Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA with remote attendance on Tuesday, 18th June, 2024 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present	Officers in Attendance
County Councillor Alistair Neill (Chairman) County Councillors: Jill Bond, Rachel Buckler, John Crook, Meirion Howells, Paul Pavia, Peter Strong, Ann Webb and Angela Sandles	Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer David Jones, Head of Public Protection Huw Owen, Principal Environment Health Officer (Public Health) Alun Thomas, Principal Environmental Health Officer Jennifer Walton, Registration Service Manager

APOLOGIES: Councillor Catherine Fookes

1. **Election of Chair**

   Councillor Neill was nominated by Councillor Webb, seconded by Councillor Howells.

2. **Appointment of Vice-Chair**

   Councillor Strong was nominated by Councillor Bond, seconded by Councillor Crook. Councillor Buckler was nominated by Councillor Pavia, seconded by Councillor Neill.

   The vote was tied with 4 for each nominee. With the Chair's casting vote Councillor Buckler was appointed.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

   None.

4. **Public Open Forum**

   None.

5. **Public Protection Performance 2023/24 - To review the performance of the service area**

   Cabinet Member Angela Sandles, David Jones, Alun Thomas and Huw Owen introduced the report and answered the members' questions.

   Key points made by members:

- Regarding a court case for noise, asking whether the warrant to seize equipment was executed. Asking, in doing that, how the safety of officers is ensured.
- Noting that he PSPO dog exclusion zones came into force on 1st June but signs aren't in place yet. Seeking reassurance that we will take enforcement seriously but also that common sense will be applied. Asking if prosecutions will take place before signs are up.
- Members were concerned that there is a huge breadth of issues for the team to deal with, but there are only 8 officers. Wondering how the team would deal with a hypothetical case of a member of the public contacting the team about the illegal use of weedkiller in a public place. Asking if the expertise is in-house or would someone be brought in from outside.
- Clarifying if it is a matter of liaising with other agencies rather than calling in outside contractors.
- Asking if there has been a difference in food standards in businesses before and after the pandemic. Looking for more detail about how involved the team gets when things are unsatisfactory, and what measures are taken.
- Regarding landlords, asking how unsatisfactory standards are flagged up for those renting, and if there is a structure in place to try to stop these problems.
- Asking if there is a correlation between fly tipping and now having to have an appointment at waste depots.
- Clarifying what proportion of animal health visits are farm or residential.
- Noting that there is a typo on p1, 3.1: Performance & 'Oversight', should be 'Overview'.
- P7, financial generic costs: further explanation was sought about the difference from what was predicted.
- P9-15, regarding areas where improvement is needed, asking what best practice is compared to equivalent counties, and how we are rating beyond the numbers, related to other groups.
- Asking the reason for closures not being so good on Environmental Protection orders. Members noted that percentages are given but not the targets.
- Asking what constitutes a closure, and if there is a sign off or agreement from the customer.
- In terms of resources, members wanted to know if we have the capacity for enforcement and wanted further detail about resource vs risk and budget?
- Seeking further explanation about additional complaints mentioned on p18, regarding noise.
- Clarifying the feed issue in 5.4.1.
- Regarding the Toilet Strategy, reminding the team that Councillor Pavia brought up Stoma-supporting facilities last year, and asking if that is part of the review.
- As this item originally came to committee every 6 months, checking that the officers are content with bringing an annual report.
- Seeking further explanation of the overspend for management and generic costs.
- Asking for an explanation of the different way of reporting fly tipping, and whether numbers are down because of the way we're reporting it.
- Given that cost resources are a problem, members sought reassurance that the team has the capacity to deliver its duties.
- Regarding animal health and welfare and the high-profile case last year with the Lost Souls sanctuary, asking if we have undertaken a 'lessons learned' exercise to understand if we effectively discharged our functions at each stage of the

process, especially regarding public communication. Noting that that particular case might mean it can't be discussed today.

- Asking what actions we are taking against businesses that sell non-compliant or illegal vapour or tobacco products, particularly if they are doing so to underage children.
- There seems to be a link between organised crime and illegal vaping. Given the team's resource challenges, asking if we are confident that we can keep on the issue of illegal vaping products moving forward.

Officers present responded to all of the questions raised and the Committee was satisfied with the responses given.

Chair's Summary:

The report was moved, seconded by Councillor Strong. We note in relation to the final question that Public Services Scrutiny Committee will be advising Environmental Health that they would like to look into vaping.

Members wish to thank the officers for their excellent work and improvements made, particularly concerning the recovery since Covid, and for the work that has gone into the Safety Advisory group events and dog control PSPOs.

6. <u>Registration Services Annual Report 23/24 - To review the performance of the service area</u>

Cabinet Member Angela Sandles introduced the report with David Jones and Jennifer Walton, who answered the members' questions.

Key points made by members:

- Asking if it is possible to give specifics of statutory targets relative to other/comparable areas.
- Asking if 'completion of work' is a useful Key Performance Indicator?
- Clarifying where records are kept e.g. at County Hall in an archive.
- 4.5 and 5.2 mention new scrutiny procedures in relation to deaths – the need for additional documentation etc. – members sought more detail and asked if there is a resource implication
- Asking if there is anything that officers would like to see changed in this service area, and if anything is flagged up that could be done better.
- Noting the closure of the maternity unit at Nevill Hall, enquiring if there are any consequences of not having births registered in Monmouthshire, and whether there is anything that we should therefore consider.

The Committee was satisfied with the performance of the service and the answers given to questions asked.

Chair's Summary:

The committee wishes to commend the team for its excellent performance, particularly regarding customers seen and those looking for an appointment both running at 100%. The report was moved, seconded by Councillor Buckler.
Noting David Jones' retirement in September, the committee and council give thanks for his years of experience and hard work, and particularly for his work during the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic.

7. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List

Note the extra and rearranged meetings due to the pre-election period. Note in particular the email sent yesterday as some times have changed. There are areas of performance in both reports today for which we would like to see comparable evidence in future reports to help further inform members and the public.

8. Cabinet and Council Work Planner

Note that Mark Hand's name is still against some of the items, though he has recently left the council. Craig O' Connor is now Head of Placemaking.

9. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 14th May 2024

The minutes were confirmed.

People Strategy Comments

Councillor Howells' comments were gratefully noted here for the public's benefit.

10. Next Meeting: 11th July 2024 at 2.00pm

The meeting ended at **12.01 pm.**