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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held
at The Chamber on Thursday, 29th March, 2018 at 10.00 am**

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

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Paula Harris	Democratic Services Officer
Alan Burkitt	Policy Officer Equalities and Welsh Language
Claire Marchant	Chief Officer Social Care, Health & Safeguarding
Sharran Lloyd	LSB Development Manager

1. Apologies for absence

County Councillors A. Davies, L. Jones and L. Dymock.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Open Public Forum

There were no members of the public present.

4. To confirm minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the meetings held on;

15th February 2018

26th February 2018 – special meeting

were agreed by the committee and signed by the Chair.

5. Action list

The Members of the committee were asked to formulate questions for People Services Officers ahead of their return visit to the committee.

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6. Social Justice Policy

Context:

To present the draft Social Justice Strategy for scrutiny.

Key Issues:

During 2016, two significant pieces of legislation came into force, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. Both Acts are underpinned by duties to collaborate with other public bodies, to involve people in the issues that affect them and to concentrate on developing preventative approaches rather than waiting for problems to arise.

In March 2017, the council endorsed two major pieces of work looking at well-being across the county - the Well-being Assessment and the Population Needs Assessment. Both highlighted the strengths and opportunities within our communities and used an extensive evidence base to draw out some of the challenges individuals and communities will face in the future.

In May 2017, the County Council election resulted in a new set of Councillors with renewed ambition to address issues of inequality that had been highlighted as a result of the Wellbeing and Population Needs Assessments, appointments included a new Cabinet Member for Social Justice. This was also coupled with the importance of re-setting our work with communities and subsequently in September 2017, Cabinet approved the restructure of both the Whole Place and the Partnerships Teams into a re-focussed Community and Partnership Development Team.

This draft Social Justice Strategy demonstrates our commitment as a Council to address inequalities in our county in order to make our society function better. Using the Community and Partnership team as an enabling body, it provides an approach that will help turn lives around by removing barriers and facilitating practical support and solutions to enable all our citizens to realise their full potential.

This is the first phase of an evolving strategy demonstrating our intention to work as a Council, and in partnership at national, regional and community level, to implement the policy interventions, approaches, support and methods to improve outcomes for people and communities.

This draft Social Justice Strategy sets out our purpose, our intentions and activities for the next four years and the targets by which we will measure our success to ensure that we achieve our goal – to put social justice at the heart of what we do in Monmouthshire.

Member Scrutiny:

In respect of the weight statistics in the case for change it was noted that the figures date back to 2014/15 and it was asked if more current figures could be supplied to allow Members to look at changes which are taking place.

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The financial implications of the policy were questioned and it was asked who would take responsibility for the different areas. An example was given with child friendly communities, over previous years there had been occasions when dated playground equipment had been taken away and not replaced. Members stressed the necessity of safe, active communities and queried how we would finance this.

The value of open spaces was highlighted with Members keen to see infrastructure which had been taken away replaced with new play equipment which was easily accessible to all in the community.

Members applauded the Officers for the work which had gone into the policy and commented on the value of the Member's workshop they had attended. The fact that it is a live document with across party committee support reassured Members that the policy would thrive.

In regard to the play areas a Member pointed out that these are community assets and it was felt that town and community councils should be fully engaged and involved in obtaining funding. The Member raised the point that town and community councils are not capped at the moment they can precept for the funding and get the work done.

The Chair raised the importance of focusing on modern day slavery and people trafficking as an authority as two cases have been highlighted through our Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Social Justice thanked the committee for their scrutiny and spoke of the policy being live and regularly updated.

Reflections included;

- The importance of community ownership working with town and community councils
- The creation of the community development partnership team
- Looking for Members to endorse the strategy and the endorsement of PSB partners.

Committee's Conclusion:

Members were happy to receive the first phase of an the policy which demonstrates our intention to work as a Council, and in partnership at national, regional and community level, to implement the policy interventions, approaches, support and methods to improve outcomes for people and communities.

