

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Lower Wye Area Committee held
at Chepstow Leisure Centre, Wye Valley Room on Wednesday, 14th December, 2016 at
10.00 am**

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Dovey (Chair)

County Councillors: A. Webb, G. Down, P. Farley and P. Murphy

ALSO PRESENT:

Mrs. B. Moore – Shirenewton Community Council
Councillor S. Dovey – Chepstow Town Council
Mrs J. Saunders – Tintern Community Council

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Andy Smith – Strategic Investment and Funding Manager
Debbie McCarty – Whole Place Manager
Wendy Barnard – Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors R.J.W. Greenland and P.A.D. Hobson

1. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

2. Public Open Forum

No matters were raised during the Public Open Forum.

3. To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on the 29th September 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.

Matters Arising:

- **Capital Funding Requests:** It was agreed that responses should be within a set time. It was noted that there were still two missing applications for Capital Funding requests. It was agreed that Mrs. D. Hill-Howells should be contacted and requested to provide a response by e mail to all Committee Members and the matter to be included as an agenda item at the next meeting. It was advised that there is £5000 available until the review of area committees is completed.

The Committee was informed that Shirenewton Community Council had submitted an application under previous rules and an outcome is expected.

- **Tourist Information Centre:** The Committee received an update that since the last meeting, there had been a constructive meeting, attended by County Councillors P. Farley and D. Dovey, between Walkers are Welcome and other interested parties. The

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meeting facilitated useful dialogue regarding the Tourist Information Centre and some other developments. It was felt that progress had been made.

4. Update from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board on Chepstow Hospital and Health Care in South Wales

The Committee welcomed Mr. N. Wood, Chief Operating Officer and Mrs. P. Hapgood, Assistant Divisional Nurse, Community, from the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to the meeting to provide an overview of community health facilities (Chepstow and South Wales) from the ABUHB's perspective.

The Clinical Future Strategies for the future development and delivery of health services in the region were introduced. It was explained that new and existing hospitals are being evaluated from an estate and service perspective to ensure they are fit for purpose for the future. It was explained that permission has been granted by the Welsh Government to construct a 462 bed Specialist and Critical Care Centre (SCCC) in Llanfrechfa. This will provide a highly specialised environment to support the treatment of patients who need complex and acute emergency care in the region and will open in 2021.

It was explained that Accident and Emergency services for ambulance patients will be provided in the SCCC with support from the regional hospitals for minor injuries (Ysbytty Ystrad Fawr, Ysbytty Aneurin Bevan, Nevill Hall and Royal Gwent Hospitals). It was noted that patients referred via their GP in Chepstow will still go to the Royal Gwent Hospital.

It was explained that the Health Board is currently consulting upon a "Care Closer to Home" strategy for the Greater Gwent region. In the county, it is proposed that as many services as possible will be delivered locally through integrated hubs in Monmouth and Chepstow.

It was confirmed that there will not be a Minor Injury Unit in Chepstow Hospital. A Member stated that a petition with 2500 signatures had been met with indifference and questioned why there had been no public consultation on this important matter. It was added that many residents in the Chepstow area travel to Lydney and District Hospital for minor injury services. It was suggested that the decision was revisited particularly in view of the changing needs of the population and the availability of public transport services.

It was confirmed that the Health Board is aware of the use of Lydney and District Hospital and that discussions are in progress with GPs in Monmouth and Chepstow to develop minor injury care locally in primary care centres. Reference was also made to the difficulties in accessing a GP in Chepstow, noting that when GPs are nearing retirement, it is difficult to arrange replacements.

The Health Board representatives acknowledged the concerns expressed regarding service changes and confirmed that engagement is a priority. It was explained that bigger, integrated centres that deliver more services can use the workforce more effectively. It was explained that there are challenges to overcome in relation to elderly and mental health patients, and also e.g. lack of availability of domiciliary care.

A Member queried how Greyhill Surgery, Caldicot, which provides a lot of services, fits into the strategy. It was explained that this is an example of a neighbourhood care network trialled by some GPs in the South Monmouthshire area. It was added that the development of resource centres around GP practices is proposed for the future; moving away from the old model of self-employed/GP owned surgeries.

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A Member recalled a previous plan to bring services closer to communities that did not proceed. It was added that some services were removed adding that the SCCC was planned in 2008. It was commented that there had been enough discussion and consultation, and that action was now required. In response, it was explained that the SCCC had been proposed in 2003 but was only authorised by Welsh Government on 31 October 2016. Further, it was explained that without the SCCC, the plan to bring services closer is not deliverable citing insufficient capital investment in the Royal Gwent and Nevill Hall Hospitals from Welsh Government; £7 million annual budget. It was confirmed that the Care Closer to Home Strategy could have been delivered earlier if the decision on the SCCC made sooner. Now that the decision is received, the strategy can be implemented.

It was confirmed that 48 beds for care of elderly and a mental health ward have been removed from Chepstow Hospital but that re-enablement services remain the same. It was commented, in response to a query, that there are 8 radiographer vacancies across the Health Board and attempts to recruit sonographers who can interpret images have proved difficult. It was confirmed that radiography equipment is still in place in Chepstow.

Rumours that Ysbytty Aneurin Bevan is to close were quashed. The facility will not close and will continue to provide minor injury services, 96 beds for rehabilitation and care of the elderly, and will be a support ward to free up acute beds for Nevill Hall Hospital for the winter months.

In terms of stroke and rehabilitation, it was explained that an integrated partnership model has been adopted with discharge liaison nurses to aid quicker re-ablement. Additionally, for fall patients, care workers will start the relationship in hospital and will continue at home. It was confirmed that stroke and rehabilitation services will continue in Chepstow Hospital.

