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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held
at on Thursday, 15th February, 2018 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: County Councillor J.Pratt (Chairman)
County Councillor A. Webb (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: A.Davies, L.Dymock, R.Roden, L. Guppy,
V. Smith and A. Easson

Also in attendance County Councillor(s): S. Jones

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Gillian Dicken	Principal EHO
Cath Fallon	Head of Economy and Enterprise
David Jones	Head of Public Protection
Judith Langdon	Whole Place Officer
Sharran Lloyd	LSB Development Manager
Dave Loder	Finance Manager
Linda O'Gorman	Principal Licensing Officer
Rachel Rawlings	Whole Place Officer
Joe Skidmore	Communities and Partnership Development Lead
Owen Wilce	Programme Lead - A County That Serves
Paula Harris	Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for absence

County Councillors L. Jones.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Open Public Forum

The Committee were joined by Mt Peter Sutherland representing Llanbadoc Community Council who raised the following points;

Although happy to have confirmation of the speed camera at Woodside it was asked if it would be possible to have a camera installed at Monkswood.

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The Llanbadoc Community Council clerk wrote to the council on the 18th December 2017 regarding an issue at Glascoed Common and to date have received no response.

Traffic through Usk during the gas works – the utility company was praised for their communication with residents, but here are concerns regarding the lack of information regarding the alternative routes for HGVs during the duration of the works.

Review of community boundaries – the community council submitted their views some time ago and these seem to have been ignored. There is a working party at county level which has no community council representation. It is understood that there will be a final set of proposals which the community council will be allowed to comment on, this is felt to be unsatisfactory. It is asked that some engagement with community councils is invited.

4. To confirm minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

5. Public Protection Performance

Context:

To undertake scrutiny of service delivery across Public Protection services in the first nine months of this financial year 2017/18, with comparison to previous years. The Public Protection division comprises of Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Animal Health and Licensing.

Key Issues:

In January 2015 Cabinet requested that Public Protection performance was reviewed regularly by this Committee to assess any negative impacts. As a consequence six monthly reports have been provided to Strong Communities Select committee, together with annual reports to Licensing & Regulatory committee.

The report summarises performance over the first nine months of 2017/18, and highlights the following –

- The four service teams, for the vast majority of the services they deliver, meet the Authority's legal obligations in relation to Public Protection services.
- As detailed in Appendix A, most proactive and reactive work is being carried out professionally, within prescribed response times. There are only a few exceptions - due to the reactive nature of most of the services – these being some slippage in housing visits, private water inspections and animal health visits.

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- Annual reports will continue to be made to this Committee to assess performance over time, and help inform future priorities noting the competing demands.
- Services may struggle to take on any new statutory duties that protect the public and the environment, and therefore funding must be sought to support any new work.
- Future strategies for sustaining Public Protection services will be developed, (to include further income generation and collaboration), locally, regionally and nationally.
- Services will improve linkages to the Authority's Corporate Business Plan 2017/22 and other key drivers, for example the Chief Medical Officer Wales' priorities.

Member Scrutiny:

A Member raised concerns regarding the large scope of work undertaken by the team and the authority as a whole. With staff absence being a major concern it was asked if the current level and quality of work could be sustained with such low staff numbers.

The issue of dog fouling was raised and it was asked if, as with other authorities we could employ a private company to tackle dog fouling and littering with a view to raising revenue.

The Committee praised officers for the report, they felt that all key information was accessible and it allowed members to identify the key indicators.

A Member asked what income was being received on income stream to supplement the team's budget.

Clarity was sought in regard to private water supplies, the size of supply and what monitoring takes place, especially in view of recent staff shortages.

It was asked if the team would be liaising with Richard Cope to ensure all bus drivers receive level one safeguarding training.

It was asked how many registered social landlords we have and how many properties are registered, what actions are taken if the properties are not being used correctly.

In respect to construction on the M4 proposed relief road, it was asked if we can encourage developers to engage with Members prior to work starting.

Weights and measures – it was asked if all relevant machines were calibrated and what sanctions are imposed on those who do not calibrate their machines.

Concerns regarding animal health were raised.

A Member asked who is responsible for air quality monitoring on the A48, ourselves or Welsh Government.

