Minutes of the meeting of Economy and Development Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 24th November, 2016 at 10.00 am

**PRESENT:** County Councillor S. Jones (Chairman)

County Councillor B. Hayward (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Dovey, D. Edwards, J. Prosser, A. Watts and

S. White

Also in attendance: County Councillor R. Greenland (Cabinet

Member) and County Councillor V. Smith.

#### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Peter Davies Chief Officer, Resources

Cath Fallon Head of Economy and Enterprise

Mark Howcroft Assistant Head of Finance Richard Jones Policy and Performance Officer

Anne Rainsbury Curator Chepstow Museum & Deputy Museums

Service Officer

Rachel Rogers Curator

Hazel llett Scrutiny Manager

Richard Williams Democratic Services Officer

#### **APOLOGIES:**

Councillors D. Evans and A. Wintle

# 1. Declarations of Interest

County Councillor S. Jones declared a personal and prejudicial Interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 7 -Business Rates Revaluation, as she is the Head of the Welsh Retail Consortium. She left the meeting taking no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

County Councillor A. Watts declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 5 – Pre-Decision Scrutiny – Monmouthshire Museums: Transition and Forward Plans as he is a Chepstow Town Councillor and the Town Council funds Chepstow Museum.

#### 2. Public Open Forum

There were no members of the public present intending to address the Select Committee.

#### 3. Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the Economy and Development Select Committee dated 13<sup>th</sup> October 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

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# 4. <u>Pre- Decision Scrutiny - Monmouthshire Museums: Transition and Forward Plans</u>

#### Context:

- To receive the findings of the Amion Cultural Services Review.
- To consider the Transition Chart for Monmouthshire Museums based on the implementation of the key recommendations of the Amion Review.
- To consider whether to accept and approve the associated Five Year Forward Plan required for the on-going Accreditation of Monmouthshire Museums, subject to bringing forward individual business case submissions for approval as appropriate.

# **Key Issues:**

# **Key Findings of the Amion Cultural Services Review**

The Amion report recognises that the status quo is not acceptable and recommends a strategy that reduces duplication in staffing, lowers staff costs, reduces expenditure on buildings and assets and realistically increases income, redefining the service and giving it a sustainable blueprint for the future. The report assesses the County's museum provision concluding that:

- The Service is over stretched and far too fragmented to be effective.
- There is little sharing of resources and expertise, with the Service functioning as three independent entities.
- There is a high level of commitment and passion from staff with clear evidence of very good practice in collections management and the Service which is being offered to residents and visitors.
- None of the buildings are ideal with Abergavenny and Monmouth being compromised in terms of access and display spaces.
- The Council will not be able to achieve current budget savings without substantial reductions to staffing levels and opening hours whilst income generation services are insufficiently resourced with a limit to the amount of 'profit' which could be generated.
- The Council is simply trying to do far too much with too little resource. The offer is not a good one for Monmouthshire's residents, visitors or staff. Therefore the Council needs to do less but do it much better and differently.

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# **Key Recommendations**

In making its key recommendations, Amion applied guiding principles for change:

- Each museum location should continue to have a means of telling its local story whereby the most distinctive stories and collections for each place should be selected and presented.
- Centralised storage and skills would enable better delivery across the offer a collections centre needing to have public access and research facilities.
- The current staff structure is unbalanced and a clear centralised structure is needed.
- There needs to be a strong on line presence for Monmouthshire's heritage.
- Cross county trails are needed to link stories together and communicate the heritage offer outside of museums and buildings.

The overarching recommendations are therefore as follows:

- Create a centralised museum offer with an effective leadership function.
- Create a collections centre / centralised store.
- Continue to provide access to the county's heritage.
- Create a properly resourced trading company this is being looked at as part of the ADM which is why it doesn't appear in the museum plan.

# **Member Scrutiny:**

- Monmouthshire is a county for tourism and it is important that this is maintained.
- Monmouthshire is known for its heritage.
- In order to be sustainable for the future it is sensible to reorganise the Monmouthshire Museums Teams.