A Member queried why it takes so long to transfer x-ray results to the GP, especially as the images are digital. It was explained that an ultrasound/x ray has to be seen by a supervisor who will interpret the image noting that non-urgent, low priority images will take 2/3 weeks to return to the GP.

The proposals regarding mental health services in the area were queried noting that it can take over 6 months for a therapy referral, or for a patient to be seen, suggesting that it may be quicker to go to the voluntary sector or privately.

It was acknowledged that the Health Board has been poor at delivering primary mental health care. It was explained that it is a Welsh Government requirement that 80% of mental health patients should be seen within 28 days and therapy should be provided within a further 28 days. It was reported that a year ago only 30% of patients were being seen, or provided with therapy within the target times. This was due to underinvestment in therapies and reliance on the voluntary sector. The Health Board is building that service back up whilst managing the back log. Currently, 80% are seen within 28 days and 70% are provided with therapy within acceptable timescales.

It was reported that the wait for children's mental health services has reduced from 17/18 weeks to 16 weeks.

It was noted that there is a significant problem with patients who don't attend appointments (20% -30%). To combat this, text and e mail reminders are being sent for some services. This approach will be deployed for mental health appointments.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that there was no significant issue with collection of debts, nor a high level of overseas patients.

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A Member acknowledged that Accident and Emergency Services in Nevill Hall Hospital and Royal Gwent Hospital are bottlenecks in the system, and queried if the closure of minor injuries units impacts on ambulance services. It was confirmed that there is a minor injuries unit in Ysbytty Aneurin Bevan and a wider facility at Ysbytty Ystrad Fawr, and two other Accident and Emergency facilities. It was added that numbers of patients being seen are stable and not increasing. The intention is to consolidate such services to a small number of sites and it was confirmed that most minor injuries are dealt with in Accident and Emergency. The view was expressed that major injuries are causing the blockage in the system hence the inability to move patients through and out of the system. It was added that the volume of admission of patients by GPs is considerable noting a 26% increase over the last two years. It was commented that volumes of frail elderly for short or long term admission have seen a significant increase.

It was confirmed that a trial at Nevill Hall Hospital for a 6-8 week period, has taken place where GP referred patients are rapid triaged and moved on. The Committee was advised that minor injury services don't always contribute to congestion in the system.

It was noted that the Health Board are looking to appoint 3 Physician Assistants which could relieve GP costs. It was suggested that a Sister led minor injury unit supported by a doctor on call released from local surgeries could be a useful solution.

The issue of additional demand for services from the 500 plus houses being constructed in Chepstow and Severnside, area was raised noting that there are applications for 600 further housing units.

Members of the Public in attendance at the meeting were satisfied that their main matters of interest had been covered. They added some information about their personal experience that the people delivering services were great but that the system was not, citing in particular that staffing levels appeared to be very low.

The Health Board representatives expressed their willingness to return to discuss services further and were thanked for their attendance.

5. Overview of Rural Development Funding

The Committee welcomed Mr. A. Smith, Strategic Investment and Funding Manager to the meeting to report on the delivery of the Rural Development Programme (RDP).

It was explained that the authority administers the Leader Funding element of the RDP for 2014-20 covering all eligible funding areas north of Newport and Monmouthshire known collectively as the Vale of Usk for which £2.7m revenue funding has been secured.

It was explained that a local development strategy was needed and, consequently, consultees were asked to determine priorities to define where the funding should be spent. It was concluded that the five main themes for Leader funding should be:

- Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources. (£492K).
- Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains. (£492K).
- Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services. (£492K).
- Renewable energy at a community level. (£356K).
- Exploitation of digital technology. (£630K).

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It was explained that projects must be community led from the ground up and the main focus area is promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas with a focus on the following areas:

- (a) facilitating diversification, creation of new small enterprises and job creation;
- (b) fostering local development in rural areas;
- (c) enhancing accessibility to, use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas.

It was further explained projects must address one or more of the following cross cutting themes:

- a) Equal opportunities including Welsh Language.
- b) Sustainable development.
- c) Poverty and social exclusion.

It was confirmed that there was no maximum grant limit currently and award of funding is related to outputs from investment. It was explained that eligible activities are subject to 20% match funding (RDP 80%).

It was explained that there is a 2 stage Process starting with an idea form which is assessed by the relevant theme sub group (team of officers). If approved a full application is invited, again assessed and scored by the sub group with final approval of all projects by the full Local Action Group (LAG). It was noted that online voting has been introduced for the LAG to speed up the process.

A copy of the papers from the presentation were requested and to include contact details of appropriate officers.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that a Community Council is eligible to apply in both categories. It was commented that the name Vale of Usk may confuse some potential applicants as it suggests it is not for our area.

It was questioned if the expenditure was on track and noted in response that difficulty was being experienced in getting ideas from groups but work was being undertaken to encourage applications. In particular, it was reported that there is limited interest in renewable energy projects. It was noted that a marketing adviser has been engaged and a press release will be issued through the MCC website and via social media. It was suggested that the Tourist Information Centre would be a good conduit.

6. Petition - Reduced Speed Limit A466 Tintern - Old Station

A petition requesting support for a speed limit in the vicinity of the entrance of the Old Station, Tintern was received.

It was reported that the matter is ongoing and that a survey will be considered in January. It was commented that the speed limit should be extended to Brockweir Bridge.

It was noted that a road safety seminar was planned for the following week and any issues should be forwarded to County Councillor A. Webb.

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7. To note the date and time of the next meeting as 13th March 2017 at 10.00am

The date and time of the next meeting was confirmed as 13th March 2017 at 10.00am. It was suggested that the venue should be The Old Station, Tintern.

The meeting ended at 11.40 am