

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Special Meeting of Economy and Development Select Committee held at County Hall, Usk held on Wednesday 29th July 2015 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: County Councillor S. Jones (Chair)

County Councillors: D. Dovey, D. Evans, R., J. Prosser, S. White, and A. Wintle

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

County Councillors R.J.W. Greenland and V Smith

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

N. Edwards	-	Strategic Food and Tourism Manager
I. Saunders	-	Head of Tourism, Leisure and Culture
D. Davies	-	Enterprise Co-ordinator
R. Jones	-	Policy and Performance Officer
M. Bartlett	-	Finance Manager
H. Ilett	-	Scrutiny Manager
N. Perry	-	Democratic Services Officer
P. Harris	-	Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor D.L Edwards.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests made by Members.

3. PERFORMANCE REPORT: 2014/15 IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOME AGREEMENT

Context:

Members scrutinised a report from the Policy and Performance Officer in order to receive end of year data for the Improvement Objective and Outcome Agreement objectives under the remit of Economy and Development Select Committee.

Key Issues:

Improvement Objectives were set annually by the Council to deliver on priorities. Despite objectives being focused on the long term the specific activities that support them were particularly focussed for the year ahead.

The Outcome Agreement is an agreement with the Welsh Government for a three year period, where the council needs to deliver on performance activity and associated targets that contribute to the Wales Programme for Government. The current agreement covers the period from 2013-2016. The Council would be awarded funding each year from the Welsh Government based on the performance achieved.

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Member Scrutiny:

The committee were informed that future outcome agreements were negotiated, at regular meetings held, with Welsh Government. The committee requested that the Corporate Champion could be identified, we confirmed that this information would be provided to members **(ACTION: R.J.)**

Members raised concerns that there had been a lack of information regarding the Whole Place approach for Lower Wye and Central Monmouthshire areas. In response the officer explained that Whole Place had been established in the Bryn Y Cwm and Severnside areas, a framework was in place in for future rollout across the other areas. Members expressed their disappointment that the Chief Officer was not in attendance.

In order to clarify concerns raised regarding the vote against the Business Improvement District proceeding in Abergavenny and whether new targets to maintain viability of business in Abergavenny were in place. Members were informed that the report provided correct information for the 2014/15 plan and a new plan had been set for 2015/17, where future activity would be reflected as appropriate.

Further information was requested regarding Section 106 funds that had been allocated to Caldicot Town Team. The Cabinet Member explained there was a need to engage people who would help deliver services, but also a need to ensure the correct governance in place. **(ACTION M.H.)**

In response to a Member's question we heard that the high percentage of approved planning applications was deemed positive as it highlighted the impact of the pre-application process.

We agreed that an item be referred to the next Democratic Services committee meeting, *'With regards to people who felt they influenced decisions affecting local areas, performance indicators from the National Survey for Wales had decreased to 21%, ranking Monmouthshire County Council as 9th amongst local authorities. Services needed to understand where improvements should be made'*. **(ACTION N.P.)**

A Member requested clarification on the number of new jobs created where assistance had been provided by Monmouthshire Business and Enterprise and Partners. It was queried if the figure reflected the number of job losses. The Cabinet Member explained that collecting data from small business could prove difficult and was therefore challenging to provide an accurate forecast.

A member requested that, in future, information regarding new businesses encouraged into Monmouthshire should be made available. The Officer commented that these figures were available in Annex A of the Officer's report.

Report Recommendations:

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That members scrutinise the performance achieved and impact made to access progress and performance against the objectives.

That members identify and explore any areas of underperformance or concerns, and to seek assurance from those responsible for future activity where they conclude that performance needs to improve.

That members confirm the evaluation scores based on the evidence provided.

That members scrutinise the targets and any revisions for the Key Performance Indicators that fall within the remit of the Select Committee.

Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

The committee acknowledged that the following items had been addressed accordingly:

- Implementation of Whole Place throughout the County.
- To receive up to date information regarding Business Improvement District.
- Benefits coming forward from Caldicot Town Team.
- Performance Indicators relating to local residents influencing decisions to be addressed at Democratic Services Committee.
- Clarification of net figure of job creation figures.
- Encouragement of new businesses into the area, and to look at Monmouthshire enterprise strategy in further detail.

