

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA and remote attendance on Tuesday, 3rd January, 2023 at 10.30 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Sue Riley (Chair)

County Councillors: Rachel Buckler, John Crook, David Jones, Jayne McKenna, Maureen Powell, Jackie Strong, Simon Howarth, Richard John, Frances Taylor, Tudor Thomas, Laura Wright, Sara Burch, Mary Ann Brocklesby, Tony Easson, Catherine Fookes, Penny Jones, Jane Lucas, Angela Sandles, Ann Webb, Tony Kear and Jan Butler

Public: George Harold Millman, Sarah Griffiths, Owen Lewis, Sara Chicken, Angela Trett, Karen Webb, Chris Edmondson, Sue Hughes.

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Peter Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer, Resources
Matthew Gatehouse, Head of Policy and Governance
Paul Matthews, Chief Executive
Frances O'Brien, Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Matt Phillips, Chief Officer People and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Nicholas Keyse, Estates Development Manager
Craig O'Connor, Head of Planning

APOLOGIES: Councillors Christopher Edwards

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Chair's Introduction

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly the members of the public who had attended to take part in the Public Open Forum. She asked the Scrutiny Manager to briefly explain the call-in process that would be followed at the meeting.

The Context for the Call-in:

The meeting had been scheduled to debate a decision that had been made but had not taken effect. On 30th November, a decision had been made to decommission the property on Tudor Street as an accommodation base for day support services for adults with learning disabilities in the north of Monmouthshire. The decision had not affected the ongoing provision of the service that had been operating throughout the pandemic. The strategic direction for learning disability services had been in place since 2014, seeking to support people with a learning disability to pursue their individual interests and aspirations within community settings. This had led to a reduction in the number of people accessing Tudor Street Day Centre and a gradual reduction in opening hours before it closed temporarily in 2020. A wider review of the service was underway, and it

had been determined that the building on Tudor Street was no longer fit for purpose and could be sold.

The decision had been called in to be scrutinised by the People Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Council's Constitution the reasons given being:

- "There has been no scrutiny and it was not included on the planner".
- "The building is situated on a flood plain".
- "There has been no consultation with users/groups. The facility is vital for the users/groups, and they have severe special needs".

The Chair explained that the Committee would hear from members of the public before beginning the Call-in Process. Whilst the scrutiny process usually allowed for a 15-minute Public Open Forum, given the significant interest in speaking at the meeting, the Chair advised that the Public Open Forum would be extended to enable anyone who had notified the Council of their wish to speak in advance of the meeting to be able to do so.

3. Public Open Forum

The recording of the meeting is publicly available and provides the individual views expressed by the public at the meeting. In addition, a detailed report would be prepared following the scrutiny meeting to provide a full account of the substantial public contributions to the meeting, to be tabled to Council on 19th January 2023, [Report of the Chair of People Scrutiny Committee Call-in of Tudor Day Centre Decision.pdf \(monmouthshire.gov.uk\)](#) . The following are views expressed by members of the public. The minutes cannot comment on the accuracy of any of the statements, which have been summarised under headings for reference.

What People suggested Tudor Street Day Centre offered them

- People stated that Tudor Street Day Centre offered a central, safe, warm environment for vulnerable people with learning disabilities to socialise with friends and undertake a range of activities. People spoke of how Tudor Street Day Centre meant much more than a physical building to them – it acted as a hub, a place to go to for people from all walks of life to build their confidence, to learn life skills and to achieve qualifications. Members heard that the Tudor Street Day Centre was felt to be a place where lasting meaningful friendships were formed between service users and the wider community, who attended their fundraising events. It also provided respite for carers from 24/7 caring responsibilities.
- People told the scrutiny committee that the central location of Tudor Street Day Centre in Abergavenny town was easily accessible to them and that it had the appropriate facilities, such as a changing bed and disabled toilet facilities that suited many people with learning disabilities, but not those with profound complex needs. Some people told the committee that their relatives couldn't use the centre because it didn't cater for the needs of people with severe disabilities, particularly those who needed hydrotherapy, tracking hoists and sensory spaces,

which are provided in purpose-built facilities, such as the facility located in Cwmbran.

- People spoke about how 'My Day My Life', whilst operating at the Tudor Street Day Centre prior to the pandemic had enabled people to make personal plans and choose what activities they would like to do within their day. People highlighted the importance to them of having the choice of day services and/or being in the community, explaining that community-based activities alone didn't support the building of friendships in the same way. They advised they simply wanted to see their friends in a safe, warm environment that had the appropriate facilities for their needs.

How People reported feeling about the Day Centre's closure

- Some people commented on how they felt they had lost the opportunity to participate in activities they previously undertook, in which they were able to gain valuable life skills and qualifications due to the closure of the centre. A carer told members that activities in the community provided little stimulation for people with learning disabilities and that the closure of the centre had negatively affected their own mental health. One person explained how since the closure, they rarely met with friends, unless there was a My Mates function, which take place infrequently. Some people reported that the closure of the centre had increased their isolation and loneliness.
- One of the reasons explained to the scrutiny committee as to why people with severe disabilities struggle to access activities based in the community are that the toilet facilities in cafes and shops are inappropriate. It was suggested that greater thought needed to be given to people's needs.
- One person suggested that Mardy Park (as an alternative centre) provided a different service offer and was difficult to access. People told members that the permanent closure of Tudor Street Day Centre would "significantly negatively affect service users, carers and support staff".

