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**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held  
at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June,  
2017 at 10.00 am**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor S. Howarth (Chairman)

County Councillors: L.Brown, L.Dymock, R. Edwards, M.Groucutt,  
R. Harris and P.Pavia

Also in attendance County Councillor V. Smith

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mark Howcroft	Assistant Head of Finance
Claire Marchant	Chief Officer Social Care, Health & Housing
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Tyrone Stokes	Accountant

**APOLOGIES:**

County Councillor J.Pratt

**1. To note the appointment of Chair**

County Councillor S. Howarth was noted as Chair.

**2. To appoint a Vice-Chair**

The appointment of a Vice-Chair was deferred until the next meeting.

**3. Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**4. Public Open Forum**

No members of the public were present.

**5. To confirm the minutes of the following meetings:**

**6. Special Meeting held on 4th April 2017**

The minutes of the Special Meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

**7. Adults Select Committee held on 11th April 2017**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

**8. Social Housing Grant Programme**

**Context:**

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June, 2017 at 10.00 am

The purpose of the report is to update the Single Cabinet Member on the completion of the Social Housing Grant programme for 2016/2017 and seek approval for the new SHG Programme for 2017/2020 and Reserve Scheme List.

It is recognised in Monmouthshire that house prices have risen to a level beyond that which is affordable to many local people. The average house price is currently £276,000 (Wales comparison £177,200) and the lower quartile house price to income ratio is 9:1. The number of applicants on the Common Housing Register is currently 3048. Therefore, the provision of affordable housing is one of the Council's priorities, both in urban and rural areas (Source of data: Hometrack 23 May 2017).

#### **Key Issues:**

#### **Social Housing Grant Programme 2016/2017:**

1. The Social Housing Grant allocation for Monmouthshire for 2016/2017 was:

Main SHG Programme            £1,144,759

Housing & Communities submitted a bid to the Welsh Government for additional end of year slippage and were successful in obtaining a further:

Additional Funding £2,062,469

The final figure drawn down from the Welsh Government was £3,207,228.

2. Melin Homes successfully completed a mortgage rescue using £98,000 of Monmouthshire's Recycled Social Housing Grant (RCG). This prevented a family from becoming homeless.

3. This is an excellent performance with Monmouthshire successfully spending 100% of its grant allocation plus £2,062,469 of additional funding. In 2016/17 new affordable homes completions totalled 87. A further 63 units from the Social Housing Grant Programme are currently under construction.

4. Affordable Housing completions were as follows:

West End School, Caldicot 17  
Westgate, Llanfoist (S106 Site) 13  
Cae Meldon, Gilwern (S106 Site – BBNP) 18  
Cae Mawr Grove (adapted bungalow) 1  
Mynyddbach 2  
Green Lane, Caldicot 4  
Trellech School (60/40 Site) 9  
Dixton Road Clinic, Monmouth (S106 site) 4  
Rogiet School 19

#### **Social Housing grant Programme 2017 – 2020**

5. The Welsh Government has made additional funding available to help reach their target of 20,000 new affordable homes over the term of this administration. The allocations for Monmouthshire are:

2017/2018 Social Housing Grant £3,342,894  
Housing Finance Grant £1,810,055  
Total £5,152,949

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June, 2017 at 10.00 am

2018/2019 Social Housing Grant £4,369,317  
Housing Finance Grant £1,037,615  
Total £5,406,932

2019/2020 Social Housing Grant £1,250,044  
Housing Finance Grant £ 716,213  
Total £1,966,257

6. Working closely with RSL partners Monmouthshire County Council has been able to build up a healthy reserve schemes list and should be in a position to fully spend this allocation.

#### **Members Scrutiny:**

The Social Housing Grant Programme Manager introduced the report and following consideration, Members made the following observations:

A Member asked if any account is taken of the affordability of land in different areas and if so, is more funding required in some locations than others (e.g. in different local authority areas) in terms of the Social Housing Grant and the Housing Finance Grant. It was explained that the available grants are calculated according to Welsh Government Acceptable Costs Guidance and each area of each county is placed on a different band based on market values; there are three bands in Monmouthshire. It was confirmed that more grant is available in different areas according to where building is taking place.

The Officer was congratulated upon securing full spend and utilising any funding that is unallocated or unspent.

A Member questioned how many people are waiting for social housing, especially young parents, and if the list was too long, particularly in Abergavenny. It was reported that there are over 3000 households on the register of which approximately 700 are in Abergavenny. It was commented that it is always impossible to match need. It was added that there is a large new site being developed very soon in the Abergavenny area.

A Member enquired about the requirement to cut down mature trees and asked for assurances that where mature trees are cut down, they are replaced with planting of new trees. It was responded that generally where trees are removed they are replaced but sometimes in a different area.

Considering demand, a Member queried if Residential Social Landlords (RSL) could purchase run down properties to provide more desperately needed homes. It was responded that the RSL partners, particularly Monmouthshire Housing Association, have a programme for buying back properties sold under the Right to Buy scheme. Additionally, if there is grant still available, it is used to buy more properties particularly disabled/adapted bungalows.

