

# Public Document Pack



County Hall  
Rhadyr  
Usk  
NP15 1GA

Friday, 15 November 2024

**Notice of meeting:**

## **People Scrutiny Committee**

**Monday, 25th November, 2024 at 10.00 am,  
The Council Chamber, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA with  
remote attendance**

*Please note that a pre meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting for members of the committee.*

### **AGENDA**

<b>Item No</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Pages</b>
1.	Apologies for Absence.	
2.	Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Public Open Forum.	
4.	To discuss the Blue Badge criteria.	1 - 18
5.	People Scrutiny Committee Forward Working Programme and Action lists.	19 - 26
6.	Cabinet and Council Planner.	27 - 38
7.	To confirm the following minutes:	
7.1.	People Scrutiny Committee - 17th July 2024.	39 - 42
7.2.	People Scrutiny Committee - 23rd July 2024.	43 - 48
7.3.	Special Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee - 19th September 2024.	49 - 54
8.	Next Meeting: Tuesday 21st January 2025 at 10.00am.	

**Paul Matthews  
Chief Executive**



MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillor Jan Butler, Goetre Fawr;, Welsh Conservative Party  
County Councillor Christopher Edwards, St. Kingsmark;, Welsh Conservative Party  
County Councillor Simon Howarth, Llanelly Hill;, Independent Group  
County Councillor Penny Jones, Raglan;, Welsh Conservative Party  
County Councillor Maureen Powell, Pen Y Fal;, Welsh Conservative Party  
County Councillor Sue Riley, Bulwark and Thornwell;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru  
County Councillor Maria Stevens, Severn;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru  
County Councillor Jackie Strong, Caldicot Cross;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru  
County Councillor Laura Wright, Grofield;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru  
County Councillor Angela Sandles, Magor East with Undy;, Labour and Co-Operative Party

## Public Information

### **Access to paper copies of agendas and reports**

A copy of this agenda and relevant reports can be made available to members of the public attending a meeting by requesting a copy from Democratic Services on 01633 644219. Please note that we must receive 24 hours notice prior to the meeting in order to provide you with a hard copy of this agenda.

### **Welsh Language**

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

## **Our purpose**

To become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

## **Objectives we are working towards**

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced.
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency.
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop.
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in.
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued
- Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential.

## **Our Values**

**Openness.** We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

**Fairness.** We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

**Flexibility.** We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

**Teamwork.** We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

**Role of the Pre-meeting**

1. Why is the Committee scrutinising this? (background, key issues)
  2. What is the Committee’s role and what outcome do Members want to achieve?
  3. Is there sufficient information to achieve this? If not, who could provide this?
- Agree the order of questioning and which Members will lead
  - Agree questions for officers and questions for the Cabinet Member

**Questions for the Meeting**

Scrutinising Performance

1. How does performance compare with previous years? Is it better/worse? Why?
2. How does performance compare with other councils/other service providers? Is it better/worse? Why?
3. How does performance compare with set targets? Is it better/worse? Why?
4. How were performance targets set? Are they challenging enough/realistic?
5. How do service users/the public/partners view the performance of the service?
6. Have there been any recent audit and inspections? What were the findings?
7. How does the service contribute to the achievement of corporate objectives?
8. Is improvement/decline in performance linked to an increase/reduction in resource? What capacity is there to improve?

Scrutinising Policy

1. Who does the policy affect ~ directly and indirectly? Who will benefit most/least?
2. What is the view of service users/stakeholders? What consultation has been undertaken? Did the consultation process comply with the Gunning Principles? Do stakeholders believe it will achieve the desired outcome?
3. What is the view of the community as a whole - the ‘taxpayer’ perspective?
4. What methods were used to consult with stakeholders? Did the process enable all those with a stake to have their say?
5. What practice and options have been considered in developing/reviewing this policy? What evidence is there to inform what works? Does the policy relate to an area where there is a lack of published research or other evidence?
6. Does the policy relate to an area where there are known inequalities?
7. Does this policy align to our corporate objectives, as defined in our corporate plan? Does it adhere to our Welsh Language Standards?

8. Have all relevant sustainable development, equalities and safeguarding implications
9. been taken into consideration? For example, what are the procedures that need to be in place to protect children?
- 10.
11. How much will this cost to implement and what funding source has been identified?
- 12.
13. How will performance of the policy be measured and the impact evaluated

## General Questions:

### Empowering Communities

- How are we involving local communities and empowering them to design and deliver services to suit local need?
- Do we have regular discussions with communities about service priorities and what level of service the council can afford to provide in the future?
- Is the service working with citizens to explain the role of different partners in delivering the service, and managing expectations?
- Is there a framework and proportionate process in place for collective performance assessment, including from a citizen's perspective, and do you have accountability arrangements to support this?
- Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out? If so, can the Leader and Cabinet/Senior Officers provide members with copies and a detailed explanation of the EQIA conducted in respect of these proposals?
- Can the Leader and Cabinet/Senior Officers assure members that these proposals comply with Equality and Human Rights legislation? Do the proposals comply with the Local Authority's Strategic Equality Plan?

### Service Demands

- How will policy and legislative change affect how the council operates?
- Have we considered the demographics of our council and how this will impact on service delivery and funding in the future?
- Have you identified and considered the long-term trends that might affect your service area, what impact these trends could have on your service/your service could have on these trends, and what is being done in response?

### Financial Planning

- Do we have robust medium and long-term financial plans in place?
- Are we linking budgets to plans and outcomes and reporting effectively on these?

### Making savings and generating income

- Do we have the right structures in place to ensure that our efficiency, improvement and transformational approaches are working together to maximise savings?

- How are we maximising income?
- Have we compared other council's policies to maximise income and fully considered the implications on service users?
- Do we have a workforce plan that takes into account capacity, costs, and skills of the actual versus desired workforce?

Questions to ask within a year of the decision:

- Were the intended outcomes of the proposal achieved or were there other results?
- Were the impacts confined to the group you initially thought would be affected i.e. older people, or were others affected e.g. people with disabilities, parents with young children?
- Is the decision still the right decision or do adjustments need to be made?

**Questions for the Committee to conclude...**

Do we have the necessary information to form conclusions/make recommendations to the executive, council, other partners? If not, do we need to:

- (i) Investigate the issue in more detail?
- (ii) Obtain further information from other witnesses – Executive Member, independent expert, members of the local community, service users, regulatory bodies...

Agree further actions to be undertaken within a timescale/future monitoring report...

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# The Blue Badge Scheme in Wales

MEMBER BRIEFING

OCTOBER 2023

# Aim of Session

- ▶ To brief members on what happens when we receive and process blue badges, so that they are able to advise constituents who approach them with Blue Badge questions and complaints and then signpost them to the appropriate process.

# How Badges are Funded

- ▶ Wales Blue Badge Scheme is funded via the RSG (Revenue Support Grant) provided to LAs as part of their annual local government settlement
- ▶ The RSG is used by local authorities to meet statutory duties and local priorities

# Could We Consider Incurring a Charge for Blue Badge?

- ▶ Because funding to local authorities is provided via the Revenue Settlement Grant local authorities in Wales are not able to charge individual holders for their Blue Badge.
- ▶ Local authorities are able to charge a fee of up to £10.00 for an organisational or replacement badge. This charge is at the discretion of the local authority.

