

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Economy and Development Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Wednesday, 30th September, 2015 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor S. Jones (Chair)
County Councillors: D. Dovey, D. Edwards, J. Prosser, A. Watts and A. Wintle

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

County Councillors A. Easson, R.J.W. Greenland and V Smith

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

K. Beirne	-	Chief Officer, Enterprise
I. Saunders	-	Head of Tourism, Leisure and Culture
R. Rogers	-	Curator, Leisure, Tourism and Culture
H. Ilett	-	Scrutiny Manager
S. King	-	Senior Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance C. Melia – Amion Consultants

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor D. Evans.

2. Declarations of Interest

Declarations of interest are noted under the relevant item.

3. To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting

i) 21st April 2015

We confirmed and signed the minutes of the Economy and Development Select committee meeting held on 21st April 2015.

ii) 4th June 2015

We confirmed and signed the minutes of the Economy and Development Select committee meeting held on 4th June 2015.

iii) 14th July 2015

We confirmed and signed the minutes of the Economy and Development Select committee meeting held on 14th July 2015, subject to the following amendments:

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Page 1. PRESENT –
Add: Councillor J. Prosser
Correction: *Delete Councillor R. Edwards* **change to** Councillor D. Edwards
Delete: Councillor P. Jordan

iv) 29th July 2015

We confirmed and signed the minutes of the Economy and Development Select committee meeting held on 29th July 2015.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

We resolved to agree to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information.

4. Scrutiny of the Cultural Review: Report by Consultants Amion

Context:

Members considered a report which informed the future of key local services – Leisure, Events, Outdoors, Culture and Youth.

Key Issues:

The committee were informed that one of the Council's priorities included the desire to maintain locally accessible services, which aligned with the wider vision of creating sustainable and resilient communities.

However, due to budget pressures there was increased risk to the continued delivery of non-discretionary local services. Historic operating data and a recent service area review commissioned with Amion Consulting, at a cost of £30,000, identified a need to rationalise the current working model and improve practices within the Culture Service area.

The purpose of the review was for future delivery options and opportunities to be identified.

A piece of work would be undertaken, which would consist of one detailed and comprehensive appraisal of the options relating to providing a sustainable, viable and vital future for Leisure, Events, Culture and Youth. The brief was being developed and would be signed off by the Cabinet Member, it specified that a business strategy emerged which would include all aspects of financial planning, asset considerations, governance, structures and accountability along with a fully-costed business plan.

The review would be undertaken impartially and it was anticipated that it would be finished in readiness for commencement of the first wave of activity in 2016/17 in order to meet the c£400k budget target.

We received a presentation from Amion Consultants.

Member Scrutiny:

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- County Councillors D. Edwards and J. Prosser declared personal non-prejudicial interests as Abergavenny Town Councillors.
- County Councillor A. Easson declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as a Caldicot Town Councillor.
- County Councillor S. White declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as a volunteer at the military museum.
- Members of the committee highlighted that all assets and tourism aspects of towns within Monmouthshire were equally important to the ward members who represented the areas and represented individual identity of towns. Therefore, the committee had difficulty in identifying how changes could be implemented, without specific areas being negatively affected.
- We recognised the level of history, culture and heritage within Monmouthshire and highlighted the importance of retaining this. In addition, local community involvement was imperative in retaining services.
- The committee recognised that there were opportunities to be considered, possibility through collaborative working with local experts and volunteer groups.
- We recognised that further detail would need to be considered in order to ascertain alternative methods for service delivery, particularly during the period of budget austerity.
- Further information was requested regarding costs, in terms of accuracy and validity. We were informed that figures were headline level, which had been built from a variety of factors, which included cost, income and experience.
- Officers welcomed member comments and credited staff responsible for running services, events and functions. There was a need to work differently, it was no longer possible to be expected to provide the same service with less resource.
- A question was raised regarding the impact on jobs, if services were reduced. In response, the committee were informed that this was an early stage of the process and further work had to be undertaken, the aim was to preserve services and jobs.
- The committee welcomed consultant recommendations and were aware of the need to work differently, however, there was a need for the Council to be confident in proposals. It was recognised that services were more at risk if the review was not progressed by the authority.
- Members focused on priceless and important assets being retained within the County. Further information was requested regarding a centralised service.

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Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

The Chair acknowledged that the presentation had been well articulated and focused on recommendations, centralised service, asset sites and next steps. We recognised that there were no recommendations within the report, however, consultant recommendations had been highlighted and presented as part of the early engagement process for members.

The committee had highlighted the following issues, to be considered during the review:

- Importance of Abergavenny heritage.
- Utilising local secondary school for museum service
- Community run trust examples
- Free museum access
- Excellent examples of Caldicot Castle
- Community involvement on the agenda
- Abergavenny castle and costs to pay
- Importance of Abergavenny Historic Society
- Museum to library building
- Success of banquets and usefulness of costings
- Welcome further reports
- Issues around costs and accuracy and validity of costs and whether they fit with proposal
- Welcome Chepstow museum and café at drill hall
- Difficulty in terms of members voting against each other – level of solidarity
- Need to look at things differently (market hall, display of Nelson collection)
- Impact on taking away space at shire hall and income generation
- Importance of nelson collection and use of market hall
- Volunteer capacity
- Shire hall functions/events opportunity
- Public engagement and passion of local people involved
- Sympathetic to feelings of others, bad develop in Chepstow
- Potential of good idea for trading company
- Caldicot castle bad ongoing decision and need investment generate
- More info needed on centralised and trading company
- National recognition of staff to museum offer
- More clarity required on proposals
- Historic environment bill and expert panel implications

Next steps were identified as:

Select committee to receive copy of Cultural Services report, first stage of wider piece of work. Will look at recommendations made by Amion in further detail and welcome information being received by the committee in December.

5. WORK PROGRAMMING

i) Economy & Development Select Work Programme for 2015/16

We noted items on the future work programme as follows:

Meeting 15th October 2015

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- Community Infrastructure Levy - Full report including results of viability testing to return to committee
- Tourism and Planning - Discussion on specific aspects of the Local Development Plan that relate to tourism development
- Discussions with the Chief Planning Officer
 - How the Local Development Plan supports Regeneration
 - Maximising S106 Contributions

Meeting 4th November 2015

- Budget Mandates

Meeting 26th November 2015

- Enterprise strategy 1 year after implementation
- Community Infrastructure Levy - Brief report outlining a list of infrastructure projects that could potentially be funded by CIL for decision.
- Chief Officer Enterprise Annual Report

The Scrutiny Manager advised items on the work programme were subject to change.

ii) Cabinet & Council forward Work Planner

We received and noted the Cabinet and Council forward work plan.

6. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting

Members noted future dates of Economy and Development Select Committee Meetings:

- 10am 4th November – Special Meeting
- 10am 26th November

The meeting ended at 4.50 pm