A Member queried, in relation to the Programme Delivery Plan (specifically the Mabey Bridge site), why, when there is significant demand in Chepstow, the allocation was reduced to 18 and if there are any other plots of land earmarked for social housing in the area. In response it was confirmed that there are 38 affordable units being developed on the Osborn Paint site. It was added that the Mabey Bridge site was not viable due to significant issues related to its brown field status. Grant has been made available and there will be two parcels of land at a reduced cost. It was confirmed that the grant will be used to build affordable housing and also that there are no other sites known at this time. Additional information was provided to explain that where there is a piece of land under consideration, there is a negotiation around the size of abnormalities. Where the abnormalities are excessively large, it is normally affordable housing that becomes the

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June, 2017 at 10.00 am**

negotiation point to make the development viable for the developers looking to make 20% profit, and noted that the challenge is to try and reduce the developers' profit margins to provide affordable housing. The example of Crick Rd was provided where the authority is working with the developer, Melin homes, to reduce the profit margin to 12% which will begin to set a precedent for future negotiations.

A Member commented that Local Development Plan policy should always be applied.

It was queried by a Member why developers, in rural areas, use the excuse of paying off-site to have private, but not affordable housing, on site. It was questioned why developers are being allowed to do this outside the provisions of the LDP policy. It was responded that this hasn't happened as there is a 60% affordable housing policy in rural areas which is successfully and rigorously applied.

A Member commented that when there are new builds in rural areas, this forms the rural allocation with precedence given to those living in the area.

A Member argued that there still seemed to be developers that didn't achieve the required percentage affordable housing and that policy was not being followed, that money is being paid for off-site housing and is therefore not helping the affordable housing situation.

It was confirmed that the policy of 60% affordable housing in rural areas has to be adhered to. It was confirmed that no commuted sum has been taken and the houses have to be built. A commuted sum will, however, be taken for single dwellings. A Member reflected that she was aware of outline planning permission being granted in a village where the developer had not followed the policy and it was agreed that further information would be provided to the Officer outside the meeting.

A Member questioned why some of the 18 affordable homes built with SHG in Cae Meldon, Gilwern, have been sold already. In response it was explained that some of the dwellings were low cost home ownership and were sold to people on the housing register. It was explained that there have been protracted discussions with the National Parks (NP) regarding commuted sums but NP has retained the funds and won't release them to the housing authority. It was added that there is £176,000 outstanding from the Cae Meldon site that is due. The money has to be spent in Monmouthshire, if not, it will be used elsewhere in the National Park. It was commented that with single dwelling homes £100,000 is being asked as a commuted sum and there are only two examples of this amount likely to be paid.

A Member asked, in relation to a housing development in Mardy, Abergavenny about discussions surrounding the cost to the developer of having to bury electricity cables currently carried by pylons, and asked for reassurance that if there are any changes in the planning application, there would be no effect on the number of affordable housing units on the scheme. It was responded that the cost of dealing with the cabling is £5 million and there has been a detrimental effect on affordable housing which was originally to be 35% but has now been negotiated to 19.8%. Confirmation was sought if the original costings included the assumption that the electricity cables would be underground and that this is not a way of reducing the amount of affordable housing to be provided. It was responded that the amount was costed by the utility company for the LDP and it is now greatly exceeded.

A Member suggested that this was a Planning matter, and added that the Planning Committee is very thorough. Information was provided that when there is contention regarding the percentage of affordable housing in a scheme, assurances are given that the development is assessed via the authority's toolkit. The District Valuer can review the case and if it is thought

# MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June, 2017 at 10.00 am

that the allocation of affordable housing in a scheme is not viable, it will provide independent advice to the Planning Committee to take note.

The Chair questioned what happens if the allocation is not used. It was explained in response, that the funds would be retained by Welsh Government for redistribution. This approach is under review and funds unused by an authority may be loaned to another authority to have it returned the following year.

### Committee Conclusion

Key issues discussed included the affordability of land, the waiting list for social housing and the affordability of housing. The Committee were satisfied that full grant had been secured and spent within Monmouthshire, which is not the case for all authorities. The Chair requested Members be sent up to date copies of projected deliveries.

The Chair noted that Members were content with progress so far and will continue to scrutinise affordable housing, with the Local Development Plan being a key area for future joint scrutiny.

### 9. Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report

#### Context:

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the revenue outturn position of the Authority at the end of reporting period 4 which represents the financial outturn position for the 2016/17 financial year.

#### Recommendations Proposed To Cabinet:

- That Members consider a net revenue outturn unspend of £884,000, an improvement of £805,000 on quarter 3 outturn predictions.
- Members consider a capital outturn spend of £40.03m against a revised budget of £40.98million, after proposed slippage of £17.5 million, resulting in a net underspend of £951k.
- Consider and approve the £17.5m capital slippage recommended (detailed in appendix 2), paying attention to those schemes described in para 3.3.6 where slippage has been requested by the service manager but is not being recommended to slip (£198k).
- Considers the use of reserves proposed in para 3.4.1,
- Supports the apportionment of general underspend in supplementing reserve levels as described in para 3.4.3 below, i.e.:

Priority Investment Fund £570k  
Redundancy & Pension Reserve £114k  
IT Transformation Reserve £100k  
Capital Receipts Generation Reserve £100k  
Total £884k

- Members note that the low level of earmarked reserves will severely reduce the flexibility the Council has in meeting the challenges of scarce resources going forward.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June, 2017 at 10.00 am

- Members note the significant reduction in the overall school balance at the end of 2016/17 and supports the continuing work with schools to ensure that the Council's Fairer Funding scheme requirements are met and that the overall schools balance remains positive in 2017/18.