What the contributors to the Public Open Forum advised service users need

- A person suggested that there was a lack of day centre provision in the north of the county and that the Council needed to give greater thought to its decision and to consider how services could be improved, involving service users in shaping the offer. A person suggested the decision had been based upon cost and that it shouldn't have been taken ahead of the conclusion of an overall review of services. They highlighted that the consultation process had provided no detail as to what alternative provision may be offered in place of what was being withdrawn.
- Whilst the remit of Tudor Street Day Centre was not to provide services for people suffering mental health issues and people weren't being signposted to the centre for mental health support, one person suggested that the centre was attended by people suffering mental health issues, as well as people with

learning disabilities and that attending the centre helped to reduce their isolation and build their confidence.

- People spoke of the need for dedicated facilities and a central base that could be extended to the wider community, to provide an opportunity for people to come together, share experiences, learn and make friendships.
- In terms of people with learning disabilities being able to pay for personal assistants and carers instead of accessing day services, a person highlighted that personal budgets were intended to give people choice, not to replace services. Some people felt that the closure of Tudor Street Day Centre was the withdrawal of a service, despite the continuation of the 'My Day My Life' model in a different way. One person explained how people who need one to one support are unable to access many of the 'My Mates' activities, that tended to include trips to restaurants, the cinema or pop concerts. It was suggested that these are too expensive for most people to attend on a regular basis and tend to be mainly in the evening, which wouldn't suit some people.
- Another member of the public spoke of the lack of community-based opportunities in Monmouthshire, particularly in Abergavenny, for people with very complex needs, who cannot be accommodated at cafes or places in the community. One person confirmed that for people with profound complex needs, Tudor Street Day Centre wasn't suitable and highlighted the lack of in-county respite provision for people with complex needs. People spoke about the need for support for young people leaving special education needs and transitioning into the adult world, which is a particularly difficult transition.

Wider issues raised by the public

- There was a suggestion that the decision prioritised the needs of one vulnerable group of people (homeless people) over the needs of another (people with learning disabilities). It was suggested that the intention to progress the planning application to avoid legislative changes relating to flooding was not in line with the philosophy of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, nor its aim to 'involve people in decision-making as equal partners'. There was a suggestion that there was a need for online engagement about the decision.
- Concerns were raised about the consultation process and whether the letter to service users as part of the official consultation process was written in the spirit of the Equalities Act 2010 with regard to accessibility. It was suggested that there was a lack of online engagement about the decision, working against the sense of open and transparent dialogue.

The chair thanked the public for their participation, advising that the public contributions had been welcomed and appreciated by the committee. She advised that the Committee would begin debating the matter.

4. Call-In: Tudor Street Property

The Chair asked the members who had called in the decision to present their reasons for calling in the decision, as stated previously.

Key points raised by the 'Call-in Members'

Members who had called in the decision raised their concerns relating to the lack of pre-decision scrutiny. They questioned the quality and robustness of the integrated impact assessment, and they expressed their concern about the thoroughness of the consultation process undertaken with service users.

The Chair asked the Committee for questions and views.

Key points raised by the Committee Members

Members spoke at length on their views on the matter but highlighted that Tudor Street Day Centre wasn't viewed by the public as just a building or a facility, but as a community, a community that people felt was being taken away from them. A committee member highlighted how day centres provide much more than a building and stated that the needs of people are far more important than the achieving of housing targets or the realising of a financial gain.

The Chair advised that she would sum up the formal outcome of the Call-in meeting.

Chair's Conclusion:

- Relating to the specific matters raised in the calling-in of the decision, it was accepted that the decision should have been scrutinised in advance, with an explanation given as to why the decision had not featured on the Cabinet and Council Forward Planner that the committee had received at its previous meeting.
- It was also confirmed that the building was not located on a flood plain.
- It was furthermore accepted that there hadn't been effective consultation on the decision to close the Tudor Street Day Centre.

The Chair advised the Committee that they had three options available to them, which were:

- 1) To accept the decision
- 2) To refer the decision to the Cabinet Member for reconsideration (with reasons)
- 3) To refer the decision to full Council

The Committee asked for a recorded vote on the above options, the result as follows:

Councillor Rachel Buckler:	Refer to full Council
Councillor Maureen Powell:	Refer to full Council
Councillor Jane Lucas (for C Edwards):	Refer to full Council
Councillor Jayne Mckenna:	Refer to full Council
Councillor John Crook:	Refer to full Council
Councillor Tony Easson:	Refer to the Cabinet Member
Councillor Jackie Strong:	Refer to the Cabinet Member
Councillor David Jones:	Refer to full Council
Councillor Sue Riley:	Refer to the Cabinet Member

agreed to refer the decision for reconsideration, following a recorded vote:

Following the recorded vote, the majority agreed to refer the decision to full council, giving the following reason:

Much greater clarity is needed on future provision. Robust engagement needs to be undertaken with service users and thorough pre-decision scrutiny should be conducted prior to any decision-making.

5. Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting as 26th January 2023.