

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Public Service Board Select Committee held  
at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK - County Hall on Wednesday, 9th  
January, 2019 at 10.00 am**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor J. Pratt (Chair)  
County Councillors: M.Groucutt, G. Howard, J.Pratt and J.Treharne

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy and Governance
Hazel Clatworthy	Sustainability Policy Officer
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Mark Hand	Head of Planning, Housing and Place-Shaping
Owen Wilce	Community and Partnership Development Lead

### **APOLOGIES:**

County Councillor D. Batrouni

#### **1. To elect a Chair.**

County Councillor J. Pratt was elected Chair for the meeting.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

#### **3. Public Open Forum**

No members of the public were present.

#### **4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th October 2018.**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th October 2018 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

Matter arising:

- The Committee accepted apologies for absence for the last meeting from County Councillor G. Howard.
- A Member asked if our partners (e.g. Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Police, Health, Fire) are clear how they devolve specifically to deal with the Monmouthshire PSB. Secondly, clarity was sought on the relationship and integration between Monmouthshire PSB and other PSBs and their officers in the region citing the example of a child from another area with specific needs placed in a county school with no consultation or resources.

The Chair acknowledged that these matters could be specifically addressed with partners at the next meeting.

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The Head of Policy and Governance reported that PSBs in the region have been working to produce common objectives which can be used to commission future work e.g. Future Trends. More information can be supplied at a future meeting. Another common focus will be understanding and mitigating climate change. Select Committee Members were reminded of the Committee's power to scrutinise partners of PSBs on Wellbeing of Future Generation functions rather than broader responsibilities. Considering the specific case, more information would be sought and provided to the Member prior to the next meeting.

#### **5. Progressing the steps in the Well-being Plan: The purpose is to provide the Select Committee with an opportunity to receive presentations that will provide a progress update on the steps being delivered as part Monmouthshire's Well-being Plan and an opportunity to scrutinise the progress made by the lead agency for each of these which are drawn from members of the Public Service Board.**

##### **Purpose:**

To provide the context for presentations that will be given to update the Select Committee on the delivery of key steps as part Monmouthshire's Well-being Plan. The Select Committee is invited to scrutinise the progress of the lead agency assigned to these steps, who are members of the Public Service Board.

##### **Key Issues:**

1. The Public Service Board has approved four well-being objectives that underpin a clear purpose of *building sustainable and resilient communities*. The ideas and activity that will contribute to the delivery of these is set out as 'steps' within the Well-being Plan, each one being led by a PSB partner.
2. The work on the steps is at different stages of evolution, with some still in the exploratory phase whilst others have engaged the market and are developing pilots. The Programme Board sits underneath the PSB and maintains an oversight of all activities.
3. These PSB has prioritised a six steps for particular focus over the next six months. They are:
  - Adverse Childhood Experiences - led by Gwent Police
  - The Mental Health of Children and Young People – led by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
  - Improve the resilience of ecosystems by working at a larger scale – led by Natural Resources Wales
  - Promoting active citizenship – led by Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations
  - Re-addressing the supply and mix of housing stock - led by Monmouthshire County Council, with involvement of registered social landlords
  - Develop technology-led solutions for improving rural transport – led by Monmouthshire County Council.
4. The Select Committee can require any statutory member of the board to give evidence, but only in respect of the exercise of joint functions conferred on the partner as a statutory member of the board in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
5. Two partners have been invited to make a presentation to the 9th January 2019 meeting to outline the activity and progress being made in delivering the steps. Presentations to the Select Committee should reflect the challenge identified in the well-

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being assessment and provide some of the available evidence to demonstrate the rationale for selecting the issue. The Select Committee will gain a clearer understanding of how the steps being taken reinforce the PSB's vision and ambition for the future.

6. The Select Committee may wish to consider the extent to which they feel the partners have applied the following five ways of working in their leadership of the steps they are delivering, as follows:

- Long term
- Integrated
- Involvement
- Collaborative
- Prevention

#### **Member Scrutiny:**

The Head of Policy and Governance introduced the report and invited questions and comments from Select Committee Members on the six point plan, as follows:

- The Chair expressed concern about NRW's recent work in her ward leading her to believe that it is under resourced. She provided details of concerns regarding Clydach Gorge and welcomed the opportunity to question NRW at a future meeting.
- Referring to the point: Re-address the supply and mix of housing stock, a Select Committee Member raised the need for resources. Reference was made to the Leader's recent comment about the Council's inability to establishing a means of building social housing due to unavailability of housing staff.

#### **Re-addressing the supply and mix of housing stock**

The Head of Planning and Place Shaping and the Director of Property Services, Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA), provided a presentation on Step 5: Re-addressing the supply and mix of housing stock as led by Monmouthshire County Council, with involvement of registered social landlords and invited questions from Select Committee Members, as follows:

- A Select Committee Member asked, putting aside work already being undertaken, what different actions have arisen as a result of the PSB and Wellbeing of Future Generations. A question was asked about the affordable housing waiting list.

The Head of Planning and Place Shaping responded that the PSB and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act have led to more joined-up working with wider partners. This has included engagement with young people in preparation for the new Local Development Plan (LDP). Additionally, a local transport plan will sit alongside the new LDP and consideration of different ways of influencing housing delivery.

The Director of Property Services, MHA, explained that the affordable housing list is used to inform the development programme. It is expected that most new builds will be allocated to those in Bands 1-3. Many on the list select certain areas and this information is used in the development programme.

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- The Member noted that 43% of children in his ward live in poverty, a night shelter has recently opened and close by there are also very valuable properties. He referred to the Council's plan to start to build own affordable housing referring to previous comments about delay and sought reassurance that proposals to build affordable housing are part of the development work for the LDP.