# National Fraud Initiative (NFI) Wales 2020-21 Report (Audit Wales)

- ▶ In 2020-21 NFI revoked 2717 badges in Wales on the grounds of misuse/fraud
- ▶ This had an estimated cost of £1.4 Million resulting from lost revenue from parking charges

Misuse not only reduces parking revenue but limits available spaces for genuine badge holders

Blue badge abuse is often also linked to wider financial abuse of vulnerable people

# Badge Applications Handled 2022-23

- ▶ Monmouthshire live badges (approved and Issued) 6043  
(translates to around 6.5% of population in Monmouthshire)

Application criteria	
Organisations	68
Automatic	2589
Required further assessment	3238
Cognitive	148

# Assessing Eligibility

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All applications are assessed on grounds of a person's ability to mobilise

Age and illness are not grounds for application in their own right.

# Types of Application

Fast Track – Special Cases Requested by Hospices

Discretionary

Automatic

Cognitive Impairment

Temporary Impairment



# Fast Tracked Applications

- ▶ Can only be submitted by a hospice.
- ▶ Are given on grounds of terminal illness **MUST ALSO INCLUDE** accompanying evidence and information of decline in mobility.
- ▶ All applications must be supported by a form SR1. The SR1 form is an official form provided by a health specialist that can be used for claiming benefits under special rules for people who have a terminal illness.
- ▶ In most cases these badges if awarded are for up to one year.
- ▶ If prognosis is longer than one year a discretionary application is advised where mobility restricts normal day to day functioning.

# Discretionary Applications (most common type)

- ▶ Has a permanent and substantial impairment which causes inability to walk or considerable difficulty in walking.
- ▶ Needs to drive a vehicle regularly and has an impairment in both arms so is unable to operate or has considerable difficulty operating all or some types of parking equipment.
- ▶ Child under 3, who on account of condition, must always travel with bulky medical equipment which cannot be carried around without great difficulty.
- ▶ Child under 3 who, on account of condition, must always be near a motor vehicle so that, if necessary, treatment for their condition can be given in the vehicle or the child can be taken quickly in the vehicle to a place where such treatment may be given.

# The Discretionary Application Toolkit

- ▶ All discretionary applications are scored using the Wales Blue Badge Verification Toolkit
- ▶ To qualify must achieve at least 15 points
- ▶ The toolkit is available only to named personnel who are responsible for administration of Blue Badges
- ▶ Toolkit information is sensitive and cannot be publicised or shared – Wales Gov exempt access under FOI (Freedom of Information)

# Automatic Applications

- ▶ Applicants in receipt of PIP 10+ points Moving Around and/or 8+ points Planning and Following a journey (we refer to this as the mobility component of the PIP award)
- ▶ Higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- ▶ People who receive War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement
- ▶ People who receive a benefit under the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces (Compensation) Scheme
- ▶ People who are blind or are severely sight impaired

# Cognitive Applications

- ▶ People who are unable to plan and follow a journey as a result of having a cognitive Impairment
- ▶ All applications must be accompanied by a letter of support from a healthcare professional (excludes GP) such as:

Information required from (not exhaustive)	Examples of diagnosis
Paediatrician Psychiatrist Psychologist Memory clinic	Autism Alzheimers or dementia Stroke survivors People with learning disability People with complex mental health Head injury

# Temporary Applications

- ▶ People unable to walk or have considerable difficulty walking following surgery or whilst experiencing a temporary illness
- ▶ Condition is likely to last for **no longer than 12 months**
- ▶ Applications must be supported by evidence from a recognised health professional who has been involved in the care or treatment of the temporary condition eg; surgeon, consultant...
- ▶ When assessing following medical procedures we would expect the applicant to have experienced 3 months recovery prior to seeking an application.

# Appeals

- ▶ Applicants who are refused a badge have a right to appeal
  1. First line of appeal is Blue Badge manager
  2. If still not satisfied/resolved applicant will be referred to independent assessors – Able2 – this assessment is carried out by a qualified clinician and their decision is final.
  3. Applicants are advised not to reapply for a period of 6 months or if the condition substantially deteriorates.

# Where to Find Information

- ▶ Blue Badge Scheme in Wales: guidance for local authorities 2021



**GUIDANCE**

## **Blue Badge Scheme in Wales: guidance for local authorities 2021**

Guidance for local authorities on how to deliver the Blue Badge Scheme.

**First published:** 20 July 2021

**Last updated:** 15 June 2023





Questions...

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## Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2024-25

People Scrutiny Committee <span style="float: right;">(Meetings at 10am unless stated otherwise)</span>				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
25 <sup>th</sup> November 2024	<b>Blue Badge Scheme</b>	To discuss the Blue Badge criteria and invite the Cabinet Member for Equalities, and other organisations such as Citizens Advice, St David's Hospice, Age Cymru and Macmillan to a meeting for a discussion.	Councillor Sandles	Discussion on the policy
	<b>Disability Confident Pledge</b>	To discuss and present the 3-year action plan for the Council.	Councillor Sandles	Policy update
21 <sup>st</sup> January 2025				
18 <sup>th</sup> February 2025				
1 <sup>st</sup> April 2025				
To be confirmed	<b>Young Carers Strategy and the Carers Strategy</b>	Pre-decision Scrutiny of the strategies.	Kim Dolphin Councillor Chandler	Pre-decision Scrutiny
To be confirmed	<b>Planning and Provision of School Places</b>	To scrutinise data and projections for pupil places and the impact of future housing development.	Will Mclean Matthew Jones	Policy Development

## Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2024-25

People Scrutiny Committee <span style="float: right;">(Meetings at 10am unless stated otherwise)</span>				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
<b>Corporate and Community Plan Items for the Committee's consideration for inclusion into the People Scrutiny Forward Plan:</b>				
	<b>Disability Confident Pledge</b>			
	<b>Participatory Budgeting Programme</b>			
	<b>Race equality action plan for Wales</b>			
	<b>LGBTQ+ action plan</b>			
	<b>Disability Action Plan</b>			
	<b>Gender Equality Action Plan</b>			
	<b>Homes for Social Rent and work to bring empty properties back into use</b>			
	<b>Review and update shared housing allocations policy</b>			

## Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2024-25

People Scrutiny Committee <span style="float: right;">(Meetings at 10am unless stated otherwise)</span>				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
	Rapid Rehousing approach/rapid rehousing action plan delivery			
	Care without profit – increase in-county placement options			
	Support effective discharge from hospital – integration between health and social care			
	Provide a high-quality residential care facility for people with dementia			
	Young Carers Strategy and Carers Strategy			
	Chief Officer for Social Care and			

## Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2024-25

People Scrutiny Committee <span style="float: right;">(Meetings at 10am unless stated otherwise)</span>				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
Health Annual Report				
Safeguarding Performance Report				
Inclusion Strategy				
Develop a broader 14-19 education offer through collaboration with partners				

## Action List for People Scrutiny Committee

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024</b>	
<b>People Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Minute:</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer / Member</b>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection</b></p> <p>In terms of Child Protection Referrals, Members requested a report on inappropriate referrals be brought back to them at the appropriate point, officers confirming this should be available after September.</p> <p><b>Action: Jane Rodgers and Diane Corrister.</b></p>	<p>Diane Corrister Jane Rodgers</p>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Home to School Transport Policy</b></p> <p>Members requested that the link to the consultation be kept on the Council's front page of the website until the end of the consultation period.</p> <p><b>Action: Deb Hill-Howells to request this via Communications Team.</b></p>	<p>Deb Hill-Howells</p>

