

SUBJECT: SIGNING UP TO THE PLACEMAKING WALES CHARTER
MEETING: CABINET
DATE: 15th SEPTEMBER 2021
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's endorsement of the proposal that Monmouthshire County Council becomes a signatory to the Placemaking Wales Charter.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees that Monmouthshire County Council becomes a signatory to the Placemaking Wales Charter.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

- 3.1 Placemaking is the proactive and collaborative process of creating and managing places. *Future Wales: the National Plan 2040* and national planning policy identify placemaking as being essential to the delivery of sustainable development and achieving improvements in the well-being of communities (Planning Policy Wales edition 11 para 2.10). The Welsh Government's document *Building Back Better* (July 2020) identifies the importance of placemaking to Covid-19 pandemic recovery:

"The Covid-19 Pandemic and our collective response to the issues it raises, is one of the most complicated challenges in a generation. We have all had to do things differently, think more about our actions, and act carefully and sensitively to those around us...Now, more than ever, we need to think about places and placemaking. This will be our core value in the work we take forward to bring about recovery in Wales. The regenerative action we take at all levels will be driven by integrated thinking and not short-term expedience which can have negative longer term consequences."

(Building Back Better, July 2020 page 2 - foreword by Julie James MS)

- 3.2 However, placemaking relates to far more than just the Council's land use planning service, and in fact relates to multiple service areas across the breadth of local government that contribute to the creation and management of places. It is for this reason that Cabinet is being asked to consider signing up to the Placemaking Wales Charter as a whole organisation, rather than just as a Local Planning Authority. To date, Swansea City Council and Newport City Council (via its PSB) are the only other Local Authorities that have signed up to the Charter on an organisation-wide basis. Other signatories include:

- Pobl;
- Sustrans;
- Transport for Wales;
- WLGA;
- the Royal Town Planning Institute;
- the Royal Society of Architects in Wales;
- the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors;
- the Institute of Civil Engineers;
- the Home Builders Federation;

- the Federation of Master Builders;
- Cardiff and Vale Health Board;
- Cardiff University;
- the Chartered Institute of Housing;
- the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation; and
- all Welsh Local Planning Authorities via the Planning Officers' Society for Wales.

4. The Placemaking Charter

4.1 The Placemaking Wales Charter has been developed by Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales in collaboration with the Placemaking Wales Partnership: a multi-disciplinary group representing professions and organisations working within the built and natural environment. The Charter builds on the strengthening focus on placemaking in policy and practice in Wales and aims to provide a common understanding of the range of considerations that go into placemaking. The charter outlines six placemaking principles that cover the range of considerations that contribute to establishing and maintaining good places. A link to the charter is provided as Appendix 1.

4.2 Placemaking Wales Charter signatories agree to promote the following principles in the planning, design and management of new and existing places:

People and Community – The local community are involved in the development of proposals. The needs, aspirations, health and well-being of all people are considered at the outset. Proposals are shaped to help to meet these needs as well as create, integrate, protect and/or enhance a sense of community and promote equality.

Location – Places grow and develop in a way that uses land efficiently, supports and enhances existing places and is well connected. The location of housing, employment leisure and other facilities are planned to help reduce the need to travel.

Movement – Walking, cycling and public transport are prioritised to provide a choice of transport modes and avoid dependence on private vehicles. Well designed and safe active travel routes connect to the wider active travel and public transport network, and public transport stations and stops are positively integrated.

Mix of Uses – Places have a range of purposes which provide opportunities for community development, local business growth and access to jobs, services and facilities via walking, cycling or public transport. Development density and a mix of uses and tenures helps to support a diverse community and vibrant public realm.

Public Realm – Streets and public spaces are well defined, welcoming, safe and inclusive with a distinct identity. They are designed to be robust and adaptable with landscape, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage well integrated. They are well connected to existing places and promote opportunities for social interaction and a range of activities for all people.

Identity – The positive, distinctive qualities of existing places are valued and respected. The unique features and opportunities of a location, including heritage, culture, language, built and natural physical attributes, are identified and responded to.

5 Placemaking in Monmouthshire

5.1 As a signatory to the Placemaking Charter, Monmouthshire County Council would be pledging to support placemaking in all relevant areas of our work and promote the six placemaking principles in the planning, design and management of new and existing places. The spirit of the partnership of one of mutual support, encouragement, and positive action. Its multi-disciplinary approach aligns well with the Council's collaborative approach and teamwork to ensure the delivery of sustainable development.

5.2 Signatories are expected to promote and uphold the principles of the charter in all of their work: -

- Involve the local community in the development of proposals
- Choose sustainable locations for new development
- Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport
- Create inclusive, well defined, safe and welcoming streets and public spaces
- Promote a sustainable mix of uses to make places vibrant
- Value and respect the positive distinctive qualities and identity of existing places

5.3 These pledges closely align to the Council's core purpose of helping to build sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations. It also aligns with the Council's values of teamwork openness, fairness and flexibility, and the embedded practice of services working together to achieve the best outcomes. Becoming a signatory of the Placemaking Wales Charter will complement and endorse the Council's commitment to wellbeing and sustainable development.