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- Digital technology is crucial in the development of the museums service and there is a need for a museums presence within the major towns within Monmouthshire for tourists and residents.
- Further detail on the future of Monmouthshire's museums would be helpful to be received via a future report to the Select Committee.
- Concern was expressed that the Amion report contained inaccuracies and did not provide a clear indication of where the Museums Service should be going. With regard to the buildings, it was considered that the Amion report was unclear.
- Efforts to increase tourism numbers in Monmouthshire should be undertaken rather than cutting costs to fit in with the existing tourism figures.
- The centralisation of Monmouth Museum could be located within the Market Hall as it is owned by the County Council and has been vacant for three years.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid is a 10 year contract which was entered into in 2008 and will be completed in 2018.
- With regard to the Shire Hall, it was noted that this was a currently muddled offer in terms of the visitor. However, more information was required with regard to this potential location.
- A HLF bid is likely to be submitted in December 2017 with a view also to potentially access the Rural Development Fund in March 2017.
- With regard to the Monmouth Museum location, a number of potential venues were being investigated in Monmouth with a view to coming up with the best solution for the town.
- It was considered that the Market Hall would be the ideal location for storing museum artefacts as the building already had the correct facilities to accommodate them.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's questions, it was noted that the Authority will undertake an Economic Impact Assessment. There are opportunities for the Authority to look at providing food offer on our sites but there is a need to ensure that this is undertaken in the correct way. As part of the forward plan, it will be about identifying what will be achievable, i.e., what the service will be able to deliver with the budgets that are available. The Service will not be putting any existing businesses out of business. With regard to opening hours at the Tourist Information Centres (TIC's), the Authority has previously looked at ways in which these two services could be worked together. However, the issue that remains in Chepstow is that there is a need to look at ways of utilising the space at Chepstow Museum to identify the most sustainable way of delivering services.

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- As part of the Alternative Delivery Model, tourism is a part of this and it will be ensured that this consistency will be maintained going forward. It will not be in isolation of the other services that the Authority needs to deliver.
- The Destinations Management Strategy will be critical in how the museums offer links in to this matter. A Member workshop will be held shortly to look at ways of inputting into the new strategy. A report on TIC's will be brought back to a future meeting of the Select Committee, as well as a report on the Council's Events Strategy. Therefore, decisions need to be made in coordination rather than being made in isolation.
- There are considerable open spaces surrounding the Keep in Abergavenny and this could be utilised to increase income streams. A business case has been developed with a view to placing a permanent outdoor structure within the grounds, with a trial event programme occurring in the summer of 2017
- In response to a Select Committee Member's questions, it was noted that the Rural Community Development Fund is capital funding and this will be drawn in where possible. With regard to demand there is a need to look at improving opportunities to drive up the visitor numbers. Signage will also need to be addressed. Creating the right marketing strategy will drive demand.

# **Committee's Conclusion:**

- On behalf of the Select Committee the Chair will send a letter to the Cabinet Member outlining the Select Committee's comments.
- The Select Committee supports the recommendations in principle but further detail is required at a future meeting of the Select Committee.
- The Select Committee supports the retention of a strong museums offer and accepts the need to be sustainable and the need to reorganise the service.

# 5. Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report Period 2 Outturn Forecast Statement

# Context:

To receive information on the forecast revenue outturn position of the Authority at the end of period 2 which represents month 6 financial information for the 2016/17 financial year.

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# **Recommendations proposed to Cabinet:**

- That Cabinet notes the extent of forecast revenue overspend at period 2 of £839,000, an improvement of £529,000 on previous reported position at period 1.
- That Cabinet expects Chief officers to continue to review the levels of over and underspends and reallocate budgets to reduce the extent of compensatory positions needing to be reported from month 6 onwards.
- That Cabinet appreciates the extent of predicted schools reserve usage and an anticipation that a further four schools will be in a deficit position by the end of 2016-17.
- That Cabinet approves a caveated use of reserves to finance £318,000 employment tribunal costs if the Council's budget is not able to absorb the effect of this extraordinary expenditure over the remaining 6 months of financial year.
- That Cabinet considers the capital monitoring, specific over and underspends, and importantly that Cabinet recognises the risk associated with having to rely on a use of capital receipts in the year of sale and the potential for this to have significant revenue pressures should receipts be delayed and temporary borrowing be required.

# Member scrutiny:

- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the potential increase in the number of Monmouthshire's schools likely to be in a deficit budget at the end of the financial year (from six schools to ten schools), it was noted that the adverse variance is minor in nature. Schools are being encouraged to have less balances to place less reliance on building up significant balances and reducing the volatility. The four schools that are likely to find themselves in a deficit balance at the end of the financial year will most likely be in deficit by less than £10,000. Also, there is an overall trend where schools starting the year in a deficit budget is a reducing one and becoming an improving situation.
- With regard to Chepstow School, it was noted that improvements have been made in respect of its deficit budget with the help of the Assistant Head of Finance.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the Adults Services budget, it was noted that Monmouthshire has an increasing elderly population and expectations around care provision. This was an issue that needed to be progressed. Elected Members are having to make hard choices year on year with all departmental budgets. Officers across the Authority are therefore having to bring re-engineering plans with a view to having to do things differently.
- Draft budget proposals will be available in December 2016.