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## Action List for People Scrutiny Committee

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> September 2024</b>	
<b>People Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Minute:</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer / Member</b>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Call-in of the decision by Cabinet of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024 regarding the Home To School Transport Policy 2025-26.</b></p> <p>To share with members the legal advice regarding the timing of the consultation, in relation to the general election.</p> <p><b>Action: Cabinet Member Martyn Groucott</b></p>	<p>Deb Hill-Howells / Martyn Groucott</p>

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Committee / Decision Maker	Meeting date / Decision due	Report Title	de	Purpose	Author	Date item added to the planner
Council	01-Jul-25	RLDP for Adoption	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the RLDP following receipt of the Inspector's report, making it the County's Development Plan as defined by S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004	Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis	23-Aug-22
Cabinet	05-May-25	Pavement Café Policy	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the pavement café policy as the basis for making decisions on applications for licences	Mark Hand / Paul Keeble	4-Oct-22
ICMD	09-Apr-25	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 4	Ben Callard - Resources			
Council	06-Mar-25	2025/26 Final Budget sign off including CT resolution	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
Council	06-Mar-25	2025/26 Capital Strategy & Treasury Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
Cabinet	05-Mar-25	2025/26 Final Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	05-Mar-25	2024/25 Revenue and Capital Monitoring Month 9	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	05-Mar-25	2025/26 WCF/Mon Farm Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
ICMD	29-Jan-25	2025/26 Community Council and Police Precepts final	Ben Callard - Resources			
Council	23-Jan-25	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24

Cabinet	22-Jan-25	2025/26 Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	22-Jan-25	UK Shared Prosperity Fund post March 2025 – financial implications and impact	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Hannah Jones	10-Jul-24
ICMD	15-Jan-25	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 3	Ben Callard - Resources		Dave Jarrett	13-Jun-24
ICMD	18-Dec-24	2025/26 Community Council and Police Precepts draft	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
ICMD	18-Dec-24	Council Tax Base 2025/26	Ben Callard - Resources		Ruth Donovan	
Council	12-Dec-24	Remuneration Report			Julie Anthony	30-Sep-24
Council	12-Dec-24	Deforestation Free Champion Council			Hazel Clatworthy	4-Oct-24
Cabinet	04-Dec-24	Future of the Former Mounton House School, Chepstow'	Martyn Groucutt - Education		Nick Keyse	13-Nov-24
Cabinet	04-Dec-24	Strategic Risk Assessment	Ben Callard - Resources	To provide Cabinet with an overview of the current strategic risks facing the authority.	Richard Jones	7-Oct-24
Cabinet	04-Dec-24	Community and Corporate Plan Performance Update	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To provide Cabinet with an update on the progress that has been made to deliver the commitments set out in the Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28.	Richard Jones	7-Oct-24
Cabinet	04-Dec-24	2024/25 Revenue and Capital Monitoring Month 6	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24

Cabinet	04-Dec-24	PSOW Annual letter 2023-24			Annette Evans	1-Oct-24
Cabinet	04-Dec-24	Monmouthshire NEET Prevention Strategy			Louise Wilce	10-Jun-24
ICMD	27-Nov-24	Planning Service Annual Performance Report	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Phil Thomas	
ICMD	13-Nov-24	TROs Amendment Order No. 15 2024 (Catrin Maby)			Graham Kinsella/Gareth Freeman	15-Oct-24
Cabinet	06-Nov-24	Future of the Former Abergavenny Library'			Nick Keyse	21-Oct-24
Cabinet	06-Nov-24	Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 – Special Procedure Licensing			Linda O Gorman	
Cabinet	06-Nov-24	Monmouth Churches Petition			Ian Bakewell	1-Oct-24
Council	24-Oct-24	RLDP			Craig O'Connor	
Council	24-Oct-24	Safeguarding report – Social Care & Health			Jane Rodgers	4-Jun-24
Council	24-Oct-24	Connecting Care – Social Care Case Management System - deferred		Deferred	Jane Rodgers	7-Oct-24
Council	24-Oct-24	Statement of Gambling Policy and proposals for casinos			Linda O Gorman	9-Jul-24

Council	24-Oct-24	Standards Committee Annual Report			James Williams	4-Oct-24
Council	24-Oct-24	Chief Officer report – Social Care & Health			Jane Rodgers	4-Jun-24
ICMD	23-Oct-24	UWN Land Charge			Amy Longford	25-Sep-24
ICMD	23-Oct-24	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 2	Ben Callard - Resources		Dave Jarrett	13-Jun-24
Cabinet	16-Oct-24	2025/26 Revenue and Capital MTFP update and process	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	16-Oct-24	2024/25 Revenue Monitoring Month 4	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Daviea	4-Jun-24
ICMD	09-Oct-24	Building at Risk Strategy	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Craig O'Connor	28-Aug-24
Cabinet	25-Sep-24	People with Care Experience			John Pearson	
Council	19-Sep-24	Appointment to Outside Body			Charlotte Drury	
Council	19-Sep-24	Self-assessment report – People, Performance and Partnerships		To appoint a Monmouthshire Councillor to be a representative on the Rachel Herbert's School Endowment Charity.	John Pearson	
Council	19-Sep-24	Gov & Audit Annual Report			Matt Gatehouse	4-Jun-24

Council	19-Sep-24	Home to School Transport – response to consultation			Andrew Blackmore	21-Jun-24
Cabinet	11-Sep-24	Measurement Framework	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Deb Hill Howells	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	11-Sep-24	Consultation on the relocation of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To approve an update to the measurement framework that enables Cabinet to track progress against the priorities in the community and corporate plan	Matt Gatehouse	7-Jun-24
Cabinet	11-Sep-24	USE OF SECTION 106 FROM N584 LAND AT FORENSIC SCIENCE CHEPSTOW	Martyn Groucutt - Education	To receive feedback on the statutory consultation concerning the proposed relocation and increase in capacity of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni.	Matt Jones	
Cabinet	11-Sep-24	Authorisation of Proper Officers - Public Protection, Environmental Health (Communicable Disease)			Christian Schmidt	7-Aug-24
ICMD	11-Sep-24	Monmouthshire Local Toilets Strategy - revised version 2024	Angela Sandles - Engagement		Louise Driscoll	
ICMD	11-Sep-24	GRT sites	Angela Sandles - Engagement		David H Jones	
Cabinet	21-Aug-24	Future of the former Tudor Street Day Centre, Abergavenny	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding			4-Jun-24
Cabinet	21-Aug-24	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 1			Nick Keyse	
ICMD	21-Aug-24	Increasing Building Regulations Charges	Ben Callard - Resources		Dave Jarrett	6-Jun-24
ICMD	21-Aug-24	Gypsy & Traveller Site Identification	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		nigel george	

