

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Economy and Development Select Committee held
at The Conference Room, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Friday, 19th October,
2018 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor A. Davies (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: J.Becker, A.Davies, D. Dovey, B. Strong and
A. Watts

Also in attendance County Councillor(s): J.Pratt

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Mark Hand	Head of Planning, Housing and Place-Shaping
Philip Thomas	Development Services Manager
Rachel Lewis	Planning Policy Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillors P.Pavia, M.Feakins and R.Roden

1. MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

Context:

To consider the extent to which the current Local Development Plan (LDP) is delivering against its objectives and monitoring indicators, as set out in the fourth Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), attached at **Appendix 1**. Although the decision has already been taken to commence work on a new LDP, there is a statutory requirement to continue to monitor the current LDP's performance. In addition, this monitoring report will help inform and shape the new LDP by reflecting on what is working and what is not.

Key Issues:

The Annual Monitoring Report provides the basis for monitoring the effectiveness of the LDP and ultimately determines whether any revisions to the Plan are necessary. It aims to demonstrate the extent to which the LDP strategy and objectives are being achieved and whether the Plan's policies are functioning effectively. It also allows the Council to assess the impact the LDP is having on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the

County and identifies any significant contextual changes that may influence plan implementation or review/revision.

This is the fourth AMR to be prepared since the adoption of the Monmouthshire LDP and is based on the period 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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Although the Council has already made the decision to commence work on a new LDP, this monitoring report will help inform and shape the new LDP by reflecting on what is working and what is not.

Recommendation:

That the fourth Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report be endorsed for submission to the Welsh Government by 31 October 2018.

Member Scrutiny:

There were concerns around the affordable housing struggle and the pressure of the reluctance of developers. The Head of Planning explained that the majority of the LDP is working but not all sites in the LDP are coming forward with the weakest link being Vinegar Hill. The new LDP will be evidence based.

We heard that the approach had focused on affordable house delivered through the private sector, but there is now a need to consider the other available options.

A Member referred officers the benefits of Community Land Trusts.

With regards to the Vinegar Hill scheme, the decisions on the M4 relief road would not affect the scheme.

The Chair was encouraged by the process of thinking about the whole picture, and the need to encourage businesses, as well as building houses.

The Cabinet Member suggested, and was supported by the Committee, that a focus group be established involving Members and officers to plan our way forward.

The Chair added comments around the importance of building and maintaining sustainable communities.

2. MONMOUTHSHIRE PLANNING SERVICE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR)

Context:

To provide Members with a report on the performance of the Council's Planning Service for the financial year period 2017-18.

Key Issues:

The purpose of the Planning Service is to help build sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations in Monmouthshire, which is a shared purpose with the Council's Corporate Plan and with our public service board partners. The service is directly involved with wider corporate projects such as 21st Century Schools, commercialisation of our estates portfolio and forms an enabling tool to help address some of the challenges and issues identified by Future Monmouthshire.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Economy and Development Select Committee held at The Conference Room, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Friday, 19th October, 2018 at 10.00 am

Key areas of work for the Planning Service include:

- Providing pre-application advice to customers;
- Determining planning applications in accordance with adopted policy and material planning considerations, taking into account stakeholder comments and corporate objectives;
- Securing financial contributions from developers to offset the infrastructure demands of new development and meet the need for affordable housing;
- Safeguarding the County's 2400 Listed Buildings and 31 Conservation Areas, areas of archaeological sensitivity, the Wye Valley AONB, the Brecon Beacons National Park and the European designated Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation;
- Taking robust enforcement action against unauthorised development that is unacceptable;
- Raising awareness of the statutory role and importance of the land use planning framework, building on the high levels of engagement underpinning the LDP process;
- Preparing supplementary planning guidance (SPG) to assist with the implementation and interpretation of LDP policy;
- Implementing the Council's LDP through engaging and working with communities, and partnership working with internal and external partners to foster the co-creation and growth of enterprise, community and environmental well-being. This will include involvement with the Whole Place work and Local Well-being Plan;
- Monitoring and evaluating Plan policies and the process of Plan preparation and formally reviewing the Plan where necessary; and
- Joint working with SE Wales Authorities with the ambition of preparing a Strategic Development Plan.

This review identified that the following things are important to customers:

- Customers value pre-application advice and advice during the consideration of the application;
- They want officers to be accessible and for there to be open and honest communication;
- They want consistency of pre-application advice and in the validation of applications;
- They want Planning Committee to follow the officer's recommendation and value being able to have a dialogue with Members prior to determination;
- They don't want too many conditions being attached to decisions, and when conditions are imposed they should be relevant and easy to discharge;
- They value being able to submit an application online and to search for applications and information online; and
- Third parties value being listened to during the application process.

The service therefore operates with these priorities as guiding principles, shaping behaviour and procedures. The service is committed to having an outcome focus rather than chasing arbitrary performance targets that are not a priority to our customers.

Recommendations:

To note the contents of the Annual Performance Report for submission to the Welsh Government by 31 October 2018 and comment accordingly.

Member Scrutiny:

In response to a Member question we heard that complaints are quantified through customer service feedback, through the Customer Service Manager. The customer survey is currently under review. It was hoped the review will be a starting point for action groups to be established and identify key issues.

Planning Service hold monthly team meetings where officers go through the feedback received.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Economy and Development Select Committee held at The Conference Room, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Friday, 19th October, 2018 at 10.00 am

A Member referred to enforcement, and recognised that minor issues are acted on quickly, but questioned if there was a way to speed up the action on older issues, such as listed building enforcement issues. The Manager acknowledged that listed buildings are challenging, and officers understood that keeping people up to date is an area for improvement.

In response to question regarding costs around appeals, it was explained that major costs could occur where there was a public enquiry. Also if we have behaved unreasonable, costs would be incurred.

A Member asked if the department was adequately resourced and officers assured Members that on the whole things are fine, and when asked if there was capacity to fulfil obligations we heard that an extra post has been created to cover the LDP period. The Vice-Chair added that such an important issue would be raised at a senior level.

A Member noted the improvements to the web pages and suggested this be presented to Council, and look at ways to integrate with the My Mon App.

A Member referred to the statement that £150,000 has been spent on consultants and sought clarity on the figure. The Head of Planning agreed to look into this and feedback.

The Cabinet Member asked if officers, in response to inspectors being less particular on design, are being less stringent. The Head of Planning responded that planning officers remain with high standards.

Committee Conclusion:

The Vice-Chair thanked officers for the presentation and expressed the need to receive the same update next year.

He expressed the importance of an action focused task group, to cover and resolve a wide range of issues.

The Committee resolved to accept the recommendations in the reports.

The meeting ended at 12.30 pm