

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Public Services Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA with remote attendance on Monday, 19th June, 2023 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Armand Watts (Chairman)
County Councillor Penny Jones, (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Jan Butler, Steven Garratt, Meirion Howells, Dale Rooke, Frances Taylor

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Sharran Lloyd, LSB Development Manager
Beth Watkins, Flying Start Manager
Susan O'Brian, Early Years Integration And Transformation Lead
Christian Schmidt, Transport Planning and Policy Officer
Deb Hill-Howells, Head of Decarbonisation, Transport and Support Services

APOLOGIES: County Councillor Revd. M Lane

Note: the following minutes focus on the challenge from members – for the full discussion, the recording of the meeting is at www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KArDdhd4TE&list=PLLMqN4nAaFJCILetq56Hon4uJ3r_La-et&index=5

1. Election of Chair.

Councillor Watts, nominated by Councillor Rooke and seconded by Councillor Bond.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair.

Councillor Watts, nominated by Councillor Rooke and seconded by Councillor Bond.

3. Declarations of Interest.

None.

4. Public Open Forum.

None.

5. Presentation regarding the Early Years Integration and Transformation Pilot and Flying Start: To review the effectiveness of the pilot and the implications for Flying Start (verbal update).

Sue O'Brian and Beth Watkins delivered the update and answered the members' questions.

Challenge:**Key points raised by Committee members:**

- Noting the perception among some new mothers of not having support available to them
- Expressing shock that there is no health visitor manager with responsibility for Flying Start
- Asking what capacity there is for taking on more cases, and why paper records are still being kept
- Asking what can be done to help the vision for proportionate universalism and improvements to be realised
- Regarding healthcare workers not being easily accessible to young families, asking if there is something in the partnership or service level agreements that professionals should be held to, and if they are not, whether there could be some sort of legal recourse
- Commenting that thresholds to access Flying Start sound like a 'postcode lottery', and that they should be changed to reflect the rise in deprivation due to the cost-of-living crisis, particularly to bring them in line with the rest of the UK
- Asking what can be done to improve the Service Level Agreement between MCC and the health board
- Asking if the pilot can be changed if it isn't working
- Clarifying the referral process and asking what will happen to the families that have been picked up that aren't in the mainstream Flying Start areas
- Asking if the reduction in funding from the end of the Pilot process will mitigate against people accessing it based on need rather than because they are in the relevant postcodes
- Noting that it would be helpful if members had better awareness and information about the referral route for their residents
- Asking how consistency of approach with families can be achieved, without health visitors, and how it can be ensured that no children will slip through the net
- Clarifying where the Health Visitors are based

Chair's Summary:

Members agree that we will ask the Chief Executive of the Health Board and the officers to a meeting. We will champion this cause and ask MCC's Chief Executive to raise it in the Public Service Board.

6. To consider a report on the short and long-term problems with public transport in Monmouthshire (report to follow).

Christian Schmidt and Debra Hill-Howells presented the report and answered the members' questions.

Challenge:**Key points raised by Committee members:**

- Clarifying dates and information in the report, asking if there is updated information in some cases, such as the percentage commuting by car in 2012, and how the dates of fares are comparable

- Noting that there are excellent ideas such as in 3.22, and asking how the gap analysis will be used in the future, and how Grassroots buses fit in to the plans
- Commenting that patronage is unlikely to recover to pre-pandemic levels as people don't trust the service, and that it doesn't suit the working patterns for rural commuters, so car use will always remain
- Observing that bus and train times aren't coordinated with Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire, leading to long waiting times, and that Monmouthshire should see a huge benefit as part of the CCR, but doesn't
- Asking if there is scope within future plans to incorporate a transport support service for those who commute over a 24-hour period on shifts
- Noting that the data in the report is outdated e.g. reference to Magor station study taking place in 2015, and that all the pieces need to be updated to reflect the current position
- Asking how we will put pressure on TFW, Burns Delivery Unit, etc., when it comes to designing new stations, as there has been a campaign for more than 10 years for a walkway station in Magor, and expressing disappointment at how transport has slipped down the council's agenda
- Noting that the bottom ribbon of the county isn't rural, which needs to be taken into account in transport matters
- Asking whether the Cabinet Member could clarify the intentions for the Strategic Transport Group
- Commenting on the stark decline in rail station entrances and exits, that people need to be encouraged to public transport but agreeing that confidence is low. It is especially important that people living where there are trains, e.g. Abergavenny, return to them, and that bus services to trains are vitally important, as is having the right user data
- Asking if there is a good reason for the notable difference in cost between the Monmouthshire and Valley Lines and whether we are challenging it
- Asking if, with the New Inn station opening soon, the no.63 bus will stop in Usk, and whether there has been progress in timetabling regarding Usk and Abergavenny, linking up Usk with the no.63 and 69 buses at Raglan
- Asking whether the Severn Tunnel Junction access and interchange improvements are being looked at as part of Priority 1

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to officers. We will return to this in October and ask the Cabinet Member to come to the meeting to answer questions.

7. Public Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List.

A workshop on County Lines is to be arranged, preferably this side of the summer, chaired by People committee. Christian Schmidt is to be invited back to the next meeting in October. Officers will write to the Health Board to get a date agreed.

VAWDASV strategy: officers will be invited back in the Autumn – they need time to put the strategy into play so that we can then hold them to account on their performance.

Councillor Bond thanked Inspector Williams for providing information after the last meeting but noted that the committee also asked for ratios for protected characteristics – **ACTION**

8. Cabinet and Council Work Planner.

Postcode inequality for optical services was proposed as a future topic, particularly regarding the difference in waiting times for urgent treatment if referred to Newport or over the border. Dentistry Services was also proposed, with the primary focus on young people but the possibility of broadening the discussion out to all ages.

Hazel Ilett suggested that when inviting the Health Board for Flying Start they could cover this topic at the same time.

9. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24th April 2023.

The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record, proposed by Councillor Butler and seconded by Councillor Jones.

Councillor Jones noted that her name was not against 'Vice Chairman' in the list of attendees.

10. Next Meeting: Monday 23rd October 2023 at 10.00am.

A meeting before then will be attempted, pending the availability of the ABHB Chief Exec.

The meeting ended at **12.12 pm**