Cabinet	21-Aug-24	Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 16th July 2024			Frances O'Brien	
Cabinet	21-Aug-24	Older People's Champion			Alistair Neill	
Council	18-Jul-24	Chief Officer report – Children and Young People	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding	<b>To formally appoint to the role of Age Friendly champion in line with the commitment made by Council in January of this year and to provide a brief update on work done towards making Monmouthshire an age friendly county</b>	Matthew Gatehouse / Jane Rodgers	27-Jun-24
Council	18-Jul-24	Medium Term Financial Strategy			Will McLean	4-Jun-24
Council	18-Jul-24	Budden Crescent business case	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	17-Jul-24	Feedback from P&O Scrutiny	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Jane Rodgers	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	17-Jul-24	Connected Care report – Social Care and Health (possible Sept)				26-Jun-24
Cabinet	17-Jul-24	Digital and Data Strategy	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Jane Rodgers	4-Jul-24
Cabinet	17-Jul-24	Revenue and Capital monitoring outturn report (including early update on 2024/25)	Ben Callard - Resources			10-Jun-24
Cabinet	17-Jul-24	SPEED LIMIT PROPOSALS – AMENDMENT ORDER NO. 14	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	10-May-24
ICMD	10-Jul-24	Whole Authority Strategic Risk Assessment	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	This report seeks Cabinet Member approval to proceed with several Traffic Orders throughout the County.	Graham Kinsella	



Cabinet	05-Jun-24	People Strategy		To provide cabinet with an overview of the current strategic risks facing the authority and to agree the revised strategic risk management policy	Richard Jones	26-Apr-24
Cabinet	05-Jun-24	Consultation on the relocation of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni	Ben Callard - Resources	To seek Cabinet approval of a revised people strategy, which is one of a suite of enabling strategies that sit underneath the community and corporate plan to ensure the authorities resources are aligned with the delivery of its purpose.	Matt Gatehouse	1-May-24
Cabinet	05-Jun-24	Feedback from P&O Scrutiny	Martyn Groucutt - Education	To receive feedback on the statutory consultation concerning the proposed relocation and increase in capacity of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni.	Matthew Jones	26-Feb-24
Cabinet	22-May-24	Strategy for Commissioned Domiciliary Care in Monmouthshire		Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee – Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 14th May 2024	Hazel Ilett	14-May-24
Cabinet	22-May-24	Council Tax Assistance for MCC Foster Carers	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Ceri York	24-Apr-24
ICMD	22-May-24	Florence Jones Report & FGE	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding	The purpose of this paper is to present the case for providing Monmouthshire County Council foster carers with a subsidy on their council tax.	Jane Rodgers	8-May-24
ICMD	22-May-24	Political Balance Report	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	to consider the options in relation to the collection of monies secured under a land charge on land at and including Upper House Farm, Wonastow, Monmouth	Amy Longford	30-Apr-24
Council	16-May-24	Appointments to Committees	Angela Sandles - Engagement		James Williams	
Council	16-May-24	Outside Bodies	Angela Sandles - Engagement		James Williams	
Council	16-May-24	Uploading S106 Capital Sums into 2024/25 Capital Budget	Angela Sandles - Engagement		James Williams	
Cabinet	15-May-24	Development of a Supported Accommodation Project for care experienced young people	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Mike Moran	9-Apr-24

Cabinet	15-May-24	Repurposing of Severn View Residential Home, Chepstow	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Jane Rodgers	24-Apr-24
Cabinet	15-May-24	Local Housing Market Assessment	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To seek approval for the repurposing of Severn View Residential Home to support policy objectives around temporary accommodation, in accordance with the Rapit Rehousing Strategy.	Nick Keyse/Cath Fallon	
Cabinet	15-May-24	Local Flood Strategy	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	The LHMA provides a review of the need for affordable and market housing across Monmouthshire and an overview of the current housing market.	Sally Meyrick	8-Jan-24
Cabinet	15-May-24	Local Transport Plan	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Carl Touhig	9-Oct-23
Cabinet	15-May-24	Climate and Nature Emergency	Catrin Maby	To adopt the Local Transport Plan	Debra Hill-Howells / Christian Schmidt	4-Oct-22
Cabinet	15-May-24	Greenfingers Report		To receive an update on progress made towards the Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and to agree the new overarching Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and action plan format	Hazel Clatworthy	19-Oct-23
Cabinet	15-May-24	Local Housing Market Assessment Refresh 2022-2037	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Jane Rodgers	26-Mar-24
Cabinet	15-May-24	Local Food Strategy		To provide an overview of the Local Housing Market Assessment Refresh 2022-2037 which provides an estimation of the additional affordable housing need across Monmouthshire.	Sally Meyrick	15-Apr-24
Cabinet	15-May-24	Placement Development Strategy			Marianne Elliot	18-Apr-24
Council	18-Apr-24	ICMD Report - 20 moh Speed Limit Revocation Order	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding	To set out a strategy for the expansion and development of in-county residential and supported accommodation placements for children who are looked after. To make recommendations about i) changing the use of 3	Jane Rodgers / Diane Corrister	8-Jan-24
ICMD	17-Apr-24	ICM report - Florence Jones DEFERRED	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Graham Kinsella	22-Mar-24

ICMD	17-Apr-24	Public Spaces Protection Order Dog Controls	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Amy Longford	11-Mar-24
Cabinet	10-Apr-24	Primary School catchment areas consultation feedback	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Huw Owen	19-Feb-24
Cabinet	10-Apr-24	Sustainable Communities for Learning Strategic Outline Programme update	Martyn Groucutt - Education	For Members to receive feedback on the consultation relating to a review of Primary School catchments areas and determine whether to implement proposals	Matthew Jones	20-Nov-23
Cabinet	10-Apr-24	Welsh Church Fund Working Group	Martyn Groucutt - Education	To provide members with details of the revisions to the Strategic Outline Programme for the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme which will inform the development of projects within the rolling programme of	Debbie Graves	12-Sep-23
ICMD	27-Mar-24	Experimental TRO Prohibition of driving except for access Goldwire Lane Monmouth	Ben Callard - Resources		Dave Jarrett	
ICMD	27-Mar-24	Increase in building control charges	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Graham Kinsella	
ICMD	13-Mar-24	To consider a Business Case for the acquisition of a property for use as a registered children's home	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Craig O'Connor	
Cabinet	06-Mar-24	Adoption of Abergavenny Placemaking Plan	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		jane Rodgers	13-Feb-24
Cabinet	05-Mar-24	Changes to the funding formula for Leadership funding for secondary schools	Ben Callard - Resources		Nikki Wellington	30-Oct-24
Cabinet	05-Mar-24	Adoption of Magor Placemaking Plan	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the Abergavenny Placemaking Plan, co-produced with Abergavenny Town Council, to inform future regeneration priorities and grant bids	Mark Hand / Dan Fordham	3-Oct-22
Cabinet	05-Mar-24	Adoption of Monmouth Placemaking Plan	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Mark Hand / Dan Fordham	3-Oct-22

Cabinet	05-Mar-24	Road Safety Strategy	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the Monmouth Placemaking Plan, co-produced with Monmouth Town Council, to inform future regeneration priorities and grant bids	Mark Hand / Dan Fordham	3-Oct-22
Cabinet	05-Mar-24	Agree the name of the new Welsh-medium Primary School in Monmouth	Catrin Maby	To adopt the Road Safety Strategy	Mark Hand / Paul Keeble	4-Oct-22
Council	29-Feb-24	Standards Committee Appointment	Martyn Groucutt - Education	Agree the name of the new Welsh-medium Primary School in Monmouth	Debbie Graves	15-Nov-23
Council	29-Feb-24	Strategic Equality Plan 2024			James Williams	6-Feb-24
Council	29-Feb-24	Appointment of Monmouthshire Local Access Forum		To seek approval of a new Strategic Equality Plan for the period 2024-28, incorporating MCCs contribution to national action plans on race equality, LGBTQ and other protected characteristics	Matthew Gatehouse	15-Nov-23
Council	29-Feb-24	Final Budget Proposals		To secure the appointment of members to the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum for its next 3 year period.	Matthew Lewis	18-Jan-23
Council	29-Feb-24	Capital and Treasury Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	
Council	29-Feb-24	Council Diary	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	
Council	29-Feb-24	WCF/Trust Treasury Fund Investment	Angela Sandles - Engagement		John Pearson	
ICMD	28-Feb-24	2023/24 Revenue and Capital Monitoring - Month 9	Ben Callard - Resources			
Cabinet	28-Feb-24	2023/24 Final Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	27-Apr-23