The Head of Planning and Place Shaping agreed to provide a written response to this point.

- The Chair gave details of a specific case in her ward where the planning conditions of the National Park were prohibitive to the small businesses keen to build affordable housing. It was noted that the lack of availability of public transport impacts on the lives and employability of residents with no incentive to limit car use. It was queried if there is engagement between with employers and MHA to ensure workers with no transport can get to work.

It was explained that as Residential Social Landlords (RSLs), there are many additional roles e.g. the Skill Wise project to help tenants get back to work. It is recognised that there are transport issues and whilst MHA does not engage with employers, it will engage with tenants e.g. to provide taxis to work. MHA also provides work opportunities. It was noted that public procurement rules sometimes preclude working with employers.

The Head of Planning and Place Shaping commented that the condition to provide cottage industries may be to reduce the need to commute and to avoid congestion in rural areas. Regarding opportunities for employment and types of jobs, the Council needs to encourage development of opportunities bearing in mind that current successful areas of employment are in tourism and agriculture which are not well paid.

- A Member commented that it would be beneficial to send a message to the PSB, in view of the significant cost of land and the small proportion of affordable housing produced by large developers, to split some council owned sites and make them available for small developers, also to dispose of Council land to housing associations. It was also suggested that parcels of land could be identified to encourage self-build (PlotShop); a project that has been successful in another authority. The Head of Planning and Place Shaping agreed that a PlotShop was possible but that there was no particular issue with viability of sites in Monmouthshire unlike other authorities.

The Head of Policy and Governance clarified that transport is a PSB strand of work. Ideas for mobility of service, and shared and integrated transport are being progressed by the GovTech initiative. It was confirmed that Cabinet will consider a report to strengthen the Legal Department recognising the need to increase commercial capacity.

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The Director of Property Services (MHA) noted that opportunities exist for working in partnership explaining that the RSLs receive Social Housing Finance Grant from Welsh Government which is significant. If small parcels of land are available, it would be possible to build developments for social rent e.g. Oakley Way in Caldicot. There is an allowance for the land purchase which could provide the authority a capital receipt and if private sector rental was also included there could be a capital revenue stream opportunity.

- The Chair supported greater ambition and working together. She queried the status of a parcel of land in her ward. It was agreed that an enquiry would be made with Estates.

The Head of Planning and Place Shaping stated that there is also the large LDP allocation in Crick Road, Portskewett where the authority is working with Melin to provide a care home and dementia friendly housing.

- A Member asked how the cost of affordable housing is calculated. The Director of Property Services explained that there is acceptable cost guidance set by Welsh Government for building affordable housing. In terms of rent, RSLs collect information on tenants' average income to assist with rent setting in line with Welsh Government guidance noting that new builds should be more energy efficient and can attract higher rent.

The Select Committee were urged to attend a series of LDP workshops, led by the Economy and Development Select Committee on the following dates:

- 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019 – LDP (Issues, vision and objectives to provide a – clear steer on content in terms of economies of the future)
- 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019 - Candidate sites
- 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019 - Growth scenarios

#### **Committee Conclusions:**

In answer to the questions 1) "Is there enough ambition" and 2) "Are the principles being applied", the Chair summarised the views of the Select Committee Members that there was agreement that we are applying the principles but we would like to see more ambition in order to provide more affordable housing and to prevent people moving out of the county. It was recommended that the points raised are taken on board. The committee was keen to continue the discussion in the future.

#### **Promoting active citizenship**

The Chief Executive Officer of GAVO and the Communities and Partnership Lead provided a presentation on step 4, Promoting active citizenship. Following the presentation, Select Committee Members were invited to make comments and ask questions:

- A Member provided an example of GAVO's work that galvanised community partners to work together successfully as Abergavenny Community Enterprise Project which might have otherwise failed and is now a great example of how such a project should work and

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develop. It was added that it is key to provide targeted support to those who wish to volunteer to enable them to be successfully active in their chosen area.

- A Member asked how many organisations are represented within GAVO. It was confirmed that there are approximately 360 members of GAVO covering Monmouthshire, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Newport. GAVO also collaborates with Torfaen Voluntary Alliance.
- A Member noted the raised profile of volunteering and asked how long term volunteers are retained and how the role is promoted. It was responded that there is an Adult and a Youth Volunteering Officers, and also there is a strong social media presence. Volunteering Awards help to publicise and keep the profile high.
- The Chair asked how proactive GAVO is at meeting with other organisations and suggested that there is a less strong presence in rural areas, and that there is a need to follow social media to keep in touch with community groups. It was noted that the Volunteer Officers balance their time between the office and in the field meeting with groups. There are also proactive networks and forums. The challenge is to reach as many groups in as many geographical areas as possible.

#### **Committee Conclusions:**

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive Officer of GAVO and the Communities and Partnership Development Lead for their attendance.

It was agreed that there were some very important points raised and that the matter will be discussed further in future.

#### **6. To consider the Select Committee's forward work programme**

The Forward Work Programme was noted. The following additions were suggested:

- ACES
- Natural Resources Wales
- Climate Change (Members were informed of a meeting at Bridges Monmouth on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019 at 7.00pm – all Members are welcome to attend.)

Is was queried if there was opportunity to hold meetings at 2.00pm to enable better attendance.

The format of today's meeting (Discussion of two of the six steps) was valued and suggested as a good way forward for the next two meetings.

#### **7. To note the date and time of the next meeting: 26th March 2018**

**The meeting ended at 12.17 pm**