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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Central Mon Area Committee held
at The Shire Hall, Monmouth. NP25 3DY on Wednesday, 27th January, 2016 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor S. White (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Blakebrough, B. Hayward and V. Smith

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Paul Keeble	Traffic and Network Manager
Debbie McCarty	Whole Place Manager
Nicola Perry	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors P. Clarke, E. Hacket Pain, P. Jones, B. Strong and A. Wintle

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

2. Public open forum

We welcomed members of the public, who raised the following points:

It was questioned what Whole Place could bring to the community that would not have been delivered otherwise. The Whole Place Manager explained that it was the intention to create sustainable, resilient communities, and to unite people in joined-up thinking. There would be a culture change in the way we all worked together. It was noted that community groups worked brilliantly but Whole Place would like to build on that and make better use of the money available

Several questions were raised regarding the pinch points in Monmouth, which would be addressed by the Highways Manager at agenda item 7, including:

- What were the basic objectives of the pinch point?
- Would the opinions of pedestrians and motorists be taken into consideration?
- Would cyclist's perspectives be taken into consideration?
- Had consideration been given to creating a one-way system?
- Could signage be improved?
- Why was the trial restricted to such a small area?

A member of the public stated that on behalf of Monmouth People First, the pinch point had been well received.

Clarification was requested regarding the minutes from the previous meeting regarding the construction of the new hotel completion date. This would be checked and it was suggested that the Estates Manager be invited to the next meeting.

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3. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Central Monmouthshire Area Committee held on 16th September 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Whole Place Update

We welcomed an update from the Whole Place Manager and noted the following points:

It was hoped that Whole Place would be commencing in September 2016 and it was expected to then take 6 to 9 months to create a draft plan. To give an idea of times we heard that Lower Wye Area had started with Whole Place in September 2015 and the first consultation would be completed at the end of January 2016.

There are many community groups operating who provide a valuable resource for the community it operates in. Indeed Whole Place is not there to change any of them but to create a platform where people can join up some of their activities, share resources and increase community capacity. It will depend on the communities themselves of what they wished to include in a plan and stakeholders would be anyone who wished to become involved.

Having a plan enables people to target resources and make sure we are creating environments that are what the communities have asked for.

Funding streams now require there to be evidence of need. CIL funding from housing developments expect there to be a plan outlining the viable projects in an area.

We noted that lessons were learnt from the Whole Place set up in Severnside and Bryn Y Cwm areas, and they were being addressed in going forward with the other areas. It is hoped to gain funding to put a toolkit together to assist Community Councils in the rural areas to create Community Led Plans

We heard that with regards to the area committee funding, it had been confirmed at full Council that £5,000 would be available to each area as a grant scheme. Whole Place Manager was in the process of putting together the criteria and grant application form. This would then be submitted to Whole Place who would forward to Area Committees for decision.

5. Head of Operations - Update on car park provision in Monmouth

The Head of Operations informed the Committee that there had been extensive studies on car parking in all towns in Monmouthshire It was that planning had been granted for additional parking at Rockfield Road adjacent to the skate park.

Car parking off Wye Bridge Street had been submitted to Planning and was awaiting approval. Initially there had been concerns regarding access but this had since been addressed.

As part of a larger study, a new car parking order was being completed which would go out for consultation and would refer to charges, short and long term parking and free spaces. The consultation period would start in the next few weeks and would be referred to Cabinet for final

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decision. It was intended that Rockfield Road remain free parking but it was expected that charges would be at Granville Street.

We heard that the majority of money from the car park charges would go back in to the development and general refurbishment of the car parks, also into traffic management.

The Chair expressed that Monmouth would be in further difficulty with car parking if Waitrose were not so accommodating.

A Member asked if the consultation would give an indication of the costs of car parks, e.g. maintenance, rates, etc. as public should be made aware of the costs involved. The Head of Operations confirmed that the consultation would not provide that detail but could refer to more detailed reports.

The issue surrounding the lack of coach parking was highlighted which would be followed up with the Estates Manager.

A Member stressed that both on and off street parking should be addressed together. It was suggested that the Police Commissioner should be contacted to discuss decriminalisation of car parking.

It was noted that there were issues with people parking in front of drop kerbs.

6. Highways - Monnow Street update

We welcomed the Highways Manager who was in attendance in order to update the Committee on the pinch points in Monnow Street.

We heard the objectives for the pinch point trial had been brought to Committee in May 2015 and were *'This design will allow highways to accommodate a wider footways at this narrow location which in combination with other proposals for improved pedestrian facilities within the town offers an opportunity to create a safer environment for non-motorists.'*

The pinch point trial had begun in October 2015 and there no other commitments at present. Feedback had encouraged to help make an informed decision, along with CCTV footage and discussions with police and local members.

The trial had not been taken to St. John Street as this would have been difficult to construct at the time and would not have had an impact on the trial.

The pinch points were part of wider improvements for the town, which would provide more opportunities for pedestrians to cross the road safely and to create a number of pinch points, but also relied on motorists driving with due care.

There had not been formal consultation but communities had been encouraged to engage. Feedback received to date was more favourable than negative.

The point regarding cyclists was noted but it was considered that cyclists were no worse off than before the trial.

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The next stages were to review the trial later this year and the options would be:

1. Terminate the trial and revert back to the original layout.
2. Make the arrangement permanent and upgrade to a better specification.
3. Extend narrowing to the St. John Junction and to continue the trial over a longer period.

It was noted that there was congestion at certain times but there seemed to be significantly less traffic than 9 or 10 months ago. This may be due to traffic being diverted from the centre of the town, and had that been done previously there may not have been a need for a pinch point.

A Member asked what the benefits of a pinch point would be over a traffic light system. It was hoped the pinch point would be more environmentally pleasant.

Following the discussion the Committee agreed to discuss the safety issues at Usk Bridge. A Member expressed that there were issues when turning left into Usk and there was a need for a pedestrian footbridge. It was noted that there would soon be an increase in the number of employees at the County Hall site in Usk therefore increasing traffic on the bridge. The Highways Manager agreed to look into the matter.

The Head of Operations agreed to take issues regarding lighting at Monnow Bridge to the Street Lighting Engineer.

With regards to the A449 slip road we heard that there had been a feasibility study, and costs estimated. Consultants were now working on the design. In addition to the 3rd lane there were also proposals to improve the ramp to the underpass. It was hoped that a scheme would be ready to submit to Welsh Government next year.

The Head of Operations updated the Committee on public toilets. In doing so we heard that the budget had indicated that should Monmouth Town Council not agree to take on Bestium Street toilets, they would close. Discussions were in place to find a way to keep them open and the officer felt optimistic that this could be achieved.

7. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting as Wednesday 23rd March 2016 at 2.00pm

We confirmed that the next meeting would be brought forward to Wednesday 9th March 2016, to be held at County Hall, Usk.

The meeting ended at 3.40 pm