Cabinet	28-Feb-24	Economic Development Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	
Cabinet	07-Feb-24	Amendment to Street Naming and Numbering Policy regarding Replacement or additional Street nameplate signs for Existing Streets		REFRESHING THE MONMOUTHSHIRE BUSINESS GROWTH & ENTERPRISE STRATEGY and action plan in setting the economic ambition for the county and providing a strategic framework that guides future economic	Hannah Jones	9-Jan-23
ICMD	24-Jan-24	Community Council & Police Precepts - Determination	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Mark Hand	2-Jan-24
ICMD	24-Jan-24	Introduction of Council Tax Premiums for Second homes from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	
Council	18-Jan-24	Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Ben Callard - Resources	Council to re affirm their decision on the Second Home Premium	Ruth Donovan	5-Dec-23
Council	18-Jan-24	Asset Management Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Ruth Donovan	
Council	18-Jan-24	Community & Corporate Plan performance update			Nick Keyse	28-Sep-23
Cabinet	17-Jan-24	REPURPOSING OF ACCOMMODATION IN THE COUNTY FARMS PORTFOLIO TO SUPPORT HOMELESSNESS AND OTHER POLICY OBJECTIVES	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To provide cabinet with the latest performance report of commitments in the Community and Corporate Plan	Richard Jones	5-Sep-23
Cabinet	17-Jan-24	consultation on the relocation of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni		To seek approval for the repurposing of vacant cottages held within the County Farms Portfolio to support policy objectives such as alleviating pressures with homelessness and to address the reliance on unsuitable temporary accommodation.	Nick Keyse	4-Dec-23
Cabinet	17-Jan-24	Approval of the revised MCC Counter Fraud, Corruption & Bribery Policy	Martyn Groucutt - Education		Matthew Jones	23-Aug-23
Cabinet	17-Jan-24	Draft Budget Proposals	Rachel Garrick - Resources		Jan Furtek	2-Nov-23

Cabinet	17-Jan-24	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 3 held on 7th December 2023 Meeting didn't happen	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	29-Sep-23
ICMD	03-Jan-24	Community Council & Police Precepts - Proposed payment schedule	Rachel Garrick - Resources		Dave Jarrett	30-Mar-23

## Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA with remote attendance on Wednesday, 17th July, 2024 at 2.00 pm

### Councillors Present

County Councillor Laura Wright (Chairman)  
County Councillors: Jan Butler, Simon Howarth, Maureen Powell, Sue Riley, Jackie Strong, Ian Chandler and Peter Strong

### Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager  
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer  
Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health  
Jane Oates, Housing Options Officer

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Christopher Edwards, Penny Jones and Maria Stevens

#### 1. Election of Chair

Councillor Laura Wright was nominated by Councillor Jackie Strong, seconded by Councillor Butler.

#### 2. Appointment of Vice Chair

Councillor Jackie Strong was nominated by Councillor Sue Riley, seconded by Councillor Wright.

#### 3. Declarations of Interest

None.

#### 4. Public Open Forum

None.

#### 5. Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2022-2027

Ian Bakewell and Rebecca Cresswell delivered a detailed presentation (available on the Council's website with the agenda), introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Jane Oates.

#### Key points made by Members:

- Clarification was sought as to whether the leasing scheme applies to Monmouthshire Housing as well, the response being that it did.
- Questions were asked about the number of affordable homes (approximately 130 affordable homes anticipated), the promotion of the Monmouthshire letting

service, the accommodation for families, and the local housing allowance rates. Members were advised that families are usually placed in self-contained properties, and that the local housing allowance rates are based on 2011 data and are much lower than market rents. Members queried the use of 2011 data for assessing Local Housing Grant.

- A Member commented that take up of the Monmouthshire Letting Service in her ward was low and that perhaps it could be better promoted via town and community councils. Officers acknowledged that contacting town and community councils to promote the Monmouthshire Letting Service would be an action they could take forward (**Action: Rebecca Cresswell**).
- A member queried the average wait for social housing, the domestic abuse figures, and the leasing properties.
- Members asked for clarification on the housing stock for families, given that Severn View is for single persons.
- Members asked about whether domestic abuse within households was leading to increasing homelessness.
- A Member asked for clarity on whether the purpose of leasing properties was to alleviate Bed and Breakfast and temporary demand, rather than to offer a long-term solution.
- A Member questioned whether somebody who has been assessed as being in unsuitable accommodation qualifies as being at risk of homelessness and the officer agreed to discuss the individual circumstance with the Member following the meeting.
- Another Member asked for clarification on people with protected characteristics as defined by the Equalities Act and also members of the armed forces in terms of their priority in gaining a property.
- Clarity was sought as to whether a 'single person' referred to a single individual without children ~ it was confirmed it applied to a single person without children and that these represented the highest proportion of homeless applications, coupled with a severe shortage of one-bedroom properties.
- A Member queried how many affordable homes were delivered in Monmouthshire in 2023-2024, the figure being sixty-three.
- A Member suggested that we consider the terminology when promoting properties for people in need of a home, to avoid the stigma associated with homelessness, which may also attract more landlords. Officers confirmed that for the purpose of the report, it was necessary to use the term 'homeless' to refer to people who are eligible for assistance under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and that it defines homelessness as "not having a suitable accommodation or being at risk of losing it within 56 days". However, marketing and promotion of homes for everyone is taken into consideration.



- It was questioned whether we receive sufficient grant monies from Welsh Government, and whether Registered Social Landlords could do more. Officers confirmed that they had held a meeting with Welsh Government about the condition of the TAC pay grants that requires property purchased to be prioritised for people in temporary accommodation. They had raised that it disadvantages other households who are not in temporary accommodation but have a homeless status and a high need for suitable housing. They also advised that they have a good working relationship with Registered Social Landlords and had recently been focussing on town centres.

#### **Chair's Summary:**

The Cabinet Member and Officers have answered the Committee's questions in full and the Committee is satisfied with the detailed responses given and the work being undertaken to alleviate homelessness outlined in the Rapid Rehousing Update Report. A further update will be brought to the Committee in due course.

#### **6. People with Care Experience**

Cabinet Member Ian Chandler and Jane Rodgers introduced the report and answered the members' questions.

#### **Key points made by Members:**

- A Member commented that whilst they had no questions about the report, it was pleasing to see the Council taking tangible steps to demonstrate it is serious about the support given to people who have been through the care system.
- It was queried whether this will involve a specific question on an application form to identify an applicant who has care experience, and whether it would be made clear as to why the question was being asked.
- A Member asked what assistance is given to people after the age of 25.
- Another Councillor suggested the report could perhaps reference some of the lifelong disadvantages of being care-experienced.

