

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Place Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA with remote attendance on Thursday, 22nd May, 2025 at 2.00 pm

Councillors Present

County Councillor Jane Lucas (Chair)

County Councillors: Louise Brown, Emma Bryn, Tomos Davies, Martyn Groucutt, Jackie Strong, John Crook, Sara Burch, Tony Easson and Phil Murphy

Officers in Attendance

Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Paul Sullivan, Youth, Sport and Active Travel Manager
Nicholas Tulp, Active Travel Officer
Geraint Roberts, Road Safety Officer
Madeleine Boase, Active Travel Officer
Duncan Thompson, Active Travel Project Officer

APOLOGIES: Councillors Lisa Dymock and Tudor Thomas

1. Election of Chair

Councillor Lucas was proposed by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Brown. There were no other nominations, Councillor Lucas was appointed as Chair.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Councillor Dymock was proposed by Councillor Brown, seconded by Councillor Lucas. There were no other nominations, Councillor Dymock was appointed as Vice-Chair.

3. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Dymock, Councillor Murphy as substitute. Councillor Thomas, Councillor Easson as substitute.

4. Declarations of Interest

None.

5. Place Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List

To note that the Placemaking Plans have been moved from 10th July to 6th November; in their place, the Flood Strategy will be scrutinised on 10th July. Members are reminded to encourage residents to attend the Public Open Forum on that date.

Councillor Strong requested an update on responses from NRW concerning the Nedern – the responses are forthcoming – **ACTION**. Councillor Bryn requested an update on the Car Parking Review – it has been pencilled in for scrutiny on 10th July.

Councillor Brown requested that an item be added to the work programme concerning scrutiny of the assets declared surplus and an opportunity to scrutinise these prior to Cabinet decisions, citing 8.2.2 of the Constitution which says the Terms of Reference for Place are 'To ensure that policy and services are responsive to the needs of businesses and visitors and promote economic activity.' – **ACTION**

6. Council and Cabinet Work Planner

7. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were agreed, proposed by Councillor Lucas and seconded by Councillor Bryn.

8. Public Open Forum

Felicity Branigan, Chair of Promobility Group (Abergavenny), addressed the committee regarding Disabled Access issues in Abergavenny, primarily highlighting mobility challenges, obstructions, dog mess, drop kerbs and tactile paving, and proposed that council members accompany disabled individuals to experience these challenges firsthand, to which the committee agreed – **ACTION**

9. Active Travel - To scrutinise various aspects of Active Travel

Paul Sullivan introduced the report, delivered a presentation, and answered the members' questions with Cabinet Member Sara Burch and Geraint Roberts:

- A member asked about the difficulty in securing funding for projects like the Abergavenny Bridge and other schemes, given the reduction from four to one strategic scheme, and the expected timeline for delivery.

The officer acknowledged the challenge posed by the change in funding criteria, emphasising the importance of a collaborative approach across departments to secure funding from various sources, including safe routes and community funding, and regional transport plans. He stressed the importance of getting projects to a tender-ready stage to present them for funding opportunities, ensuring they are ready for implementation when funding becomes available. The Cabinet Member highlighted the potential benefits of multi-year funding through regional partnerships (CJCs), which could provide a more consistent and planned approach to project delivery.

- A member enquired about the timeframe of the data showing traffic reduction at Undy School and expressed concerns about the abuse of temporary closures by parents. He noted that the school is making efforts to police the situation, but emphasised the need for more effective enforcement to address the ongoing abuse of temporary closures.

The officer explained that the data was collected before and after the implementation of school streets, with the most recent data from May showing significant reductions in traffic. He mentioned that civil enforcement officers are sent to the site to speak to parents about problem parking and encourage parking further away. Surveys are being conducted to gather feedback and plan next steps to further reduce traffic around the school.

- A member expressed frustration over the difficulty in getting smaller interventions like drop kerbs and pavement smoothing done and asked for a system to report and prioritise these requests. She enquired about the number of schools working towards active travel plans and the effectiveness of these plans. She asked what percentage of Monmouthshire students are involved in these sessions and the percentage of students walking or cycling to school, and requested information on the percentage of children receiving cycle training after Stage 2.

*Officers acknowledged the need for prioritisation and committed to working on a system to report and prioritise quick wins, considering internal capacity and funding constraints. They mentioned that 21 out of 34 schools have active travel plans, which are rolling documents updated annually. They did not have the exact number of schools currently working on plans but committed to providing that information – **ACTION**. Officers explained that the Road Safety Transition sessions are offered to all year six pupils across Monmouthshire, focusing on safe routes to comprehensive schools. Level one cycle training is offered to all schools, while level one and two training is provided to four or five schools annually, focusing on those near comprehensive schools to promote cycling. Officers shared data from a 2021 survey showing that 63% of secondary and 73% of primary school pupils wanted to actively travel more, with less than 3% currently cycling to school.*

- A member asked how long it should reasonably take for a dropped kerb request to go through the design process and receive a clear response – either approval or rejection. They expressed frustration at the current lack of updates or timelines after submitting requests.

The officer explained that timelines depend on prioritisation and funding. A clearer picture will emerge once the current programme is reviewed and categorised (e.g. red/amber/green). Some dropped kerb designs are tied to broader strategic schemes like active travel links, which complicates delivery. Funding fluctuations and limited internal design capacity also affect timelines. However, the officer acknowledged the need to move quickly on the prioritisation work to better manage expectations and improve turnaround for high-priority requests.