The Committee resolved to note the report.

4. MONMOUTHSHIRE EVENT STRATEGY

Context:

Members received a report from the Enterprise Co-ordinator providing further information on Monmouthshire's Event strategy and to request approval for temporary reserve funding of £100,000 to compensate for upfront costs associated with securing and facilitating events. The budget would support the delivery of major events in the County with a view to increasing income generating opportunities.

Key Issues:

The strategy demonstrated the Council's recognition of the significant role that major events can play, not only in generating income for the County but in also generating

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greater impact, when working with communities to help facilitate and improve the coordination of localised events.

The need for an events framework had been recognised and would put in place the internal mechanisms required to enable the team to be efficient and effective.

The Monmouthshire events team recognised that in order to secure big name artists/events that would generate high return, a working capital reserve budget of £100,000 was required which would be called upon to provide up front funding to ensure that team can act quickly to avoid lost opportunities.

Member Scrutiny:

Clarification was required in relation to the volunteer timesheets and payments. It was explained that for each task allocated to a volunteer, an hourly rate would be allocated in order to determine the value of volunteers.

Concerns were raised regarding a cycling event taking place on the 9th August 2015. A local member stressed that the event had not been appropriately publicised to residents and there were significant issues for people who needed healthcare assistance on the day. In response, officers explained that priority was given to residents directly impacted by road closures, communication strategy was in place which included, leaflets being distributed, highway signs and information publicised through social media, a dedicated number had been circulated to all members so that the events team could be contacted.

Further clarification was requested regarding an information request, following profits of an event held in 2014 and confirmation of how much would be donated to a specific charity. We were informed that the officer would provide a direct response to the query.

The events officers had a cost centre code in place and all future spends would be allocated to the account. We resolved that figures for events were reported back to the committee twice a year. **(ACTION D.D.)**

The committee requested explanation regarding projected figures in the Typical Finance Model and in response, we were advised that these figures were based on a model and each event would be considered on its own budget requirements.

A member praised the events team for all their efforts and understood the need for the £100,000.00 fund as this would allow them to make deals quickly, securing events.

The Head of Tourism, Leisure and Culture confirmed that a new Events strategy would be put in place, going forward to 2020, to build on what had previously been achieved. Return on investment was highlighted as a priority for the team, alongside events being supported by Council, which was key. It was anticipated that temporary staff would be retained, in order to maximise limited resources available to the team.

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Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

The committee acknowledged that the following items had been addressed accordingly:

- The clarification that the £15 p.h. mentioned in regard to volunteers was the return in value to us.
- That attention to detail with events was crucial with events to inspire confidence.
- Need for strong communication with local community – do we have sufficient resources?
- Financial feedback – where is that being reported back to, reassured that a cost code specific to events team had now been set up.
- Importance of bring the public with you, but highlighted the importance of figures.
- The cost of events, figures looked understated. The potential of an overarching Events Committee.
- To ensure Monmouth was included in any future events hosting.
- Support for the Events team and the £100,000.00 fund.

Actions Agreed:

- Members accepted recommendations as a whole and were unanimous in their support.

5. PERFORMANCE REPORT: RETURN OF INVESTMENT OF CYCLING EVENTS

Context:

Members scrutinised a report from the Strategic Food and Tourism Manager summarising the wide ranging benefits of delivering the 2014 National Road Cycling Championship (NRCCs) and the 2014 Friends of Life Tour of Britain (ToB) focusing on the economic and social benefits of these events under the remit of Economy and Development Select Committee.

Key Issues:

The events provided an opportunity to celebrate success and gather information regarding the cycling events in partnership with British Cycling, Welsh Cycling and the

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Tour of Britain. The events brought together collective skills and resources of a variety of services, departments, other organisations, partners and the community and the collective effort of this activity should be recorded

The cycling events gave many opportunities for marketing, business and tourism and the impact at the time of the events was considerable in terms of spectators, volunteers and community engagement. Some key drivers were that they encourage growth and economic opportunities in tourism, business and enterprise and are an important tool in building resilience and community spirit and also showcased the beautiful countryside.

Measuring economic effects of tourism activity is extremely complex these are only estimates and care should be taken in making direct comparisons between the two different economic impact figures.