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 In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the Cattle Market in Raglan, it was noted that there is still some work to be undertaken before the Authority takes over the responsibility for it. It is still in the commissioning stage.

# **Committee's Conclusion**

- That the recommendations outlined in the report be presented to Cabinet.
- That the Scrutiny Manager invites the Economy and Development Select Committee to the Strong Communities Select Committee when the issue relating to the Cattle Market at Raglan is discussed.

#### 6. Business Rates Revaluation

#### Context:

To receive a verbal update in respect of Business Rates Revaluation.

# **Key Issues:**

Situation Analysis:

Following a recent draft Business Rates Revaluation, internal analysis has identified that 65% of Monmouthshire's rateable values have increased, 11% have stayed the same and 24% have decreased.

A recent Welsh Government consultation exercise has asserted that approximately half of all ratepayers will continue to pay nothing following the revaluation as a result of support provided by the Small Business Rates Relief Scheme (SBRR). However, analysis suggests that only 44.7% of ratepayers will receive full Small Business Rates Relief (down from 51.5%) and 31.9% of Monmouthshire businesses will receive no relief under SBRR (a 17.3% increase). Where a business is not already eligible for small business rates relief, it will not be eligible for transitional relief under the current Welsh Government proposals.

Should the revaluation go ahead, it is likely to have a considerable impact on Monmouthshire's local businesses, particularly the retail sector which will experience an overall sector increase of 11%, the highest in Wales. Local facilities, including post offices, public houses and village halls also seem to be particularly vulnerable as a result of this revaluation. The table below provides an analysis of percentage changes on a town by town basis:

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Town	% Increase	No Change	% Decrease
Abergavenny	68	10	22
Caldicot	41	22	37
Chepstow	64	12	24
Monmouth	84	5	11
Usk	89	5	6

#### Action to Date:

Given that 'Supporting enterprise, entrepreneurship and job creation' is one of the Council's key priorities, the following actions have been taken to raise awareness of this issue and the potential impact that this can have on the cash flow of Monmouthshire's local businesses:

- 4<sup>th</sup> November 2016: The Chief Executive and Deputy Leader met with David Davies MP to raise concerns.
- 30th November 2016: The Chief Executive, Deputy Leader and Chairman of Monmouth Chamber (representing all Monmouthshire's Chambers) are meeting with the District Valuer to:
  - Request a postponement of the revaluation so that the methodology can be examined. There is a need to understand why Monmouthshire is experiencing such a high proportion of the increase when there are inconsistencies with other counties. The system must be seen to be transparent and fair.
  - To understand if there is an opportunity for the Council to make a technical appeal on behalf of the County's businesses, although the Authority is not aware of an existing methodology that will enable it to do so.
  - Alternately, to seek assurance that those who lodge appeals against the
    revaluation should have increases postponed until the determination of the
    appeals. Businesses asked to pay these unexpected hikes at short notice
    could suffer severe cash flow problems. If the Welsh Government refuses to
    re-examine these proposals, Monmouthshire could lose some of the County's
    iconic businesses.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016: County Councillor Greenland to put a motion to Council urging Welsh Government to postpone these draft proposals to give time for a thorough review of the methodology and results thrown up from this revaluation to be considered. Also for Welsh Government not to impose any increases until the results of the appeals are known. Also, to call for sympathetic transitional arrangements for all businesses given that Welsh Government, although has announced a transitional scheme for small businesses affected by the increase, it has not done the same for the larger businesses which will be harder hit.

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• **5<sup>th</sup> December 2016**: Nick Ramsay AM is holding a Public Meeting in Usk Memorial Hall at 7.30pm.

# **Member Scrutiny:**

- The Select Committee endorsed the information received in the verbal update and Members agreed to raise their concerns at Full Council.
- It was considered that in order to maintain a viable business entity in Monmouthshire this matter needed to be addressed and resolved as quickly as possible.
- The report presented would be emailed to the Select Committee.
- The Cabinet Member stated that this matter is serious for many of Monmouthshire's businesses. It is likely that the smaller local businesses are likely to suffer under these proposals. It was noted that it was in the gift of Welsh Government to postpone these increases and for a better transitional period. This matter will be raised with Welsh Government.
- Some Select Committee Members considered that, as a Council, we could support local businesses by not putting a charge on businesses for their 'A' boards, with a view to showing support. It was considered that the cost implication of introducing this charge would create a minimal financial gain for the Council. It might be better not to introduce it and therefore support local businesses. The Vice-Chair asked officers to look into this matter but noted that the main issue that needed to be addressed was the matter of business rates.