- A member asked if the £6 million award for Abergavenny had already been received or if it was still a bid. She expressed concern that active travel initiatives seem to focus on urban areas, potentially neglecting rural areas and specific locations like Chepstow. She asked about the Chepstow Transport Hub funding, expressing concerns about the link between the bus and train stations, and highlighted the dangers of certain routes, such as the A48 near the garden centre, making them unsuitable for cycling or walking. She enquired about the maintenance and accessibility of public rights of way in rural areas and raised concerns about the displacement of traffic due to interventions around schools, potentially causing issues in other areas.
- *The officer confirmed that the £6 million award for Abergavenny had been received and would be used for the specified projects. The Cabinet Member explained that the focus on urban areas is due to the strategic emphasis on value for money and the impact of funding, but acknowledged the importance of rural*

areas and public rights of way. Officers confirmed that Chepstow Transport Hub funding was allocated last year through core funding to support active travel priorities and preparatory work for the Levelling Up Fund. While some details still need to be clarified regarding how funding will be distributed across different project elements, the UK Government has confirmed that the funding remains available from a Monmouthshire perspective. – **ACTION: to provide a written update for the committee.** Officers acknowledged the challenges of dangerous routes and emphasised the need to align with strategic focuses and funding constraints. They mentioned that public rights of way are being considered, with efforts to ensure they are accessible and maintained, but the primary focus remains on strategic urban routes. They acknowledged the issue of traffic displacement and mentioned that surveys and consultations are being conducted to understand and address these concerns – **ACTION: to look into traffic displacement and report back**

Jackie:

- A member expressed gratitude for the progress on the safe crossing for students traveling to Caldicot Comprehensive School and asked for a date when the work through the castle grounds would begin. She emphasised the importance of play areas in promoting active travel and mentioned the positive impact of improvements at Cas Troggy Park. She highlighted issues with parking in Church Road and the need for better communication to residents about parking spaces. The member requested that the consultation include residents of Castle Lea and asked to be kept informed about the consultation results. She expressed concern about the impact on the B4245 of the Severn Bridge closure to lorries and the safety of students traveling from Magor and Rogiet to the comprehensive school.

The officer acknowledged the long-standing issue with Safe Crossing for Caldicot Comprehensive School and confirmed that the work is progressing, with construction expected in Q3/Q4. He agreed on the importance of play areas and mentioned ongoing efforts to engage with local members and stakeholders to ensure the success of such initiatives. Officers acknowledged the parking issues in Church Road and committed to addressing them through better communication and consultation. They confirmed that the consultation would include residents of Castle Lea and committed to keeping the councillor informed about the results. They acknowledged the concern about the impact of lorry closures on the B4245 and emphasised the need to monitor the situation closely to ensure student safety.

- A member enquired about the size and capacity of the enforcement team, questioning whether there are enough personnel to effectively manage the streets and roads of Monmouthshire.

Officers indicated that the question falls outside the scope of the active travel discussion, but it was acknowledged that the need and demand for enforcement is recognised by the Cabinet. A written answer regarding the current team size and capacity would be provided later. – **ACTION**

- A member praised the high standard of engineering on the new safe route near his home in Abergavenny, which is used by many children from nearby schools.

He expressed concern about the need for ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the safe routes, particularly the new planting that needs to be tended to prevent being overwhelmed by weeds. He suggested that more roads near schools should be closed to through traffic during school hours to encourage walking and reduce unnecessary car journeys.

The officers acknowledged the importance of maintaining the high standard of engineering and the need for ongoing maintenance to ensure the routes remain fit for purpose. They agreed that ongoing maintenance is a challenge and emphasised the importance of building maintenance schedules into the planning of new routes. They also highlighted the role of green infrastructure in making routes attractive and safe. They discussed the importance of understanding and influencing behaviour to encourage more walking to school, mentioning programmes like Living Streets and the Walk Tracker to incentivise active travel among children.

- The Chair questioned the allocation of £6 million to Abergavenny and expressed concern about the lack of funding for Chepstow and rural areas. She highlighted the importance of addressing the needs of rural areas and ensuring fairness in funding distribution. She raised concerns about the maintenance of public rights of way in rural areas and the need for better accessibility. She mentioned the issue of traffic displacement when implementing new schemes, using the example of hospital parking issues.

The officers and Cabinet Member explained that the £6 million for Abergavenny has been confirmed and emphasised the importance of focusing on the seven major settlements due to the strategic focus on routes up to three miles. They acknowledged the need for equitable funding and the challenge of addressing rural areas within the current funding constraints. The officers highlighted the importance of maintaining public rights of way and mentioned that the public right of way team is working on least restrictive access. They also noted that the maintenance of these routes is a challenge and emphasised the need for ongoing dialogue with local stakeholders. They acknowledged the issue of traffic displacement and mentioned that the team is looking into it, emphasising the importance of community engagement and consultation to address these concerns.

- The Chair highlighted the significant impact of the Vauxhall/Ingles Bridge closure on the Monmouth community, noting that it has effectively divided the town. She also noted concerns about Hereford Road and the Haberdashers' School, particularly regarding older students who drive and the associated parking problems, asking whether it is possible for officers to engage with the school on the matter – **ACTION: to consult with other officers and report back**

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to the officers and Cabinet Member for this report and their answers to the committee's questions. A copy of today's presentation will be sent to Felicity Branigan – **ACTION**

10. Next Meeting

Thursday 5th June 2025 at 2.00pm (Special Meeting).

The meeting ended at **4.01 pm**.