

**NOTES OF INQUORATE Lower Wye Area Committee held at
The Meeting Rooms, St Arvans
on Wednesday 29th April 2015 at 10:00am**

PRESENT: County Councillor: A. Webb (Chairman)

County Councillors: G.L. Down.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr P. Davies	-	Head of Commercial and People Development
Mrs. C. Fallon	-	Head of Economy and Enterprise
Mrs S. King	-	Senior Democratic Services Officer

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms M. Davies	-	St Arvans Community Council
Mrs B. Moore	-	Shirenewton Community Council
Mrs S. Squire	-	Local resident
Mr N. Vincent	-	Local resident

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors D. Batrouni, D. Dovey, P. Farley, P.A.D. Hobson and P. Murphy.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chairman welcomed members of the public to the meeting and we noted the following questions:

a) Mr and Mrs Vincent, Local Residents, addressed the committee:

- Issues of concern had been raised at a previous meeting, which related to dangerous speed limits on the B4235 and it was requested that action could be taken by the committee.

In response:

- We welcomed detailed information that had been contained within emails sent by the residents.
- We discussed information that had been collected following speed surveys and noted that Gwent Police had responded to issues.

**NOTES OF INQUORATE Lower Wye Area Committee held at
The Meeting Rooms, St Arvans
on Wednesday 29th April 2015 at 10:00am**

- The issue would be considered by members of the Lower Wye Area Committee.

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

We noted that as the Lower Wye Area Committee meeting was inquorate the minutes would be confirmed at the next meeting.

Members requested clarification regarding the availability of £5k Capital Monies.

5. UPDATE – BROADBAND PROVISION

We welcomed the Head of Commercial and People Development and were advised that the portfolio incorporated ICT, Digital, Technology, Economic Development and broadband as well as HR.

We welcomed the Head of Economy and Enterprise, responsible for enterprise growth and enterprise strategy, assisting in business growth and introducing new businesses and developing entrepreneurs with schools.

Various Broadband initiatives were in place, which included Super Connected Cities programme. Funding has been extended to include the whole of Monmouthshire, to enable businesses to be connected to superfast broadband through a voucher initiative of up to £3,000 .

There had been some connection issues within Monmouthshire, due to network access and civil works in infrastructures being developed. Officers had liaised with BT and AB internet and data mapping had been used to identify specific issues.

The current position was roll out process in getting people connected and once the infrastructure was in place there was a need to maximise benefit. Additional resource would be considered to ensure provision was maximised and supper connected cities voucher system was promoted.

A variety of schemes were being considered and discussed, which included community internet element e.g. free public WIFI provided on Grass Routes buses. There was a need for information, opportunities and initiatives to be promoted and for awareness to be increased, there was focus on businesses but the aim was to reach communities who needed to know when infrastructure would be in place and updated information was available.

There was a need to ensure that education was offered to those with internet access who did not know how to use it and also to ensure that those who did not use the internet were not left behind.

**NOTES OF INQUORATE Lower Wye Area Committee held at
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on Wednesday 29th April 2015 at 10:00am**

The Superfast Cymru contract had been awarded to BT, who had a contractual obligation to roll out and deliver to 90% across the whole of Wales. Milestone expected date for targets was identified as June 2016, issues would be discussed between Welsh Government and BT regarding the exchange infrastructure and connection cabinets.

A report was commissioned by Disconnected Wales, which looked at the cabinet exchange infrastructure. Significant gaps had been identified and some areas remained below the superfast speeds. There were options in place to address the shortfall and technologies could be introduced to ensure that appropriate speeds were provided.

Officers were keeping in close communication with BT and Welsh Government, progress was being monitored.

During discussion we noted the following:

- We recognised the complexity of issues and schemes available. It was suggested that communication through Welsh Government with other parties should be increased.
- Members requested specific information regarding particular wards and these issues would be progressed by officers, through BT.
- We reemphasised the importance of appropriate broadband being provided for all businesses and residents within the community.
- The provision of broadband would assist in building communities and help businesses to become established.
- The DCMS programme had been established and areas would be identified which had no mobile coverage in the UK, technology would be developed which would assist these areas, which included Grosmont, Trellech and Devauden.
- Issues were being discussed at Welsh Government level and with major network providers, so that provision of broadband and mobile could be improved.
- We were informed that websites were available which would advise customers of the most appropriate networks for their areas. However, we noted that issues were being discussed at a strategic level and needed to be progressed with Whitehall.
- A report was considered by Cabinet in March 2015 and resource investment would allow digital presence to be created. It was suggested that a leaflet could be produced which would provide further advice.
- We were reminded that the Superfast Cymru scheme could be used in the interim.

We thanked the officers for attending and presenting information.

6. CONSERVATION IN LOWER WYE

The Chairman advised that Officers had apologised as they were unable to attend the meeting.

**NOTES OF INQUORATE Lower Wye Area Committee held at
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on Wednesday 29th April 2015 at 10:00am**

The item would be added to a future agenda.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

We received and noted the Lower Wye area committee work programme.

8. TIMING OF MEETINGS AND DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

We agreed the date of the next Lower Wye Area committee meeting at Wednesday 17th June 2015 at 10.00am.

The meeting closed at 11:10 am.