

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

**Meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held
at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK - County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk on Tuesday,
10th September, 2019 at 2.00 pm**

Councillors Present

County Councillor L.Dymock (Chairman)
County Councillor A. Webb (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Dovey, A. Easson,
R. Harris, V. Smith, Squires and N Vincent

Also in attendance County Councillors: P. Murphy
and R.Roden.

Also present:

Mr. N. Vincent, Member of the Public
Ms. S. Squires, Member of the Public

Officers in Attendance

Frances O'Brien, Chief Officer, Enterprise
Matthew Phillips, Head of Law/ Monitoring Officer
Roger Hoggins, Head of Service - Strategic Projects
(Fixed Term)
Richard Jones, Performance Manager
Paul Keeble, Group Engineer (Highways and Flood
Management)
Graham Kinsella, Traffic And Road Safety Manager
Matthew Gatehouse, Head of Policy and
Governance
Emma Davies, Performance Officer
Michael Collins, Senior Traffic Engineer

APOLOGIES: There were no apologies for absence

1. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest. Members agreed to take these as and when arising.

2. Public Open Forum.

A member of the public requested to speak about the speed management item. The chair agreed that his contribution be deferred until that item was discussed under item 5.

3. Scrutiny of the executive members on the performance service delivery and alignment to the corporate plan.

- The committee heard that each of the five priority goals contain commitments to action. This report is focused on the goals within the corporate plan that fall within the remit of the Strong Communities Select Committee, specifically Goal C – natural and built environment and Goal E, Future Focused Council.
- The goals are scored using a six point scale from level 1 - unsatisfactory to level 6 - excellent. The committee heard that both goals allocated a rating of 3 – adequate.

Members Challenge

- Members questioned whether the authority had the necessary resources to deliver performance at the required level for the featured performance measures. The committee heard that these were nationally set and not always focused on council priorities and can sometimes be simplistic the corporate plan gives a broader flavour of progress on areas of greatest importance in Monmouthshire.
- There was a question about the project to enhance the build heritage and Caldicot destination space programme. Members heard that hub tenders were being evaluated

and on track. The overarching programme must be assessed by the Welsh Government Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) panel, we have approval in principle. Discussions have begun with the contractor on The Cross Scheme subject to confirmation of funding from the Minister.

- Members heard from the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and MonLife that Cabinet have requested a feasibility report on renovating Caldicot Leisure Centre. If approved this would begin in the first half of 2020 with completion in 2021.

Outcome

- Members requested receive a project update for the Caldicot regeneration scheme with timescales and indicative cost

4. To present the Speeding Management Process for pre-decision scrutiny developed by the Strong Communities Task and Finish Group.

- The Committee heard the views of Mr Andrew Vincent who had contributed to the task and finish group and attended as part of the public open forum.
- Mr Vincent informed the committee that in his view the document lacked imagination in tackling the key issues in a rural county. There was a concern raised that the paper talks of complaints. It was considered inappropriate to call people who raise issues of speeding are not appropriate to be called complainants.
- Mr Vincent advised the committee that he had provided highways with a more detailed critique but did not feel that this had been taken into account. It was recognised that Appendix G is a more professional document.
- Mr Vincent argued that the proposals will not lead to adequate improvement in the current process to help communities achieve lower speed limits for example the use of averages to measure speed was challenged while reference to neighbourhood police teams no longer reflected modern day policing.
- Concerns were raised that the data supplied will be flawed and that poor data leads to poor decision-making leading. Mr Vincent asked the committee to revisit the document.
- The committee heard from officers that there are some similarities with Caerphilly document but the speed management element is very much a Monmouthshire paper. It was reported that Monmouthshire intends to employ an officer to deal with this.
- Members received a presentation from the Group Engineer for Highways who confirmed that officers had explored best practice, including Caerphilly CBC and had tailored these to Monmouthshire's needs and then held a series of workshops with local members and community and town councils.

Members Challenge

- Members sought clarity on accident rates on the roads that the council is responsible for compared to the county as a whole. Members heard that when trunk roads and motorways are excluded Monmouthshire has one of the lowest accident rates in Wales.
- Members challenged how process will reduce accidents. The committee heard that that reports will look at accidents and also near misses alongside speed information. These are fed into a scoring matrix to determine the action that will be taken.
- Members expressed dissatisfaction that the report showed insufficient improvement made to the process while there was a missed opportunity to make increased use of technology. Members heard that cameras are in place automated number plate recognition is being explored.

- A question was raised whether this would be a council or Cabinet decision. The Head of Service advised that it could be a Cabinet decision although it could be taken to council to increase awareness.
- Members raised a number of points about specific local issues. They heard that individual projects could be picked up as part of an envelope scheme of improvements to traffic management within villages.
- Members asked whether the council has the resources available to manage this. The committee heard that staffing resources have been put in place for coordination. The funding of schemes will be from the authority's budgets or via bids for external funding.
- The committee questioned whether adequate use was made of social media to promote the right behaviours. It was reported that social media messages are a part of educating people about behaviours including awareness of cyclists and horse-riders.

Outcome

- It was agreed that the changes proposed by Mr Vincent be submitted to the chair. Matters of drafting would be addressed by officers while matters of policy substance needed to be fully considered by councillors before being presented to Cabinet or Council and that the working group would be reconvened for one meeting to address the issues.
- The chair summed up that the committee suggested a number of changes including: more involvement of community councils and greater weight be given to views of the local community when setting speed limits.

The meeting ended at 3.45 pm