

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held
at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 28th January, 2016 at 10.00
am**

PRESENT: County Councillor S. Howarth (Chairman)
County Councillor V. Smith (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Dovey, A. Easson, S. Jones and K. Williams

Also in attendance County Councillor(s): D. Blakebrough, D. Jones and
S.B. Jones

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Alan Burkitt	Policy Officer Equalities and Welsh Language
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Rachel Jowitt	Head of Waste & Street Services
Carl Touhig	Recycling Strategy and Business Manager
Hazel Illett	Scrutiny Manager
Paula Harris	Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for absence

We received apologies from County Councillors A. Webb and S. White.

2. Declarations of Interest

None received.

3. Public open forum

There were no members of the public present.

4. To confirm minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee resolved to confirm and sign the minutes of the meetings of Strong Communities Select Committee held on:

- 24th November 2015 (Special meeting)
- 10th December 2015
- 11th January 2016 (Special meeting)

5. MCC Strategic Equality Plan number two 2016 - 2020

Context:

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced in April 2011 and within its specific duties is the requirement to publish the Council's Equality Objectives within a Strategic Equality Plan (SEP). The Act's principles and processes ensure that the Council remains true to its corporate values of Openness, Fairness, Flexibility and Teamwork. This is the Council's second SEP replacing the version 2012 – 2016 on the 1st April 2016.

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Key Issues:

One of the Specific Duties in the Equality Act 2010 requires Public Bodies to publish their second SEP's by 1st April 2016. In giving the Protected Characteristics due regard, it was necessary to consult on the Objectives and Plan and to take feedback into consideration in the development of the final Plan. The consultation ran from the 16th December 2015 to the 14th January 2016.

Member Scrutiny:

A Member asked since the reorganisation, was there was a dedicated point of contact. We were advised that there will be an internal network of individuals with a champion in each division acting as a vehicle encouraging effective communication.

A Member question if the officer was aware of the new Trade Union Equality reps, with there being an All Wales Equality rep network. The Officer advised that they may be useful to our network and would follow this up.

Questions were raised regarding funding for interpreters for Syrian Refugees entering the County & whether constructive tuition was being offered. We were told in response that The Home Office was providing funding per head and ESAW were setting up classes.

A Member commented that they were irritated by the reference to old people having a good life and said that the line should to be changed to 'everyone' is entitled to have a good life.

It was stressed by a Member the importance of diversity at an elected level and there need to be more onus on how we encourage that. The Officer advised that the report was at a draft stage and he would welcome any suggestions, comments and input from members.

The Officer was asked if support was being received from the communications team. In answer we were told that the Communication team provided excellent support ensuring that all projects receive massive coverage.

A Member raised concerns that the report needs to be exposed in a different environment, with more debate being needed.

Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

The Chair said that Welsh Government should be encouraged to take some responsibility for this issue, with training costed for this – Chair to write to Welsh Government.

County Councillor Jones to work with officers, subject to this going ahead.

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6. Waste Review

Context:

To seek Select Committee's views on the findings of the Recycling Review prior to a report being presented to Cabinet in March 2016.

Key Issues:

Over the past 28 months, MCC has carried out a strategic review of the recycling and waste service in response to changes in EU and UK law and Welsh Government (WG) policy and guidance including WG's preference for kerbside sort collections. The background to the review and the legislative issues was fully explained in the report to Cabinet of December 2014.

Member Scrutiny:

Members were not convinced about kerbside sorting returning, especially the health and safety implications of sorting glass and asked if a separate bag could be provided for glass.

Members agreed that option 4 was the least attractive option.

A Member asked how far away from anaerobic digestion we are, it was answered that the contract was due to start in 2017.

Members expressed concerns that changing the system so many times would lead to dissatisfaction among members of the public, with people less likely to engage in recycling if constant changes taking place. We were advised that this was one of the main reasons the review was important, with the choices of vehicles setting the path for the next 7 years of service.

Committee's Conclusion:

The Chair reminded Members that the Committee were being asked to provide their views on the four options contained within the report that would be taken to Cabinet in March 2016 and were being asked to approve the following draft recommendations:

- I. The principles of the existing collection service of dry recycling materials (red & purple bag) be continued - **AGREED**
- II. A robust 6 month pilot is undertaken on *separating glass* at kerbside (alongside red and purple bags) to fully understand: productivity rates – what is achievable and firm up costs (including hiring demo vehicles to test), quality of material – new MRF contract with SITA (“separate collection test”), glass flows and demand, public engagement and change management and importantly compliance with the EU Waste Framework Directive requirements; **AGREED**
- III. The pilot results to be reviewed by Recycling Review Member Steering Group, Select Committee and Cabinet prior to proceeding with full implementation following the trial period and adjust collection methodology if necessary; **AGREED**
- IV. The Scottish model (explained in para. 33 below) is reviewed through the pilot period; **AGREED**
- V. That food and garden waste kerbside collections will be split, with food waste to be

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treated via AD and garden waste via open windrow. **AGREED**

The Chair concluded that whilst Members support the recommendations contained within the report, they would ask officers to consider the following points:

- The pilot scheme if not carefully communicated could confuse the public and therefore not demonstrate an accurate reflection of take-up – Members suggested effective communication with the public involved in the pilot should be undertaken in advance to ensure the various methods that will be trialled and the period over which each trial will commence are understood.
- Members were opposed to the 4th option, which would involve a vehicle sorting recyclates at the kerbside. Members suggested that whilst they recognise that they quality of recyclates is improved via this type of collection method, they feel it is too burdensome for the public to collect their recyclates in this manner.
- Members are opposed to the plastic recycling boxes as the feedback that they have received suggests these are blown away in poor weather conditions and may damage vehicles or property. Members argue that the plastic bags are a better option and ask officers to pursue the potential for these instead of plastic boxes.

The Committee agreed that the report should be taken to Cabinet and the pilot be commenced, reporting back to the Select Committee with the outcomes before permanent collection methods are implemented.

7. Strong Communities Select Committee Work Programme

The next meeting has been moved from the 10th March 2016 to 25th February 2016.

At the next meeting Drybridge House will be discussed and members are encouraged to visit the building prior to the next meeting.

8. Cabinet and Council Forward Planner

Members considered and noted the Council & Cabinet Forward Work Planner.

9. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 25th February 2016 at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 12.41 pm