Members felt that the Social Justice Strategy sets out our purpose, our intentions and activities for the next four years and the targets by which we will measure our success to ensure that we achieve our goal – to put social justice at the heart of

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what we do in Monmouthshire and look forward to regular updates.

7. Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

Context:

To present the draft Gwent Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Strategy to Select Committee prior to adoption across Gwent.

Key Issues:

The Gwent VAWDASV Strategy is required under the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 which calls for the public sector in Wales to work together in a consistent and cohesive way to improve the outcomes for individuals and their families subjected to VAWDASV.

The Gwent Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership Board has been established to meet the requirements of the Act. The public and third sector partners that make up the Gwent board are: the five local authorities in Gwent, Gwent Police, and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Welsh Ambulance Service, Probation Services, Registered Social Landlords, Supporting People Regional Collaborative Committee, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Gwent Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards, VAWDASV specialist sector partners and voluntary sector organisations.

The Gwent VAWDASV Strategy contributes to the National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – 2016 – 2021. The Gwent VAWDASV Strategy has been prepared by the Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board of which the Monmouthshire County Council is a member.

Member Scrutiny:

A Member asked if the report could be updated with helpline numbers easily accessible.

It was asked that the strategy is brought back to committee to review.

A Member highlighted that the use of women in the title may deter men from approaching agencies for help in domestic abuse situations.

It was suggested that the local MP and AM have receive a copy of the strategy.

Members asked if they would expect to see an increase in domestic abuse incidents with the roll out of the universal credit, as finances can be a root cause of domestic arguments.

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A Member asked where the detail of incidents were held and how they were monitored.

Particular concerns were raised in regard to adverse childhood experiences. It was felt that not enough was done to support children, particularly in regard to the communication between the police and schools. It was asked that when a child has been a victim or witness to an incident that the police force make the school aware so that support can be put in place for the child.

Committee's Conclusion:

Members were impressed by the work and commitment of Officers supporting this strategy and look forward to having regular updates and opportunities to provide feedback.

8. Strategic Equality Plan

Context:

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced in April 2011. Within the Specific duties is the requirement to publish an annual report on the progress made by the Council in its compliance with its Strategic Equality Plan, equality objectives and action Plan. The Act's principles and processes ensure that the Council remains true to its corporate values of Openness, Fairness, Flexibility and Teamwork.

Key Issues:

One of the specific duties in the Equality Act 2010 requires Public Bodies to publish an Annual Report detailing the progress on achievement of the actions outlined in the plan covering the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. There is also an appendix a report on the work that has been carried out on the Gender Pay Gap.

Member Scrutiny:

A Member asked if there would be future training for Elected Members to increase equalities knowledge.

It was asked if the officer has meetings with other authorities to discuss best practice.

It was suggested that the officer attends area committee meetings to share the message of equalities.

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The portfolio holder Cabinet Member County Councillor Sara Jones thanked the Equalities Officer for the hard work that goes into this critical agenda. The Cabinet Member said that we are looking to refresh the inclusion group and the plan, we will be looking for Elected Members to feed into this.

Committee's Conclusion:

That Members endorsed the progress made by the Council in the sixth year of the Strategic Equality Plan as detailed in its sixth annual monitoring report.

The upcoming training was welcomed and it was felt crucial that this is refreshed regularly.

9. Strong Communities forward work programme

Members discussed the Work Programme for the Strong Communities Select Committee. In doing so, the following points were noted;

A special meeting will called to invite back People Services and to provide scrutiny of the Highways Management Plan.

The following items were added to the work plan;

- Modern Slavery
- Roadside advertising
- Visits to recycling plants in Monmouthshire

10. Cabinet & Council forward work programme

Members noted the Cabinet & Council work planner.

11. Date and time of next meeting

24th May 2018 – 10am (pre-meeting 9.30am)

The meeting ended at 11.30 am