategy prior to returning it to Cabinet for approval.

A Member questioned if farmland would automatically be tested when it comes to planning. It was explained that farmland was not automatically identified as contaminated land. Officers would look at historical data and maps to identify contaminated usage, and follow through from there.

In response to a Members question regarding military sites, we were informed that the Authority had no enforcement over these sites. However, Natural Resources Wales monitor water and information could be obtained from them.

Recommendations:

Members were recommended to note the content of the attached report entitled '*Monmouthshire County Council's Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy – Progress Summary*' February 2016, consider the options available and comment accordingly.

Committee Conclusion:

To conclude, the Chair noted that the general consensus of the Committee was to favour Option A: Dealing with land contamination through the planning regime.

It was acknowledged that Members requested further information on the school site in Llanfoist and Council owned sites on the register.

The Committee resolved to note and accept the report.

4. Monmouthshire Business and Enterprise - Performance Report.

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Context:

Members received a report from the Head of Economy and Enterprise in order to provide the Committee with a performance update on the activities of Monmouthshire Business and Enterprise (MBE).

Key Issues:

In line with one of the Council's four priorities of 'Supporting Enterprise, Entrepreneurship and Job Creation', Cabinet approved the Monmouthshire Business Growth and Enterprise Strategy in November 2014 and endorsed the associated Action Plan. The Strategy hinges on three pillars namely '*Supporting Business Growth*', '*Enabling Inward Investment*' and '*Growing Entrepreneurs*' and addresses customer needs through the provision of a programme of business support, networking and facilitation to help unlock the potential for growth in the County. In 2015/16 activities are targeted towards achieving these key priorities and maximising funding opportunities to reduce the financial burden on the Council.

Further to this the Vale of Usk Local Development Strategy approved by Cabinet in June 2015, is a key tool in drawing down £2.79M from the new 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme (RDP), expanded to include the rural wards of Newport. This Council is the Administrative Body for the programme holding overall responsibility and activities are directed through the Vale of Usk Local Action Group (LAG) – a local partnership based on the three thirds principle of representatives from the community, private and public sector.

In addition MBE also delivers the external strand of the Council's iCounty Strategy which includes the coordination of broadband infrastructure and ICT exploitation activities.

Members Scrutiny:

The Chair advised the Committee that issues surrounding iCounty and Rural Development Plan would be addressed at a special meeting in early April 2016.

A Member queried if the targets for employment were achievable, as the jobs created were currently at 110 rather than the annual target of 200 set in the LDP. It was noted that many suggested areas of employment were not near completion, or even started. The Head of Economy and Enterprise responded that the target was based on information received from businesses the authority works with. Unfortunately it was out of the officers hands, as the Council do not create the jobs. It was acknowledged that where there were delays, this would be forwarded to next year's plan. The Chief Officer for Enterprise added that ideally it would be preferable to scrap annual targets as there was no direct control. It was suggested that with the new economy emerging, there would need to be more robust frameworks in place.

In response to a question from the Chair we heard there would be a wider regional framework particularly in terms of the City Deal, where an audit of the South East Wales economy is being undertaken.

A Member commented that with new technology and new types of businesses being established we must remain focused on the sustainability of existing businesses, particularly agricultural. Clarification was requested on the types of RDP projects in the pipeline. The Head of Economy and Enterprise explained the RDP was not a job creation programme but provided funding for innovation to ensure sustainability going forward. The Programme's Officers would also work with applicants to find additional funding post RDP intervention. A brief overview of approved projects included a BEES project "Breeding, Education, Environment & Skills" cooperation project between Vale of Usk, Caerphilly (& Blaenau Gwent) and Merthyr (and RCT);

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a baseline study to identify non-statutory services in Monmouthshire and Newport with a view to identifying any gaps and future demand; a full community consultation on the Magor Three Fields Site identify the need and use of a community building on the site which will be in addition to the proposed and already funded Energy Centre. Future submissions include projects relating to off-road cycling, digital coding clubs, a community toolkit for community planning and Wi-Fi i for village halls.

The Chair noted that the village hall projects were fantastic and the aim was to create employment opportunities and expressed thanks to the Business Development teams.

A Member raised ongoing concerns surrounding the roll out of Superfast broadband in the South of the County given the close proximity to Bristol. It was hoped that Monmouthshire would be part of the development of technological businesses and considered it important to try harder to develop the workforce in Chepstow. It was frustrating for people who wished to work from home but could not due to lack of broadband. It was thought that as good as iCounty sounded, it was frustrating that it was not moving forward.

