

# MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## EXTRACT of Minutes of the Special meeting of Strong Communities Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Monday, 12th October, 2015 at 10.00 am

**PRESENT:** County Councillors: S. Howarth, D. Dovey, A. Easson and K. Williams

### OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Will McLean	Head of Policy & Engagement
Deb Hill-Howells	Head of Community Led Delivery
Debbie McCarty	Whole Place Manager
Andrew Mason	Project Officer ASB
Sharran Lloyd	LSB Development Manager
Kellie Beirne	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Mark Hand	Head of Planning
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Paula Harris	Democratic Services Officer

#### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Webb, White and Jones.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

None received.

#### 6. To consider a call-in in relation to the individual Cabinet Member Decision dated 23rd September 2015 'Employ consultant to undertake protected species surveys for Troy House'. The following papers are attached for Members consideration:

We received a call in request in respect of the decision taken by Cabinet on 23rd September 2015 regarding the employment of a consultant to undertake protected species surveys for Troy House as follows:

- To seek cabinet member approval to engage a consultant to undertake protected species surveys for Troy House, Mitchel Troy, at a cost of £9,665. The costs of the proposal are met fully by existing budgets.

The reasons for the call in were noted, as follows:

- The improper use of public money. Poor value for taxpayers, paying for a private individual to then develop the land.

The Chairman invited the members who had called in the Cabinet decision to make comments and ask questions in respect of the decision and the following points were noted:

- Members who had called in the Cabinet decision were concerned that the application dated back to 2009 when Monmouthshire County Council were in a

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more prosperous position. In the current climate of austerity, with 35% of the discretionary budget being cut, it was felt that the Council were not in a position to meet these costs.

- There were concerns that the money would be better spent elsewhere.
- The Members believed that development needed to take place, but felt the budget was not fully stretched as the Accountant had advised the costs could be met from the current budget.

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member to address the Select Committee and the Members who had called in the Cabinet decision to outline the reasons for agreeing to cover the cost of the survey. Members were informed of the following:

- Under NERC Act 2006 there are certain types of development where survey information has to be received in advance.
- The Planning and Conservation teams are keen to preserve the building.
- Troy House is a 17<sup>th</sup> Century building which has had several uses over the years. The Grade 2 style listing recognises especially important buildings, Troy House is listed as an exceptionally fine County House with notable features in the interior.
- The report notes the ecological survey is required as part of any planning application to restore Troy House through the enabling development, enabling because the commercial work will fund the restorative work.
- The Council could take steps to Compulsory Purchase, but legal costs and undertaking specialist repair work would be dramatically more than the £9,665 for the survey, which would have to take place.

The Chairman invited Officers to address the Select Committee and the Members who had called in the Cabinet decision to outline the reasons for agreeing to cover the cost of the survey. Members were informed of the following:

- Protected species surveys have to take place in advance and cannot be conditioned.
- The case with listed buildings means the development is an enabling development, which means the amount of new development will have to be the absolute minimum required to fund the restoration of the listed building.
- The application had been with the Council since 2008, the building is deteriorating, and if work does not progress soon the Council could step in with enforcement action.
- The Welsh Government have recently increased planning application fees by 15% (with this money to be kept in the planning service) from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015, this would help meet this cost.

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- There will be zero 106 monies generated,

The Chairman informed Select Committee Members that in terms of the call in procedure, three options were available:

1. Accept the Cabinet's Decision.
2. Refer the matter back to Cabinet for re-consideration (with reasons).
3. Refer the matter to Council for consideration.

It was therefore proposed by County Councillor D. Dovey and seconded by County Councillor S. Howarth to refer the matter back to Cabinet for re-consideration as the reasons within the Cabinet Log did not adequately explain why the Council should pay the fee for the private developer.

Upon being put to the vote the following votes were recorded:

For the proposal	-	4
Against the proposal	-	0
Abstentions	-	0

The proposition was carried.

We resolved to refer the matter back to Cabinet for re-consideration as the reasons within the Cabinet Log did not adequately explain why the Council should pay the fee for the private developer.

**The meeting ended at 1.41 pm**