#### **Chair's Summary:**

The Chair confirmed that there was full support from the Committee for the direction of the report and thanked officers and the Cabinet Members for attending.

#### **7. People Scrutiny Forward Work Programme and Action List**

Noted.

#### **8. Cabinet and Council Planner**

Noted.

**9. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th April 2024**

The Minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

**10. Next Meeting**

23rd July 2024.

## Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA with remote attendance on Tuesday, 23rd July, 2024 at 10.00 am

### Councillors Present

County Councillor Laura Wright (Chairman)

County Councillors: Jan Butler, Simon Howarth, Penny Jones, Maureen Powell, Sue Riley, Jackie Strong, Jill Bond, Peter Strong, Ian Chandler and Martyn Groucutt

Also in attendance: Ben Anderson (Care Inspectorate Wales)

### Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager  
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer  
Frances O'Brien, Chief Officer, Communities and Place  
Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health  
Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services  
Deb Hill-Howells, Head of Decarbonisation, Transport and Support Services

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Christopher Edwards, Maria Stevens, Alistair Neill and Paul Pavia

#### 1. Declarations of Interest

None.

#### 2. Public Open Forum

None.

#### 3. Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection

Jane Rodgers and Ben Anderson introduced the report which was a performance evaluation of the children's services by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), highlighting the strengths and areas for improvement identified by the inspection report. Ben Anderson, CIW, commented that the inspection overall was positive and that there was evidence of ongoing development of the service since February. He highlighted the focus going forward would be to focus on practice and quality to ensure compliance with statutory duties and to capture the voice of children. Diane Corrister answered the members' questions in detail, together with Jane Rodgers and Ben Anderson.

#### **Key points made by Members:**

- Members asked how leaders are having greater oversight of the quality of assessments and plans and noted that training, quality assurance, and implementation support was being provided to staff.
- A member asked for an explanation of the new practice model and the Early Help Assessment Team.
- Clarity was sought on what improvements are being made to bring practice in line with Welsh safeguarding procedures.

- Another member sought clarity on the compliance with paperwork for child protection conferences and how much advocacy parents are offered prior to a case conference stage.
- The committee questioned the main strengths and areas for improvement identified by the inspection report, noting the report had recognised the positive outcomes achieved for children looked after, the family support offer, and the morale and leadership within the service as strengths. Areas for improvement were acknowledged to include responding to and dealing with the impact of demand across the service, and making sure that the workforce corresponds with those levels of demand.
- Members asked for an explanation as to how the team was addressing the issue of demand and workforce capacity in the service, to retain staff and reduce the reliance on agency workers.
- Members sought to ensure that the voice of children is captured in a consistent and meaningful way and according to the age of the child and then reflected in assessments and care plans.
- A member referred to paragraph 4.8 in the report which suggested a cautious approach to risk management, questioning whether given our lower than national average number of children looked after, there may be a contradiction. The officers clarified that to an extent, this is because of the impact of demand on the front door; and that strengths-based practice needed to be more consistent across all areas of the service.
- Members asked for clarity on the outcomes of the platform service for young people's emotional health.
- Another member queried the increase in referrals and also inappropriate referrals and how these could be reduced, noting that this is currently subject to a data and audit analysis to understand the sources and the reasons for the referrals. Members requested a report on this be brought back to them at the appropriate point, with officers confirming this should be available after September. **Action: Jane Rodgers and Diane Corrister.**
- A member commented that the threshold document assisted the addressing of the increase in figures, and asked whether the team engages with partner agencies in a way that they can understand and share their perspective.
- Members queried how the referrals from education and health compare with other Gwent authorities and what might be possible gaps in the support structures of these agencies.
- A member asked for more clarity on how the single point of access operates in practice and whether it could be replicated in other areas.
- The committee questioned the timeliness of child protection visits and case conferences outlined in paragraph 1.4 and asked whether the desired improvement had been achieved in terms of ensuring conferences take place on an earlier and timely basis.
- Members asked for clarity on the role of the coach and how their impact would be measured.
- The reasons for the difference in the volume of referrals and how that was being managed was clarified.
- The committee asked whether the service had streamlined their processes to become more effective.
- A member asked officers how confident they were that there aren't cases that were not on the radar of Social Services. Officers advised that it would be naive

to think all cases would be on the radar of social services, but that they were confident that the Council was doing more over-intervention than under-intervention. Officers added that the Council has good safeguarding structures and training across the organisation, but they could never be 100% confident that cases could occur.

- The report under paragraph 2.10 refers to 'most staff' being supported, CIW were asked for further clarity on this, as in what are the reasons for the small number of staff not being on board and whether you believe working practices since Covid have had an effect.
- The committee commented on the use of acronyms and that a glossary would be helpful, particularly for reports in the public domain.

The Cabinet Member drew some closing remarks, and the committee were satisfied with the answers to questions asked.

### **Chair's Summary:**

The committee congratulated the service on the positive inspection and the leadership comments and children and foster care feedback. The chair concluded that the committee had undertaken detailed scrutiny of the report together with members of the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee and was satisfied with the outcome of the inspection.

## **4. Home to School Transport Policy**

Cabinet Member Martyn Groucott introduced the report, explaining that the purpose of the consultation and the report brought to the committee was to consider whether to adopt the statutory distance eligibility criteria for the provision of free home to school transport. He answered the members' questions with Debra Hill-Howells.

### **Key points made by Members:**

- Members asked for clarity on the two options for changing the statutory distance over which free transport is provided and queried how much savings each of these options would generate. The member commented that the consultation didn't offer alternatives to changing the statutory distance for the public to consider, for example, an increase in council tax. Councillor Groucott confirmed that increasing the council tax by approximately one percentage point, would generate about £700,000 per year, but that this needed to be considered as part of the wider budgetary process as there are other budgetary pressures that will need to be considered.
- A member highlighted that the time of year is not particularly good for achieving responses from the public to consultations, as many people would be on holidays. It was confirmed that the consultation commencement date had been delayed by the general election, however, all emails had been sent to existing users of transport, schools, stakeholders and operators to make them aware of the consultation. Officers confirmed that there will be sessions in hubs and there is documentation online explaining the purpose of the consultation as well as a survey that invites people to provide their feedback on the proposals.