The Cabinet Member responded that we do need all the things in iCounty. The AB internet project would bring the most difficult areas of Monmouthshire up to superfast speeds but there were still concerns about how to reach the last few areas. It was important to keep pressure on BT to ensure they adhere to projected timescales but we had been encouraged by the AB internet pilot which is due to come on line in March 2016.

The Chief Officer agreed that there were big ambitions and there was a need to mobilise resources to match those ambitions. As the lead for innovation in the City Deal, the Chief Officer understood the importance for Monmouthshire as well as the wider region and was keen to note that the reason Aston Martin had been attracted to the region was due to an enterprise zone, and this should be developed in other areas. As part of the City Deal, a set of asks were being put forward around flooding the region and attracting different high calibre businesses.

The Cabinet Member expressed congratulations to Vale of Glamorgan on hooking Aston Martin and noted it had been due to the great work between Welsh Governemnt and the Vale of Glamorgan Council. In Monmouthshire, from the Chief Executive down, we were working on projects. It was noted that in terms of the City Deal there was a potential £1.2 billion coming into the area, due to working together as a region.

The Chair requested that BT be invited to the next meeting to address the issues with Superfast Cymru.

Clarification was requested regarding ERASMUS funding. The Business and Enterprise Manager explained that ERASMUS was an EU funding stream for entrepreneurship. Officers were starting to work with South East Wales colleges on the project but were still in the initial stages. Further information would be brought to Committee in due course. In terms of the situation with the EU referendum, we were informed that the EU budget was set until 2020 so any projects we were involved with during this funding round would not be affected. It was also noted that should the UK pull out of Europe in the future we would still be able to access EU funds as part of the European Economic Area.

A Member wished to highlight the importance of promoting the benefit of Monmouthshire and its strategic position to businesses in Bristol. It was thought that it would not take a huge budget to promote and publish and would be important to make the effort within the South West Gloucestershire area. It was expressed that we should take note of the appropriateness of what is being offered in schools.

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The Head of Economy and Enterprise agreed that we need to attract business and have regular meetings with the Chambers, as well as currently having meetings with a Bristol based company regarding moving to the area. There was work being carried through within schools with an IT focus and in terms of a social level there were coding clubs.

Recommendations:

Members were recommended to receive the report in evidence of activities detailed in the Monmouthshire Business Growth and Enterprise Strategy Action Plan, as reflected in the Chief Officer's Annual report for Enterprise. Also, to receive a more comprehensive assessment of progress against the Monmouthshire Business Growth and Enterprise Strategy and the Vale of Usk Local Development Strategy in June 2016 following outturn.

Committee Conclusion:

The Chair concluded that some of the areas discussed by the Committee had included issues in rural areas, superfast broadband, the sustainability of existing businesses, and the promotion of Monmouthshire across the bridge.

The Committee were keen to invite BT to a meeting in April to discuss the issues surrounding Superfast Cymru.

We noted that further reports regarding iCounty would be brought to a future meeting

A Member requested an update on the Abergavenny BID be brought to Committee.

The Committee resolved to note the report and would welcome a progress report in June 2016

5. Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2015/16 Month 9 Outturn Forecast Statement.

Context:

Members received a report from the Finance Manager in order to receive information on the forecast revenue outturn position of the Authority at the end of reporting period 3 which represents month 9 financial information for the 2015/16 financial year.

The report would also be considered by Select Committees as part of their responsibility to:

- Assess whether effective budget monitoring is taking place,
- Monitor the extent to which budgets are spent in accordance with agreed budget and policy framework,
- Challenge the reasonableness of projected over or underspends, and achievement of predicted efficiency gains or progress in relation to savings proposals.

Members Scrutiny:

The Chief Officer highlighted that at month 6 we had been in a much different position and had now brought down an overspend of over £500,000 to £127,000, a significant

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adjustment in light of the huge challenge faced this year. It was noted that 14% of the budget had been lost and credit was given to the officers involved. Alternative methods of delivery would be looked at as current methods were no longer sustainable

A Member thanked the Finance Manager for the clear and concise presentation. A question was directed to the Chief Officer regarding the timescales in terms of refocussing, and if there were adequate resources in place to accommodate the plans. The Head of Tourism, Leisure and Culture advised that in terms of timescales officers were currently working to deliver a new delivery process, and Members had been briefed on a timetable. It was hoped the new model would go live in April 2017, but there was still a lot of work to be done, as well as political decision making.

A Member requested an update on the situation with the Hub in Abergavenny. We were advised that any necessary reports and information had been shared through a variety of different mechanisms. It was hoped the Hub would go live in three to six months but there was still building and structural work to be done. Further reports would be brought to Select Committee.

A Member questioned the accuracy of fostering figures. We were advised the Chief Officer for Social Care and Health had taken a recovery plan to Cabinet and would be best placed to advise further.