#### **Committee's Conclusion:**

On behalf of the Select Committee, the Vice-Chair thanked the officer for presenting the verbal report and urged Cabinet and officers to do what they can to help businesses overcome this very difficult issue.

# 7. <u>Improvement Objectives and Performance Indicators - 2016/17 Quarter 2 update</u>

#### Context:

To receive quarter 2 performance data for the Improvement Objectives which are under the remit of Economy & Development Select Committee and to receive the latest performance against wider key national performance indicators that are under the committee's remit.

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# **Key Issues:**

Improvement Objectives are set annually by the Council to deliver on priorities. These are set in the Council's Improvement Plan 2016/17. Despite objectives being focussed on the long term, the specific activities that support them are particularly focussed for the year ahead.

Activity that contributes to the delivery of some objectives cross cuts Select Committee remits and these will also be reported to the other relevant committees.

The Improvement Objectives will be evaluated at the end of the year (2016/17) based on the Council's self-evaluation framework, as set in the Improvement Plan 2016-17. Performance against them will be reported to Select Committee and in the Stage 2 Improvement Plan published in October each year.

This is likely to be the final annual cycle of Improvement Planning in this format. The Council is currently undertaking two substantial assessments of need and wellbeing within the County as a consequence of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. This information will provide a much deeper evidence base of well-being in the County and will be used to review the Council's current improvement objectives in preparation for the publication of the Council's well-being objectives by 31st March 2017.

Appendix C of the report sets out further Key Performance Indicators from the National Performance indicator set that are under the committee's remit. The primary purpose is to highlight the performance achieved so far in 2016/17. Where indicators relate to the performance of services that are under the remit of more than one committee these will also be reported to the other relevant committees.

#### **Member Scrutiny:**

- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the progress of the tourism, leisure, culture services and that progress was 'on target', it was noted that milestones are set in terms of progress towards that delivery. The 'on target' in this case related to completing the option appraisal by October 2016, the target having been set in May 2016. Therefore, this target had been met.
- A viable places loan scheme in Abergavenny has been promoted via the Council's website, the Council's Facebook page, twitter and press releases to communicate this message.
- The action in the report related to City deal has an associated milestone scheduled to be completed by March 2017. The Select Committee Manager confirmed that this matter is currently on the work programme to be brought to the Select Committee at the appropriate time.

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 In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding STEAM data and how it is collated, it was noted that the Tourism Manager could provide the Member with an update regarding this matter.

# **Committee's Conclusion:**

- That the report be noted.
- The Tourism Manager to provide the Select Committee Member with information on how STEAM data is collated.
- An update report on the City Deal to be presented to a future Select Committee meeting.

# 8. Y Prentis and CMC2 Updates

#### Context:

To receive an update on Y Prentis activities and the benefits it has brought to the wider South East Wales region. To consider the dissolution of CMC<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Key Issues:**

Y Prentis was established by CMC2 and Melin Homes as a not for profit company limited by guarantee in September 2012. Y Prentis delivers a Shared Apprenticeship Scheme across South East Wales in partnership with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). Its vision is to 'provide long term sustainable employment opportunities to help young people maximise their potential and gain fruitful future employment'.

Y-Prentis has been a success story for CMC2. It is profitable, supported by a levy from the construction sector and enabled more than 160 young people into sustainable living wage apprenticeships. Moreover, the potential now exists for the continued development and expansion of the company, in light of the City Deal and major infrastructure developments and opportunities such as the Critical Care Centre in Torfaen. Aside from Y-Prentis, CMC2 has created benefits for Monmouthshire communities with broadband exploitation, MonmouthpediA, digital inclusion and tourism. In terms of its contribution to the Council, the work undertaken by CMC2 on the development of the replacement social care system (FLO/PLANT), has saved the Council in the order of £150,000 annually in licence fees.

With the conclusion of the software development work and other than the continued operation of Y-Prentis, CMC2 has ceased trading and has been engaged in completing live projects since July 2015 when Cabinet approved reserve funding for its accumulated losses. However it was not dissolved at this time as it formed part of an options appraisal to consider a suitable delivery structure for the Alternative Delivery

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Model (ADM) being considered for Tourism, Leisure and Culture Services. This analysis has now concluded that CMC<sup>2</sup> is not the correct vehicle for the ADM so it is now proposed that the company is formally dissolved.