The two sets of results were based on surveys undertaken by different companies at a different scale and cost, and were based on different methodologies with different sets of assumptions. The survey for the NRCC was undertaken on a much smaller scale and lower cost with just 213 visitors completing the face to face cycling visitor survey over the four days of the National Cycling Championships, whilst the Frontline study for the ToB was based on a much larger sample (2,461) of spectators completing a web-based survey

Member Scrutiny:

Following a query regarding which areas of the County were surveyed, the officer advised that many lessons had been learnt through the exercise and that a representational sample from the whole route was required, if face to face surveys had taken place.

We commended the events, but recognised that food and drink was a main attraction for the county. Members highlighted the importance of maximising on this asset and generating increased benefit for businesses within the community (e.g. local business stalls at events). In response, the officer advised that the team was working with local businesses and work was being done in this area. We were informed that food and drink was the largest expenditure for day visitors, however, in order for increased tourism to be generated and for bigger return on investment there was a need to encourage people to stay overnight.

The committee were encouraged to hear that local businesses welcomed the opportunity of advertising during events, which were often televised and repeated.

We requested that attractions in Monmouth was added to the information presented.

A member raised a query regarding comparable data for cycling events, we were informed that data was available from areas impacted by the recent 'Tour of Britain' and a national road race in Lincoln.

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Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

The committee acknowledged that the following items had been addressed accordingly:

- The need for a more representational sample to be taken; including Usk and Monmouth.
- Need to take advantage of the presence of visitors in towns.
- Repeated visibility for Monmouthshire, capitalising on that with advertising.
- Developing a methodology for future events.

The Committee agreed that the report had been reviewed and they look forward to hearing the Events Team return to committee with updated data and new methodology.

6. PERIOD 1 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN FORECAST STATEMENT 2015-16

Context:

Members were presented a report from the Finance Manager to advise the position of the Authority at the end of period 1 (representing 2 months financial information). The report was to be considered to assess whether effective budget monitor is taking place, monitor the extent to which budgets and being spent, challenge the reasonableness of projected over or underspend and monitor the achievement of predicted efficiency gain or progress under the remit of Economy and Development Select Committee.

Key Issues:

The report shows that the first period of revenue monitoring in 2015/16 £252,000 deficit and seek assurance of the action of Chief Officers are taking to address over spends.

A caveated use of the reserves for redundancy costs totalling £13,000. Services will continue to find compensatory savings additional to the mandates to mitigate the net cost pressure by the end of the financial year.

Period 1 capital monitoring with a revised budget of £58.406 million for the 2015/16 financial year.

Member Scrutiny:

The committee welcomed that feedback would be received from directorates on how savings were to be achieved. We were advised that mandated saving were running at

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83% across all directorates with a large proportion falling under the Enterprise directorate.

We recognised that a new approach had been introduced that all 2015/16 mandates would be verified thoroughly with finance managers, to ensure that all relevant information was considered and this was welcomed.

Members expressed dissatisfaction that a senior officer had not attended the meeting to address questions that related to specific service area budgets. We requested that a Cabinet Member or Senior Officer attended during budget discussions, so that all necessary questions could be addressed.

Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

- Difficult to pursue further as relevant officers not at meeting.
- Issues with mandated savings that were proposed and their achievability.

The Chair stated that they would send a letter to the Chief Officer and Member of Cabinet requesting that in future one of them would be present for the finance agenda item and performance indicators.

7. Work Programming

i) Economy & Development Select Work Programme for 2015/16

We noted items on the future work programme as follows:

Meeting 3rd September 2015

- Cultural Services Review ~ Pre-decision scrutiny
- Tourism and planning ~ Policy review
- Chief Officer Annual Performance Report

Meeting 15th October 2015

- Community Infrastructure Levy ~ Performance update
- S106 Update ~ Policy Development
- Investment Property ~ Pre-decision scrutiny

Meeting 4th November 2015

- Budget

Meeting 26th November 2015

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- TBC

The Scrutiny Manager advised items on the work programme were subject to change.

ii) Cabinet & Council forward Work Planner

We received and noted the Cabinet and Council forward work plan.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the next Economy and Development Select Committee Meeting would be held on Thursday 3rd September 2015 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 12.20pm