

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Public Services Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Thursday, 25th July, 2024 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Armand Watts (Chair)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Meirion Howells, Penny Jones, Tony Kear, Malcolm Lane, Dale Rooke, and Jan Butler

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Sharran Lloyd, LSB Development Manager
John Crandon, Community Safety Officer
Gareth Walters, Trading Standards & Animal Health Team Leader
Rachel Calnan, Trading Standards Officer
Ian Muirhead, Community Safety Officer

APOLOGIES: Councillors Steven Garratt and Frances Taylor

1. To elect a Chair

Councillor Watts was proposed by Councillor Bond and seconded by Councillor Kear.

2. To appoint a Vice Chair

Councillor Jones, proposed by Councillor Rooke and seconded by Councillor Bond.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Public Open Forum

No submissions were received.

5. Illegal Vaping

Gareth Walters and Rachel Calnan delivered a presentation on the issue of illegal vaping, its impact on youth, the role of trading standards, and efforts to combat the problem. They subsequently answered the members' questions with John Crandon:

Key Points raised by Members:

- Members asked what percentage is purchased online. Discussion took place as to how laypeople can distinguish between legal and illegal vapes in shops, focusing on the identification of compliant products.
- The Committee discussed whether there is any evidence that this is a problem emerging at primary school level.

- There was a concern that some young people aren't sufficiently informed about the health damage that vaping can do and that may not be enough evidence of vaping being a health problem to act as a deterrent.
- A member highlighted that drivers vaping and road safety is also a concern.
- Members asked how blatant illegal sales are and how members could spot it. They asked if there are any hotspots for illegal vape sales in Monmouthshire and how residents can report such sales and what the process is for residents to report things.
- They also sought clarification on the educational efforts regarding the health risks of vaping.
- A member expressed interest in the controls over internet sales of vapes, the effectiveness of import controls, and the manufacturing origins of vapes and what the regulations are. For example, in terms of TCH being added, how do we stop that?
- The member also suggested improving the dissemination of information about online sessions on vaping.
- Members queried what happens if there's a repeat offence and how long someone is given to change their ways before there is a prosecution and whether there had been any prosecutions.
- Members asked if new products are being introduced continually to circumvent the legislation and if so, how we stay on top of the industry, not just the sellers.
- A member asked about the liaison with new Police and Crime Commissioner and whether there is a good relationship between trading standards and the police, and how it operates on a practical basis.
- Members asked about opportunities to enlist parents and members to communicate more widely.
- Members spoke of their concerns about the growing problem of illegal vaping, especially among children and young people, leading to nicotine dependency and health issues, especially the presence of nicotine in products labelled as nicotine-free.
- Members asked about how schools, police, and community safety teams work in partnership to address the issue. The development of educational resources and campaigns to raise awareness among young people and parents was also discussed.
- Members asked about new legislation which may regulate vapes more strictly and align them with tobacco products and heard that there was a need for continued vigilance and adaptation to new market developments. Members highlighted that the issue was complex and were reassured that a multifaceted approach is being taken to tackle illegal vaping.

Chair's Summary:

The Chair thanked Gareth and Rachel for their significant work in combatting illegal vaping and said members felt satisfied with the comprehensive answers that had been provided to the concerns about enforcement, public health, community safety, and the need for effective communication and education on the issue of vaping. The Committee agreed to request a further update in 9 months to a year.

6. Public Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List

Members agreed to send ideas via email. There was a request that when Mental health is tabled, relevant Council officers are present. There was confirmation that a Member workshop (non-live streamed) by the Committee on County Lines will be scheduled for the Autumn.

7. Cabinet and Council Work Planner

Noted.

8. Minutes of the previous meeting held on the 7th May 2024

The minutes were confirmed, proposed by Councillor Rooke and seconded by Councillor Howells.

9. Next Meeting

14th October 2024 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at **11.26 am**.