

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Place Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Thursday, 14th March, 2024 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Lisa Dymock (Chairman)

County Councillors: Louise Brown, Emma Bryn, Jane Lucas, Maria Stevens, Jackie Strong, Tudor Thomas and Angela Sandles

Also in attendance County Councillors:

APOLOGIES: Councillors Tomos Davies and Laura Wright

Officers in Attendance

Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
David Jones, Head of Public Protection

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=wA6TC85Tin0&list=PLlmqn4nAaFJAaDA9m3C2P8ZdJsca-bkSU&index=13

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Public Open Forum

None.

3. Local Toilet Strategy

Cabinet Member Angela Sandles and David Jones introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Jane Rodgers.

Key points raised by Members:

- The last survey was in 2019, will we carry out another soon to keep the document relevant? – **ACTION: officers to seek clarity from WG about issuing another survey, and any set guidance for it**
- The Boys Need Bins rollout is very good to see, and toilets becoming Stoma-friendly – is there more detail as to when these measures will be achieved by? What will be the eventual costs?
- Could some of the grant of £17,200 mentioned in 15.3 be used for this implementation?
- Will the toilet facilities listed on the web indicate that there now will be bins available, some will be Stoma-friendly, etc.? – **ACTION: to get the latest update about the A40 toilets, and to update members**

- Noting the importance of the bilingual signs, are we letting down the English-speaking residents by not displaying them in the meantime? Can that form part of the Action Plan?
- Can 1.13 in the strategy be amended to say, 'single sex toilet toilets will always be provided' and 'unisex provision will be considered as and when alterations are made to existing facilities in full consultation with stakeholders'?
- There is an issue about safe spaces, and that bullet point could be misinterpreted to say that we're going to change all toilets to unisex facilities, and a number of people would feel uncomfortable going into toilets that had shared washing facilities that were enclosed – therefore, there also needs to be another bullet point which says 'unisex provision will also be a single lockable door to the ceiling with wash facilities enclosed opening out to open safe public spaces, either internally or externally.' – **ACTION: Councillor Brown to provide officers with alternative wording suggestions**
- Note that the National Toilet Map doesn't give any specific information on toilets in a given location e.g. Chepstow.
- Would members be open to forming a working group to look at the strategy, as was done previously? – **ACTION: members to discuss outside the meeting about the direction to take, and which members will be involved**
- Can we get feedback from our cleaners?
- Are Town Councils responsible for arranging Environmental Health inspections or do they go through the local authority? Do the inspections have to be financed by the Town Councils?
- A 5% response from Caldicot Town Council is very disappointing. Would an annual strategy for responses be a good idea?
- There's a lot to be learned from Abergavenny Town Council and the service surveys they carried out
- **ACTION: to feed back that the Welsh in the National Toilet Map needs to be improved**
- The matter of Welsh language signs is surprising: as we are in Wales and there is an important focus on pushing the language, we should be able to produce them in-house; hopefully that can be done.
- Regarding Changing Places toilets, there have been improvements but there is no provision in Abergavenny town for anyone with severe disabilities. There should be an aspiration for something to be provided, noting that there is potential for facilities at the Melville Centre, with it replacing Tudor Street.
- Whitehorse Lane is controversial, it would be very difficult to bring that back into service, particularly given Gwent Police's concerns about drug taking, antisocial behaviour and damage.
- Some corrections need to be made, e.g. p28, Priory Street is no longer open but the map shows it still is, and the Shire Hall opening times are wrong – **ACTION: Councillor Lucas to provide corrections for the team to update**
- A regular complaint at Monmouth Town Council is that opening and closing times vary considerably so that it's often closed when it should be open.
- Is it widely known that there's a free service for inspections?
- It's disappointing that there isn't more on Severnside, and the leisure centre in county court isn't quite up to Changing Places standards
- A changing place in Magor Hub would have been ideal for people on a day out, coming back from shopping, etc.

- I would like to reinforce the point about the safety of women and girls in public toilets.
- Can we have more detail about the problem of anti-social behaviour, drug taking and damage to toilets, and how it is managed?
- Regarding drug taking, in Monmouth a blue light was put in at great cost as apparently this prohibits seeing veins, and there was talk of providing a safe sharps box – this needs to be chased up – **ACTION: Councillor Lucas to check status**
- Are we able to engage more with the clinics for certain illnesses running out of Chepstow Hospital and Nevill Hall so they're aware that radar keys can be issued from Tourist Information Centres/Hubs? If that's correct?
- If we look to carry out another survey, monthly clinics for certain illnesses will be a very good opportunity to get people to participate in surveys – **ACTION: to check that awareness of the radar key scheme is encouraged at various points within health and social care**
- What is the timeline for Bins For Boys? When will we have an idea of what's required across the county?

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to the Cabinet Member and officers for this work, and for attending today. The Toilet Strategy is important and helps to support physical activity for people out and about, whether they're shopping, engaging in sport, etc. We've raised many questions and made many comments: we requested an update with regards to Stoma friendly status and asked about the Welsh Government grant of £17,200. There were concerns across the group with regards to Unisex toilets, wanting to ensure that single sex toilets will still be available, but we understand the concern around being too prescriptive in the wording of the strategy. It was suggested that we look to set up a working group as previously. There were questions around how to improve survey engagement – we can learn from Abergavenny Town Council and the service surveys they carried out; as part of that working group, we could ask them to come along and speak to us and show us what they did differently. The bilingual Stoma friendly stickers are currently outstanding, and members are keen to push ahead with getting them. There was some concern regarding the lack of changing spaces in Abergavenny town centre, and we've requested an update with regards to the Melville Centre. There were some discrepancies on the toilet map with regards to opening times, and there was a suggestion about sharp boxes and blue lights in toilets. Concerns about the lack of changing places in Severnside were raised, and how Caldicot Leisure Centre doesn't meet the requirements. We also wanted to understand a little bit more about the antisocial behaviour and vandalism of our public toilets – we need to re-engage with Gwent Police.

We want to thank the team that maintains our public toilets across the county: they work exceptionally hard, and having clean toilets is vitally important for visitors and our residents.

4. Place Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List

Councillor Brown noted that the RLDP Deposit Plan has been deferred previously, and expressed concern that the opportunity for it to come to the committee could be missed, and that the consultation could fall in the school holidays, which will not be an effective

time. Officers assured members that they are in discussions about the finalised timescales, and it will come to the May, July or September meeting depending on when the date for Council is set. – **ACTION: Chair to contact Councillor Griffiths and the Head of Placemaking for clarity on timescales**

5. **Council and Cabinet Work Planner**

6. **Minutes of the meeting held on 1st February 2024**

The minutes were agreed, approved by Councillor Thomas and seconded by Councillor Lucas.

7. **Next Meeting: 10th April 2024**

The meeting ended at **11.25 am**.