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The success of the access advisory system was congratulated.

In regard to the construction of Monmouth school, it was asked if the large number of complaints made by members of the public was above average for a project of this size.

The level of staff in the department was raised as a concern, especially in view of the increasing workload including the slavery and trafficking act.

It was asked if enough was being done to raise the profile of social issues such as modern slavery.

Committee's Conclusion:

Members praised officers for the report and the work that they do.

The importance of the work in keeping the residents of the County safe was felt to be invaluable.

Members look forward to receiving the report on an annual basis.

6. Month 7 Budget Monitoring

Context:

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the revenue and capital outturn positions based on activity data at month 7.

This report will also be considered by Select Committees as part of their responsibility to,

- assess whether effective budget monitoring is taking place,
- monitor the extent to which budgets are spent in accordance with agreed budget and policy framework,
- challenge the reasonableness of projected over or underspends, and
- monitor the achievement of predicted efficiency gains or progress in relation to savings proposals.

Key Issues:

Members consider the forecast net revenue outturn overspend of £62,000.

That Cabinet requires Chief Officers to continue to work to reduce the £1.333m over spend on services, using measures such as a moratorium on non-essential spend and the freezing of vacant posts other than where recruitment is considered essential.

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Members consider the forecast capital outturn spend, the levels of capital slippage proposed and the levels of capital receipts to assist with capital programme funding, primarily the Future Schools Tranche A considerations.

Members note that the low level of earmarked reserves, which will severely reduce the flexibility the Council has in meeting the financial challenges of reducing settlements and consequent need to redesign services.

Members note the significant and continued forecast reduction in the overall school balance at the end of 2017/18 and supports the continuing work with schools to ensure that the Council's Fairer Funding scheme requirements are met and that the overall schools balance reverts to a positive position at the earliest opportunity.

Members note the significant over spend on services and consider recurrent and new pressures that need to feature in the draft revenue budget proposals currently out on consultation.

Member Scrutiny:

A Member that the TLC line within Enterprise box does not add up. We were told that the variance is offset by the same amount in Business Growth & Enterprise so the bottom line figures are not affected.

In clarification we were told the following;

Business Growth & Enterprise	824	644	1,468	1,779	311	23
Governance, Democracy and Support		4,061	4,061	4,122	61	
Planning & Housing	1,852	-374	1,478	1,533	55	56
Tourism Life & Culture	3,140	-282	2,858	2,965	107	101
Total Enterprise	5,816	4,049	9,865	10,399	534	180

The monitoring information and a draft report have been provided earlier than is common, given that the Assistant Head of Finance was on extended leave. Given that, there was always a likelihood the figures would change subsequently, reflecting senior colleague's deliberations.

Finance Officers suspected there would be further adjustments between Business Growth and Enterprise and TLC, given a heightened sensitivity in the reporting of TLC, due to a variety of moving parts and Member consideration of for instance Alternate Delivery Model.

Immediately prior to month 7 preparations finance officers accommodated a request to reflect a future movement in responsibility for the Events function, which also had the

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effect of transferring the large deficit on Events it incurred this year to Business Growth and Enterprise.

The revised narrative in the report was updated and reflective of the intent to charge part of that adverse Events position to Caldicot Castle. It will have the potential to muddy the water in any evaluation of Events.

Officers are intent to procure an external review into the validity of running an Events service to supplement the views proffered internally from the likes of Finance Officers or Chief Internal Auditor. It will come back to Members to consider again.

A Member rased a query in regard to reserves and we were told the following;

We do not hold our reserves either Council Fund, earmarked reserves or capital receipts reserves as Cash or as ring fenced investments. We hold all our cash, including reserves, cash from external borrowing and surpluses from the Authority's cash flows from payments and receipts etc. as a combined pot. In fact this pot can be lower than the level of our reserves if we chose not to externally borrow where capital schemes are borrowing funded in order to save on the cost of carry (the cost of borrowing less the returns on investments).