5.4 The Council is already working on a number of projects that embrace placemaking and the principles set out in the Charter. These include:

- Establishing the new Regional Public Services Board and work on the existing Local Wellbeing Plan;
- Declaration of a Climate Emergency;
- The Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP), which will allocate land for development, designate areas for protection and outline a planning policy framework for planning decisions up to 2033;
- Partnership working to deliver projects such as the dementia-friendly development at Crick Road, Portskewett and associated care home, the 21st Century schools at Caldicot and Monmouth and the current work on the replacement of King Henry VIII school, Abergavenny;
- The Council's award-winning Green Infrastructure planning guidance developed by MonLife;
- The re-energised delivery of Active Travel improvements by MonLife and the Highways service;
- The regeneration masterplan for Caldicot Town Centre, which is identified within the Placemaking Wales Charter as a key case study. The Charter recognises the cross-cutting work of the design team to turn The Cross from a space into a place. The project creates a civilised street that is more accessible for pedestrians and cyclists, improved public transport infrastructure and enhancements to stimulate economic and social activities, incorporates green infrastructure for ecological resilience and people's wellbeing and enhances tourism opportunities.

5.5 It is evident that the principles of the Placemaking Charter Wales are aligned with the Council's core purpose and values, and that the Charter is complementary to the focus on outcomes and positive sustainable development that enhances communities. Placemaking is going to be key to ensuring that our communities thrive in a post-pandemic world and that our town centres and settlements have well-designed and well-maintained built and natural environments. Becoming a signatory to the Placemaking Charter therefore provides an opportunity for the Council to confirm its commitment to delivering quality places and recognising the key role that this plays in enhancing the health and well-being of its communities and residents for the long-term future.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 It is recognised within the Placemaking Wales Charter that a placemaking approach should be fully aligned with the goals and ways of working of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015. The proposals to become a signatory of the charter is in accordance with the wellbeing goals and the sustainable development principles. An Equality and Future Generations Evaluation (including equalities and sustainability impact assessment) is attached to this report at **Appendix 2**.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Monmouthshire County Council becomes a signatory to the Placemaking Wales Charter

Option	Benefit	Risk	Comment
Monmouthshire County Council becomes a signatory to the Placemaking Wales Charter	The Council confirms its commitment to delivering and maintaining quality places and recognises the key role that this plays in enhancing the health and well-being of its communities and residents for the long-term future.	Potential additional development costs associated with ensuring placemaking objectives are met in development proposals and in future maintenance. It should be noted that the Charter outlines that true placemaking should not result in additional cost implications.	The Placemaking Wales Charter seeks to deliver the Council's core purpose to build sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generation and signing the charter reaffirms the Council's commitment to delivering this purpose. This is the preferred option.
Do not become a signatory to the Placemaking Wales Charter		If Monmouthshire is not a signatory of the Charter there is a risk that its commitment to placemaking is questioned.	Many aspects of the Charter are covered by other legislative or policy requirements, for example the Wellbeing of Future generations Act, the Socio-Economic Duty, national planning policy, the Active Travel Act, the biodiversity enhancement duty, so in reality should happen anyway. However, it would be a positive step to show commitment by signing up to the Charter.

6. RESOURCE AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Compliance with the Placemaking agenda, and being a signatory to the Charter, requires that the Council ensures proposals, including its own schemes, are elevated above 'placeless' and/or low quality developments. This inevitably requires an appropriate level of time investment (for example in community engagement and multidisciplinary officer meetings) and financial commitment (for example to ensure quality public realm works and future maintenance). Notwithstanding this, provided that placemaking is addressed in a comprehensive manner at a suitably early stage, following the principles set out in the Charter will not necessitate any increase in costs being incurred by the Council on its projects. Importantly, good placemaking is far more than specifying expensive materials or reducing the scale or scope of development. In many instances, adhering to the principles of the Charter can be suitably addressed using 'everyday' materials, utilised in a careful and creative manner.

- 6.2 The Council in any event sets itself high standards in this regard, and has emphasised its commitment to advancing its schemes in compliance with requirements set by national policy and legislation. The Welsh Government's 'Future Wales 2040' provides the national statutory development plan and contains a specific policy requiring the public sector to show leadership and apply placemaking principles to support growth and regeneration for the benefit of communities. It states under Policy 2: "*The public sector must lead by example and apply placemaking principles to create exemplar developments. In particular, (it) must prioritise design quality, innovation and sustainability.*"
- 6.3 Any costs associated with embedding placemaking principles into decision making will be met within existing service area budgets and potentially using additional capital funding from grants. There could be additional revenue budget pressures to maintain a high quality public realm.

7. CONSULTEES

- Enterprise DMT
- SLT
- MCC colleagues via the Digital Cwtch Friday 20th August 2021

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Future Wales 2040: The National Plan \(Feb, 2021\)](#)
- [Planning Policy Wales \(Edition 11, Feb 2021\)](#)
- [Building Better Places : The planning system delivering resilient and brighter futures \(July 2020\)](#)
- [Placemaking Guide 2020 Design Commission for Wales \(Appendix 1\)](#)

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APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: [Placemaking Guide 2020 Design Commission for Wales](#)

APPENDIX 2: Future Generations Evaluation