- A member shared their concerns about increasing the in-house service, and staffing implications. The officer confirmed that the cost of in-house provision is compared to external tenders and the in-house service only undertakes the service if they are the best financial option.
- A member asked how the council would monitor the environmental impact of increasing personal transport budgets and car use and officers responded that the council has a carbon reduction plan in place and has made a climate emergency declaration, and that they will assess the carbon footprint of the different transport options and work with schools and parents to promote sustainable travel choices whilst considering the environmental impact as part of the decision-making process, to mitigate any adverse effects.
- A member asked how the council would support working parents who may face difficulties due to the changes and what mitigations would be offered. Cllr Groucutt responded that there is already discretionary support to help families and that the details would be shared.
- Members asked how the available walking routes are assessed for safety and suitability and heard that there is a standard Road Safety GB assessment process which is normally undertaken by Highways officers. Where an assessment is challenged, officers will walk the route with parents and members.
- A member asked why the draft policy wording wasn't included in the consultation document and was advised it's because it hasn't changed, except for the three options that are being considered and that if any of these were to be adopted, the distance eligibility criteria will be amended accordingly. The member asked for clarity that the policy wording would stay the same, apart from the three options. Officers confirmed the policy wording will stay the same apart from the three options, and the proposed amendments will be included in the Cabinet report.
- The committee asked how the proposals would affect the faith transport, and the faith schools and officers confirmed the proposals will not change the eligibility criteria for accessing faith transport but any changes to the distance eligibility criteria will apply to all learners, including faith. They advised that the consultation document includes a question about the impact of the proposals on religion and belief, and parents are also able to provide comments or suggestions on this issue.
- A member asked if transport that had been provided as there wasn't an available walking route would be ended at the end of the academic year and the answer given was that it wouldn't, unless works had been completed to make the route safe, such as a crossing point or changes to the speed limit.
- A member asked if there would still be dedicated school transport from Goytre to King Henry for the new academic year and heard that the intention was to reinstate the public bus service for home to school transport from Goytre for the forthcoming academic year, as the bus service route had been altered, so that learners do not need to cross the A4042.
- A member highlighted that it was important that council attempts to reduce its carbon footprint by using its own transport as opposed to that of sub-contracted supply.
- Members expressed doubt that in adverse weather, children in rural areas would be walking 2 miles and a member asked for clarity on the process where applicants had not been successful in the first choice of school and had been awarded transport to an alternative school. He asked if they would continue to

receive free transport in the subsequent year, the rules around siblings, extended family and separated families. Officers confirmed that where a learner had been granted free transport as they were attending their nearest school as allocated by CYP then they would continue to free transport, unless there were changes in their personal circumstances, such as moving house and they would be re-assessed. Siblings would not be entitled to free transport where a parent had exercised parental preference.

- A member asked what would be considered if the consultation response is very negative and commented that in their view, question 1 not asking if the person answering will be affected may skew the answer. It was confirmed that the survey responses would form part of a Cabinet report to enable Members to decide whether or not to proceed with all or any of the options.
- A member queried whether the findings of the consultation would be reported back to the People Scrutiny Committee ahead of Cabinet decision and it was confirmed that statutory timescales for implementation meant that the item was not scheduled to return to scrutiny ahead of Cabinet decision and that this meeting constituted pre-decision scrutiny during the consultation period.
- Members requested that the link to the consultation be kept on the Council's front page of the website until the end of the consultation period. **Action: Deb Hill-Howells to request this via Communications Team.**

#### **Chair's summary:**

The chair sought the committee's views on whether the policy could be supported and there were no stated views expressed to the contrary, however a member expressed their concern about how the data arising from the consultation would be interpreted.

#### **5. People Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List**

Noted.

#### **6. Cabinet and Council Planner**

Noted.

#### **7. Next Meeting: 24th September 2024 at 10.00am**

Noted.

The meeting ended at **12.46 pm.**

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## Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA with remote attendance on Thursday, 19th September, 2024 at 9.30 am

### Councillors Present

County Councillor Laura Wright (Chairman)

County Councillors: Jan Butler, Christopher Edwards, Maureen Powell, Sue Riley, Jackie Strong, Martyn Groucutt, Lisa Dymock, Phil Murphy, Tony Kear, John Crook, Emma Bryn and Louise Brown

### Officers in Attendance

Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer  
Matthew Gatehouse, Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.  
Will McLean, Chief Officer for Children and Young People  
Frances O'Brien, Chief Officer, Communities and Place  
Deb Hill-Howells, Head of Decarbonisation, Transport and Support Services

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Simon Howarth, Penny Jones and Peter Strong

#### 1. Declarations of Interest

None.

#### 2. Call-In of the decision by Cabinet of 11th September 2024 regarding the Home to School Transport Policy 2025-26

Members who requested the decision be called-in were asked to speak first, outlining their reasons for doing so.

Councillor Dymock:

Councillor Dymock stated that the consultation on the proposed changes was poorly timed and did not adequately inform or engage affected families as it took place in the summer holidays, when families are not in their usual routines. This reduced significantly the likelihood that parents or guardians would have had the time to engage fully with the process, and many families might not have even been aware that the consultation was taking place.

She noted that the Cabinet Member discussed the timing at the last meeting of People Scrutiny and referred to the general election as the reason for delay, but Rhondda Cynon Taf ran its consultation from 27th November 2023 to 8th February 2024, and it was extended by 3 weeks to give more people the chance to participate – she asked why MCC did not do the same. She suggested that the outreach was limited, with only 411 responses and 11 emails received – a low response rate that raises serious concerns about the sufficiency of the Council's outreach efforts, especially in regard to rural families. Many of these rely on school transport due to the lack of safe walking routes and limited public transport options; families therefore required detailed, localised information about how the proposed changes would affect specifically, but there was a

lack of granular detail about the communities and individuals who would be affected, making it difficult for families to fully grasp the consequences of the policy changes' implications – without this, many parents would not have been able to make informed contributions to the consultation or fully appreciate the potential impact on their children's daily lives.

Councillor Dymock sought clarity as to whether the Equality Impact Assessment was published at the same time as the consultation; if not, she argued this would have limited the ability of respondents to fully assess the implications of the proposals and would undermine the transparency of the consultation.

Councillor Kear:

Councillor Kear supported Councillor Dymock's comments. He asked if the Cabinet Member could advise who gave the legal advice regarding the timing of the consultation and whether that can be made available to members. ACTION – to be shared with members

Councillor Murphy:

Councillor Murphy highlighted safe walking routes as an example of the importance of proper consultation. He appreciated that the current numbers need consideration each year but fundamental routes, e.g. Caerwent-Caldicot, should have been identified. A resident whose children would be affected by the proposals informed Councillor Murphy that there is no safe walking route from Caerwent to Caldicot, with blind corners and a lack of pavement in some places – had the consultation been longer and at a more appropriate time, examples such as these, in which walking routes for children would be irresponsible, might have been put forward. This argument could surely be replicated in other parts of county.

Citing further examples of unsafe routes, Councillor Murphy asserted that work to adequately bring forward these measures should have been done sooner, as RCT did. Unsuitable routes would then have been discounted, relieving parents of their concerns. Not all parents would be able to transport children themselves. The need to save money was fully recognised, but the Councillor suggested that there must be a more considered process, and that bringing up such decisions so close to deadlines is unacceptable.

Cabinet Member Martyn Groucott gave the following response:

The Cabinet Member clarified that legal advice was given by the Council's Monitoring Officer, and reiterated the details of the consultation: this year, it took place between 12th July and 23rd August. 408 people completed the online survey and 11 emails were received. He noted that it had been planned to extend the consultation period, starting earlier: Cabinet considered this as early as 30th April, and plans were put in place for the consultation process to start on 3rd June, but the general election was announced on 22nd May, and the Monitoring Officer made it clear that the consultation could not proceed during that period. A strategy was therefore developed to enable a detailed and through consultation to be undertaken, despite not being able to extend its length. He asserted that the record number of responses received shows that although the

consultation period was 6 weeks, shorter than planned, its effectiveness was greater than any previously held e.g. the consultation for 23-24 which ran between 5th August and 16th September 2022, for which 71 responses were received, and at which time People committee did not raise any concerns about the length or nature of the process, and there was no call-in. This year, despite the process being truncated by national politics, the consultation length was identical, and no objection was raised by People scrutiny.

