

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Economy and Development Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Wednesday, 17th July, 2019 at 3.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor R. Roden (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Dovey, and J. Watkins (substituting for Councillor J. Becker)

Also in attendance County Councillors: L. Brown, A. Easson, R.J.W. Greenland, M. Groucutt and M. Powell

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Frances O'Brien	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Mark Hand	Head of Planning, Housing and Place-Shaping
Rachel Lewis	Planning Policy Manager
Cath Fallon	Head of Economy and Enterprise
Dave Loder	Finance Manager
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors: J. Becker, A. Davies, M. Feakins, P. Pavia, B. Strong, A. Watts, R. Edwards, R. Harris, P. Murphy and T. Thomas

1. Election of Chair

As the Chair and Vice-Chair were unable to attend the meeting, we elected County Councillor R. Roden as Chair for today's meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan Growth and Spatial Options Paper

The replacement Local Development Plan (LDD) for the County (excluding the area within the Brecon Beacons National Park) will cover the period 2018-2033. The Select Committee were presented with the Growth and Spatial Options paper, an executive summary and an easy to read guide. The scrutiny followed a member workshop held on the 11th July to which all elected members were invited. The committee has been involved in identifying the key issues, challenges and drivers facing the County in previous meetings and was being asked to offer its feedback on the next key stage of the process in considering how much growth is needed in the County over the replacement plan period, where the growth should be located and how the options presented meet the plan's vision and objectives. The Growth and Spatial Options Paper will undergo a full public consultation process before being endorsed by full

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council and as part of the engagement, drop-in sessions are being held with the public. Members will continue to be involved in scrutiny of the LDP through scrutiny workshops (inviting all members) and reports to the Economy and Development Select Committee.

Member Challenge:

- The climate change impact is presented as a red category on some of the growth options ~ Members were informed this is the projected impact because commuting levels would be estimated to be highest in those options and therefore would negatively impact on that goal.
- The demographic impact of the older age group is evident in all options ~ this was confirmed, with the explanation that some options may enable a more proportional balance with younger economically active people.
- Concern that future employment and economic activity will have a direct impact on the appropriate housing or transport and that this needs to be considered when estimating housing need ~ the committee were advised that in talking about growth, economic activity is an integral component to determining housing need and that the 'Economies of the Future' work is focussing on employment growth and will be informing the LDP.
- That options focussing on growth in the south of the county may create an unbalanced environment and that consideration needs to be given on the needs of the whole county, with discussion with the Brecon Beacons National Park ~ The planning department reassured members that they are having ongoing discussions with the national park but are not at the stage of discussing numbers or sites.

Public Contribution to the meeting:

I have been engaged in the debate around the development of the new LDP and would like to offer the following comments. Young people need jobs and we need a diversified labour market. We need to ensure that we meet their employment needs and provide them with the right education to enable them to gain the employment opportunities that we are wanting to attract for the county. I am hoping that we have learnt lessons from the past LDP and are looking forward and making positive progress.

Officers responded to acknowledge that during the development of the last LDP, we didn't forecast housing growth, but that this time, we are looking at growth and employment in conjunction, which is a learnt lesson. We have evidence this time of what's working and we have a clear demographic pattern of 15-19 years leaving the county, so working with local colleges and universities, we are focussing on creating attractive employment prospects and affordable housing for young people, should they wish to move back to Monmouthshire. We are also researching where buyers are originating from, which will help inform the debate upon options.

Scrutiny Outcome:

- Members welcomed the opportunity for early engagement on the LDP through the scrutiny workshops.

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- The committee felt unable to offer views on options without knowing the implications for any existing towns and the details of any new future settlement. Whilst any future new settlement would be a decision for the council, at this stage, Members were unable to indicate any preference, but felt satisfied they had offered feedback and had the opportunity to ask questions at this stage.

4. Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2018/19 Outturn Statement

The Committee discussed the report and were satisfied with the explanations given on the budgetary position. Members questioned the directorate's planned expenditure for the year, their actual expenditure, reasons and future pressures and mitigations. The committee noted the positive position and that trends will be worked upon through the year. The financial pressure was confirmed to be Monlife, with some savings not anticipated to be achieved as a result of the decision not to proceed with the Alternative Delivery Model. These would be reported to Council in September. Members questioned whether we were maximising every opportunity for achieving grant funding. In terms of grant applications, Members were reassured that every effort was made to achieve any funding available and that funding from Welsh Government last year had assisted in managing our expenditures and pressures. The areas of risk are the Rural Development Programme and what happens when that funding ends. The Shared Prosperity Funding hadn't been announced but given that it's industry specific, there is a lack of clarity as to what will be a natural successor to the RDP funding.

Scrutiny Outcome:

- Members were satisfied that the department is managing its budget effectively and will keep a watching brief.

The meeting ended at 4.46 pm.