Any surplus cash held including on a daily basis is invested with high quality counterparties such as Barclays, Lloyds, with the Debt management office and in money market funds. The returns on these investments varies with economic factors such as confidence in Sterling, exchange rates and the bank base rate. Global Equity markets will also be affected by these same factors but not necessarily in the same way and there is not a direct link between the two. So in the event of a fall in equity market values, as in the last week or two, I would not perceive there to be a material increase in risk to the principals we invest. In fact interest returns are increasing due to the increase in bank rate and projected increase in bank rate following the last Bank of England Statement.

It was asked that the relevant Officers come to the Committee to answer Member's questions in regard to the Solar Farm.

Committee's Conclusion:

The Committee thanked Officers for the report and felt it clearly red flagged where the areas of concern are.

The pressure on services are increasing and the number of resources we have to satisfy that demand is decreasing. In particular is was felt in the level of response to highway maintenance in the winter.

Public perception is high with residents expecting a lot from Monmouthshire County Council.

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7. Community and Partnerships Team - Individual Updates on priorities and activities - verbal update

We were joined in the Chamber by County Councillor Sara Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Justice.

Context:

To inform partners of the function of the newly established Community & Partnership Development Team.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Social Services and Wellbeing Act are encouraging us to look ahead and identify new ways of doing better things. As a requirement of the Act, the Public Service Board and the Authority undertook a Wellbeing Assessment in 2016, which provided us with an understanding of the assets, challenges and opportunities within our county. This enabled us to set wellbeing objectives in March 2017 that will form part of the wellbeing plan in 2018.

The strategy for a Community and Partnership Development Team aligns with the wellbeing objectives, enabling co-production by taking a local asset and place based approach. The new team will bridge gaps by balancing community needs with Authority priorities, to ensure the county's future sustainability.

Key Issues:

Public service delivery is changing. With an ageing population, reducing budgets and ever increasing demand, dependency upon public services is increasing when budgets are decreasing.

As a local authority we need to rethink our relationship with our local communities to enable us to successfully redesign our services. We need to think longer term about how we work together to identify and co-produce the right services going forward that will help us tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

As the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act requires co-delivery with partners, the historic disconnect between the Public Services Board (PSB), the Authority and the local community needs to be addressed. To enable this, community engagement has been repositioned within a more centralised role.

The new team also provides:

Specialist support in strategic PSB areas such as health and wellbeing issues, isolation, ageing well, community cohesion, etc.

Support for the Authority in their Cluster Area activities

More direct Town/Community Council engagement/liaison to increase knowledge of needs and priorities and ensure these can feed into strategic decision-making at local authority and PSB level.

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AIMS OF THE TEAM:

The Aim of the Community and Partnership Development Team is to work with communities and partners to help bring about social change and improve the quality of life in our county. The team will act as enablers; unlocking potential and supporting sustainability through collective impact; providing a resource and tangible link between local communities and a wide range of partners; enabling the delivery of measureable and sustainable programme of activities that will constantly look to the future. Collective impact is a principle, which is based on the community and sector specific organisations, agreeing to solve a specific problem or local priority using a common agenda, aligning their efforts and using common measures of success. The team will seek to exploit this principle when working with communities and partners to reach the shared goals across the county.

The team see communities as co-producers rather than service recipients, and will promote existing and establish new networks that can provide caring, mutual help and empowerment, ultimately enabling communities to control and design their own futures.

WHAT THE TEAM WILL DO:

The Community and Partnership Development Team will work to ensure there is strategic partnership direction and community delivery, and in so doing meet legislative requirements, enabling place based delivery and furthering the social justice priorities of the Council.

In order to apply strategic context to delivery, the team will operate as a bridging mechanism between partners, Town and Community Councils and communities. The team will seek to develop solid relationships with Town & Community Councils and the community, joining-up the strategic direction of public services with the desires of the community. The team will bridge the gap between multi-agency partnerships and the community to ensure that public body partners are in-tune with their communities and are better positioned to explore collective impact and co-production to meet shared outcomes.

The team will also work to shape the community and partnership landscape and strengthen the links with our communities to address challenges in relation to crime and disorder, ageing well and children & young people, ensuring better coordination and links between the direction of travel of PSB and the wider Monmouthshire communities as a whole. The team will steer PSB multi-agency partnerships to come together with the community to work more closely and strengthen links to ensure that the Authority is adopting the five ways of working under the new Wellbeing of Future Generations Act i.e. integrated, collaborative, long term, involving and preventative.