In doing so, it is proposed that one outstanding account of £90,000 relating to software development services for Skutrade is novated to the Council. The Council had separately engaged with Skutrade to determine whether it could support the competitiveness of Monmouthshire businesses. The recovery of the Skutrade account is considered to be a separate matter to this and we are working with the company to settle the account.

As CMC<sup>2</sup> is the registered co-owner of Y Prentis, with Melin Homes, it is proposed that following dissolution, ownership of the company transfers to the Council which becomes co-owner of this not for profit company limited by guarantee, which is successful in its own right. Accumulated surpluses of £240,000 (expected to reach £260,000 by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017) are now held by the company. The significant additional future growth potential with major infrastructure investment schemes in the region, now coming to pass must also be considered given the remit of Y-Prentis to work on a regional scale.

# **Member Scrutiny:**

- The Business Plan for Y Prentis to be brought to a future meeting of the Select Committee.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding Y Prentis being in the ownership of CMC2, it was noted that at the inception of CMC2, it was seen as a perfect opportunity for CMC2 and Y Prentis to align. And a decision was made to do so. However, there is a need to re-house Y Prentis due to the dissolution of CMC2.
- Part of the focus of CMC2 included sustainable energy but was not the single focus. The articles of the companies were in renewable and training skills. CMC2 always had the flexibility to operate in many areas.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding its success, it was noted that there has been an enthusiastic apprenticeship scheme and new software developments. Now seems to be the time to bring it back in-house.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the intellectual property of the system, it was noted that with regard to FLO / PLANT, things have been protracted where strong relationships have been developed with other software houses and providers who have taken a keen interest in what has been produced. However, changes in the market has led to some of these companies being taken over which has meant that the platform is in the process of being sold on. A valuation is being sought from the District Valuer. The IP address and the code is owned by the Authority. In respect of development work taken for the Authority, where contracts were written that the IP address was held by the Authority. For any software development works that were undertaken with

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private companies, the holder of the IP address varied. There is no intellectual property that is held by CMC2 other than one software development project. With regard to who owns this intellectual property, this will need to be ascertained via legal process. Therefore, the company would not be dissolved until this matter had been clarified.

- A Select Committee Member had expressed his disappointment and questioned the purpose of CMC2. It was noted that there had been a number of examples highlighted in the report that had outlined the good work that had been achieved. However, the point had been reached where it had become necessary to curtail activities and dissolve the company.
- The Cabinet Member stated that purpose of CMC2 was to take forward areas of interest for the community and to bring people into the Community Interest Company (CIC) who had skills and were able to take forward issues the Authority would like to do but were not in the general remit of the Council. Therefore, developing benefits to the community that would not have been delivered. The company has been successful during its time of operation.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question, it was noted that Cabinet received the CMC2 business plan annually and at each point that it was presented to Cabinet, pre-decision scrutiny had been undertaken by the Select Committee.

# **Committee's Conclusion:**

- Y Prentis deserves further scrutiny and this matter will come forward to the Select Committee in the spring of 2017.
- To accept the recommendations outlined in the report, as follows:
  - To receive a full update on the activities of Y Prentis.
  - To approve the dissolution of CMC<sup>2</sup>.
  - To agree to novate outstanding debt to the Council for recovery purposes.
  - To, as a consequence of the above movements, agree to formally pass ownership of Y Prentis from CMC<sup>2</sup> to the Monmouthshire County Council.

# 9. Economy and Development Select Committee Forward Work Programme

We scrutinised the Economy and Development Select Committee Forward Work Programme. In doing so, the following points were noted:

• The Ordinary meeting of the Select Committee to be held on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at 10.00am (All day meeting).

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- A Tourism Workshop regarding the Destinations Management Plan will be held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at 10.00am.
- A Special Meeting of the Economy and Development Select Committee to be held in January 2017. Agenda items:
  - Benefits of hosting the Velothon.
  - City Deal.
  - Museums Work.
  - Enterprise Restructure.

We resolved to receive the update and noted its content.

# 10. Council and Cabinet Business Forward Plan

We scrutinised the Council and Cabinet Business Forward Plan.

In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the Community Governance report, the Scrutiny Manager would liaise with the Senior Democratic Services Officer to ascertain when this report is likely to be presented to Council by the Head of Governance, Engagement and Improvement.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

# 11. Next meeting

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at 10.00am.