Concerns were aired surrounding the costs of hosting the Eisteddfod and whether all areas were contributing to the funding. It was thought that not all areas were embracing the idea and the County should pull together. We heard that with regards to costs the Eisteddfod was so far on budget, with more events and activities to come.

There were concerns surrounding the deficit position of schools, particularly Mounton House and Chepstow School. We heard issues had been noted at Children and Young People Select Committee and a report called-in had been referred back to Cabinet. Audit Committee were addressing issues surrounding Chepstow School.

Committee Conclusion:

The Committee welcomed the substantial progress made from month 6. In doing so a number of issues were noted including the Eisteddfod, implementation of the Hub and early engagement of the new service delivery.

The Committee resolved to accept the report.

6. Update on Monmouthshire's Events.

Context:

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The Event Manager provided Members with an update on the work and achievements of the Events team for 2015-2016 and on the progress of plans for events within 2016-2017.

Highlighted areas included:

- Monmouthshire's National Eisteddfod 2016
- Monmouthshire's area at the National Eisteddfod 2016
- Status Quo live at Caldicot Castle
- Velothon 2016

Member Scrutiny:

The Chair expressed that volunteers were a huge asset in terms of supporting events and questioned if the volunteers were being recognised by way of accreditation. The Event Manager advised that the Events team worked closely with the Programme Lead through the County that Serves programme for volunteers and currently certificates/thank you were issued but in terms of forward thinking it was hoped to hold an awards evening at the end of the year to recognise the input of volunteers. It was agreed that volunteers were the back bone in holding such big events.

A Member expressed congratulations on the progress to date. It was questioned if there were adequate resources in place as the Events Team became more busy and successful. In response we heard there were 2 full time roles but it was important to note that it was not the Events Team staging the events but Monmouthshire County Council. The role of the team was to support and coordinate the natural resource, working across leisure and tourism department. Volunteer teams were fundamental. Where necessary professional skilled freelance contractors were used.

The Chief Officer pointed out that the budget was cost-neutral.

The Chair questioned what proportion of income comes from outsourcing services and staff to third party events and projects. The Event Manager explained it was not as much as would be likes and this financial period had brought £5,000 to £8,000. It was hoped to increase this figure next year.

A Member brought attention to the 200th Anniversary of the Wye Bridge, and asked how this would feature in the statistics. We heard that Whole Place were looking at the project.

A Member raised a concern that the Monmouthshire Eisteddfod may be attracting publicity but to the detriment of the Abergavenny Eisteddfod.

With regards to the Abergavenny Eisteddfod Members stressed that the town should be in top quality condition with excellent facilities. We heard that the Waste and Street Services Teams were prepared.

There were concerns surrounding costs of the Eisteddfod and Members would welcome a cost benefit analysis. We heard that other areas had benefitted from a £6 to £8 million return on investment. The budget was being delivered and it was forecast to be maintained. Eisteddfod organisers did not foresee any problems. It was noted that fundraising would continue to the end of 2016.

The Chair noted that a Return on Investment report would be brought to Committee following the Eisteddfod

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A Member questioned why Status Quo had been chosen in particular for the event at Caldicot Castle. The Event Manager explained that there were many reasons for the event:

- We had been being presented with the opportunity from an agency
- The band fits with our demographics
- In terms of audience, an avid and loyal fan base, which we have benefitted from.
- This is a good starting point to develop relationships with music agents etc.

In terms of advertising, we heard that two thirds of tickets had been sold even though there had not been much in the way of advertising to date. We would now move onto physical advertising namely across libraries and leisure centres.

The Chair noted that the Committee would welcome an update following the event and offered congratulations on the sale of tickets to date.

With regards to the Velothon 2016, the Chair stressed the importance of working with the event organisers and highlighted the importance of helping local businesses benefit from the event. The Event Manager noted that in terms of internal arrangements all Community Hubs and Contact Centres had been briefed should people contact them for information, and would act as a link between residents and event organisers.

Committee Conclusion:

Members were keen to congratulate the team and volunteers, and welcomed the uplifting report. We appreciated the vibrancy being brought to the county and the economic benefits.

We noted that the return from the National Eisteddfod would be huge.

We acknowledged that the problems of the Velothon 2015 had been addressed and 2016 would be a great event.

The Committee resolved to accept the report and would welcome frequent updates.

7. Work Programming.

The Committee noted the future work programme, in doing so it was noted that a special meeting would be held on 16th March 2016 at 2.00pm to discuss the Circuit of Wales.

A special meeting would be arranged for early April 2016 to address iCounty, Skutrade and SRS.

8. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting.

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 14th April 2016 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 1.20 pm

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