The Team will be central to the delivery of the Monmouthshire Wellbeing Plan ensuring that support is provided to all partners and communities' in-line with the legislative requirements of the Wellbeing Act and the direction of travel in meeting the PSB and Monmouthshire County Council objectives.

The Team will allocate a dedicated officer to each of the five areas across Monmouthshire (Abergavenny, Monmouth, Usk, Caldicot and Chepstow), to provide

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continuity, to build solid relationships and provide a steer around both the strategic direction of travel and to support local action to realise sustainable and resilient communities across the county.

In addition to this the Community & Partnership Development Team will also:
Allow for the provision of a consistent asset based community development approach across the five strategic settlements, whilst acting on local priorities.

Ensure provision of a programme of support against the Authority's statutory duties discharged through the Monmouthshire PSB, to enable the delivery of PSB priorities, enabling the solving of societal changes via a partnership and community approach, particularly in relation to Crime & Disorder, Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV), United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Ageing Well & Phase 3 Older Peoples Strategy, Tackling Poverty, Armed Forces Community Covenant.

Deliver the Rural Development Programme funded Community Leadership Academy designed to increase the participation and quality of community leadership by providing a suite of learning and development opportunities, upskilling members as well as community organisations to enable a common approach. Some examples of the offer include engaging with and leading volunteers, holding effective meetings, digital engagement skills, solving complex problems, putting ideas into action, working with public bodies, positive psychology and mindfulness.

Identify and support the delivery of community development priorities and place based plans, aligned to the Wellbeing Plan, in each of the five cluster areas i.e. Abergavenny, Monmouth, Usk, Chepstow and Caldicot, accepting that priorities will differ from area to area depending upon maturity, needs, gaps and opportunities

Provide engagement and support for town and community councils to build trust, develop both participative and elected democracy and disseminate information with a longer term ambition to encourage effective community representation and leadership

Develop a 'virtual bank' of funding streams in conjunction with partners which maps funding streams and resources to aid community development activities

Develop a business engagement programme, working with local businesses to maximise the local social impact from their corporate social responsibility programmes;

Progress the delivery of 'A County That Serves' – putting volunteering and contribution at the heart of citizenship in the County. Monmouthshire has some of the highest rates of volunteering in Wales with over 3500 people giving their time to help others. The team will ensure that community groups are able to make the best possible use of this unique asset to make a real difference on the issues that matter most to local people. Volunteering has a positive impact not only on individuals and their wellbeing, but also on organisations like Monmouthshire County Council and the wider community we serve. The team will work with the community and partners across the public, private and third sector to create more opportunities for people to volunteer in Monmouthshire, to have the opportunity to share their gifts, skills and passion within their own communities.

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Member Scrutiny:

Members asked for the detail of the team to be placed on the Hub to refer to in regard to roles and areas of responsibilities.

The loss of the Community Safety Action Teams was discussed and it was asked if it would be beneficial to reintroduce the teams as it was felt they served a valuable function.

Members felt that there was valuable work taking place in the community and that we should publicise our successes more.

In regard to allowing the committee to provide future scrutiny it suggested that key performance indicators were in place to allow members to identify success and progress.

Members asked the team how, as County Councillors they could help Officers.

County Councillor Sara Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Justice summed up by voicing her excitement for the approach being taken and felt that the experience of the individual team members was outstanding.

It was felt that using our assets to their full potential was something the team will focus on through the social justice strategy.

She also stressed the importance of private sector development so that working partnerships were established to benefit communities.

Committee's Conclusion:

The chair thanked the Cabinet Member for their perspective and felt that the team will be critical to making long term improvements.

It was asked that regular updates were brought to the committee for scrutiny.

8. Strong Communities forward work programme

The work programme was noted.

Members were asked to send their thoughts to the clerk in regard to questions they would like raised with People Services prior to Officers returning to committee.

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9. Cabinet & Council forward planner

The Cabinet & Council forward planner was noted.

10. Date and time of next meeting

29th March 2018 at 10am

The meeting ended at 1.45 pm

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