The Councillor gave further details about this year's consultation: officers determined to ensure that every user of Home To School Transport was made aware of the consultation, particularly as important changes were being considered. Before breaking up for the summer, Headteachers made sure that all parents were aware of the consultation, which was followed by a monumental effort from officers to ensure its success: every user was contacted personally, and the Comms team was very successful in a media blitz to ensure all communities were fully aware. Officers also undertook face-to-face meetings in each hub, and there were 12 articles in the 3 local newspapers. As a result, response to the consultation was dramatically better than any previously held, with 400+ completed responses – over 100 more than for the consultation over the council's budget, for example.

The Cabinet Member added further that another improvement was the use of social media. Material was put on Facebook and X on 16th, 19th, 22nd, 23rd, 28th, 30th and 31st July and 1st, 5th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, 19th, 21st and 23rd August, for which there were nearly 60,000 views. A large-print version of the consultation was sent out by email, on request, ensuring that those with additional needs were part of the process. Involvement has therefore dramatically increased from consultations held previously. The Councillor stated that the evidence is therefore overwhelming that time for the process has not been reduced, though it would have been extended if circumstances had permitted. Officers' hard work in engaging the public and stakeholders through multiple channels resulted in the hugely improved response rate. Councillor Groucott concluded by saying that he could not accept, given the evidence of dramatically increased participation, that it can be reasonably argued that the consultation was ineffective and should have been changed, given the circumstances.

#### Key Points from Members:

It was asked if members had had the opportunity to see the responses from the public in order to assess whether the consultation was done adequately. Officers responded that the Cabinet report provided statistics, but the full detail could be made available to members if they wished. In the survey, the public were given the opportunity to give comments through open questions but as it would have been impractical to include all 411 responses in the report, they were summarised around themes e.g. Welsh language, and respondents were asked what proposals they would put forward to make savings if they disagreed with the policy.

A member expressed their opinion that consultations should take place in Spring, suggesting that increased responses in this instance might be due to the policy being a controversial one. She noted the example of one of her ward members having been unaware of the consultation, and a community councillor had expressed dissatisfaction with the timing and quality of questions. Officers expressed surprise that any users were

unaware, with 3,173 emails having been dispatched on 12th July and a follow-up sent on 8th August to remind any who hadn't responded to do so.

A member expressed their support for the Call-in and suggested that the consultation had failed 2 of the 4 Gunning principles, used as a guide for public engagement. The timing during the summer holiday meant respondents would not have been around, and there would always be low engagement, as a result. He appreciated the dramatic rise in feedback from residents compared to other consultations but suggested this might reflect panic from respondents due to the timing and length of the consultation period. He proposed gaining an understanding as to why RCT's Monitoring Officer determined that they held their consultation between November 2023 and February 2024.

Clarity was sought as to whether a school not being included in Appendix 1 meant that it was unaffected by the proposals. Officers confirmed that the appendix lists only those schools where a Home To School service is provided, and therefore those affected.

The member asked for clarity as to whether Thornwell was affected. Officers responded that based on last year's figures, there was no-one affected at Thornwell. Because this policy would not take hold until September 2025, officers would not ask for safe walking assessments on routes that would not be required next year. Route assessments will be undertaken but they will be based on current year applications once those have been assessed, which would include an assessment of Thornwell.

Further explanation was requested for the timing of the assessments. Officers responded that the team will go through the data and ascertain which learners will still be with us from 1st September 2025, so those assessments can be undertaken. We will identify which learners will lose transport as a result of the policy, which learners are still with us, and any new applications we receive.

Regarding the timing in relation to RCT's consultation, it was asked when MCC knew the relevant information and the decision was taken to consult later than the Spring. The Cabinet Member responded that the timing was based in part on historical precedent in this and the previous administration, though this could be changed in the future, and he reiterated that the plan had been to bring this consultation forward by several weeks. In addition, the consultation was undertaken in the Summer because the date of the policy's implementation would then not be as far away for parents who need to make the application, and if the window were longer between consultation and implementation there might even be new children moving into the county between those dates. Therefore, the Cabinet Member asserted that RCT is flawed in running its consultation so much earlier than the policy would start.

A member expressed their appreciation for decisions that need to be made in light of the budget, but that Home To School Transport is one of the most important things that should be retained, and suggested that the policy being more of a drastic change than before might be why RCT consulted so much earlier. The member suggested that because the consultation did not take place earlier, the 24/25 policy should be retained for 25/26, especially as parents might not have understood the full implications of the proposals. Consultation could then run in the Spring when more information will be available.

The member suggested further that this should come under the Education budget because of greater contact with schools and the input from Headteachers about the policy's implications.

It was asked if assessing safe walking routes will be done by the Spring term so that parents have more time to go through the appeal process, if necessary. Officers responded that regarding timing, in order for members to have sufficient evidence and data to inform decisions, officers needed to ensure there was time to do that. The team is small, and its focus at the start of the year is assessing eligibility for the forthcoming school term. The timing was also determined so as not to conflate Home To School Transport with the budget consultation and its implications. Officers tried hard to ensure this be a standalone consultation and that members and parents had all the information they needed to be able to respond properly. Any future consultations that are held earlier would need to be held when they would not be conflated with other discussions. It was highlighted that safe walking route assessments are carried out by independent road safety officers in the Highways team, and that there is no intention of putting learners in the position of walking unsafe routes.

Regarding identifying cohorts and safe walking routes, it was asked how much notice could be given to parents. Officers responded that data from the current academic year will be looked at from the start of October. We will aim to contact parents who we think will be affected by the end of the current calendar year to make them aware.

A member shared Councillor Murphy's concern about the Caerwent-Chepstow road and children's safety but expressed their reassurance by the officers' comments about how seriously it would be taken by officers and the road safety assessment process.

The Chair asked how targeted the social media campaign was. Officers responded that there was broad coverage, with efforts made to ensure a coordinated campaign to ensure anyone accessing Facebook or X would receive numerous notifications that there was an ongoing consultation. There were 2,123 views of the consultation page, from 1140 unique individuals, with a total of 59,526 views across the two platforms. Targeting was not done via social media, but stakeholders were targeted by email, as explained above. It was also important to target those who may be parents or guardians in the future.

In summing up on behalf of the Call-in signatories, Councillor Murphy suggested that too much weight should not be given to online views. Ordinarily, the signatories would wish to refer the matter to full Council but given the short timeframe in which to do so before the statutory deadline of 1st October, in this instance they would recommend referring back to the Cabinet Member for reconsideration.

Chair's Summary:

The committee expressed its appreciation to the officers for their hard work in conducting the consultation. The comments from the committee today focussed, in particular, on looking to the example of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the length/timing of its consultation, with a suggestion to have discussions with their officers about what might be learned for future consultations. It was noted that there were more responses to the consultation than previous ones, but that this might be due to the scope of the changes.

A member suggested that partly because of this, perhaps the changes could be delayed to the next academic year. There were concerns about whether the questions were clear, but officers assured the committee that parents found the consultation easy to understand and engage with. Explanations and reassurances were given about when safe walking route assessments would take place, though there are still concerns about them among members. The Cabinet Member agreed to share the legal advice from the Monitoring Officer with members regarding the decision to change the date of the consultation.

The committee moved to a vote on one of the three options:

- 1) Accept the Cabinet's decision.
- 2) Refer the matter back to Cabinet for re-consideration (with reasons).
- 3) Refer the matter to Council for consideration.

The committee voted unanimously for Option 2, to refer the matter back to Cabinet for reconsideration.