#### **Member Scrutiny:**

The Committee was reminded that there were requests to Cabinet for funds for extra support for teams last year and it was questioned if that amount was included and if so, how it balanced out against mandates in this financial year; was the figure added to last year's outturn. In response, it was explained that there were pressures on the authority from Welsh Government e.g. the government's new manifesto is seeking to increase the capital threshold for persons having long term residential placements to £50,000 (previously set at £24,000) over the next 3-4 years. This financial year the capital threshold is increased to £30,000. An extra grant has been received which starts in 2017/18 therefore there is no retrospective funding.

A Member queried the reason why there were more people in residential care. It was responded that there has been a pressure in the south of the county where some people who were previously self-funding have run out of money and have dropped below the threshold (£24,000 in 2016/17). There is then a statutory duty to consider them for funding. It was explained that there is a rigorous financial assessment form to try and identify if there has been any deprivation of capital. If there is any property a legal charge is attached to the dwelling which then has to be sold to fund their care.

It was further queried, if this remains the trend, how residential care can be sustained. It was explained that there is sufficient provision within the county including in house provision at Severn View Residential Home in the south of the county and private providers. It was added that despite the demographics of increasing numbers of age 85+ residents, use of residential care has remained static. It was noted that there is an increase in numbers of people with advanced dementia and in these circumstances a care home is the most appropriate placement.

The availability of residential care in the north of county was questioned and it was responded that there is sufficiency in the whole county. The authority purchases approximately 10% of the places available and supply meets demand. It is forecast that as the capital threshold increases, a higher proportion of care home placements will be purchased, as more people become the responsibility of the authority and a different relationship with the care home sector will develop.

A Member questioned, with the changed capital threshold, if the Welsh Government will provide assistance as the changes will place more demand on the budget. It was explained that there is a Welsh Government grant from the current financial year 2017/18 and persons dropping below the £30,000 threshold are reported to Welsh Government to trigger funding. In response to a further question about whether or not the grant will cover demand, it was commented that demand could be more than the grant funding and the activity data to support this point will be provided by tracking the people dropping below the capital threshold amount and the true cost to the authority. The opinion was provided that, on past experience, it was unlikely that the true cost of demand would be covered in full.

A Member referred to the increase in young people on the Autistic Spectrum now feeding through to adult services and questioned if there is sufficient provision. In response, it was explained that budget is set aside to provide for people with learning disabilities which includes those on the Autistic Spectrum. It was added that for the next three years, Welsh Government has invested in the Gwent region to establish an Integrated Autism Service for all ages.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June, 2017 at 10.00 am

Monmouthshire is hosting the service for the region. It was suggested that this could be a topic for consideration at a future meeting.

#### **Committee Conclusions:**

Key issues raised under this report were the pressures of residential care. Members had concerns that the Welsh Government grant would be unlikely to cover the true cost of demand in full, however, members heard that despite the demographics of increasing numbers of age 85+ residents, use of residential care has remained static. Members highlighted the need to ensure a watching brief on the sufficiency of provision in line with demographic trends.

The committee agreed that a report on the progress of the Welsh Government funded Integrated Autism Service across the Gwent region would be a future work programme item.

#### **10. Social Services Chief Officer Annual Report**

##### **Context:**

To provide Adults Select Committee with the Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services for consideration and comment. It was explained that regrettably the report had been omitted from the agenda but it was agreed by Members that they would listen and make comments.

##### **Key Issues**

1. This is the Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services, and reflects on the financial year of 2016/17. The report is intended to reflect on progress in delivering the priorities set out in last year's annual report, performance for that year, and, maps out the key areas for development and improvement in 2016/17. It enables the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) to test out whether our assessment of progress and development is consistent with the range of evidence gathered and presented to them as well as their direct experience through site visits, regulatory activity and themed inspections. The format of the report has changed is now in a nationally developed template which aligns to the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014). Each Director in Wales must report on performance and risk and set out plans for improvement in relation to:

- Summary of performance;
- How people are shaping our services;
- Promoting and improving the wellbeing of those we help;
- Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing;
- Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society;
- Supporting people to safely develop and maintain health domestic, family and personal relationships;
- Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm;
- How we do what we do;
- Our partnership working, political and corporate leadership, governance and accountability;
- Our priorities for improvement.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June, 2017 at 10.00 am

2. The annual report provides an opportunity to reflect on what we are doing to make a difference to the lives of the most vulnerable citizens of Monmouthshire, what we do well, and where we need to do even better. The report explains the context in which we are working and how we will continue to improve and modernise. It highlights some excellent, leading edge, practice, workforce development, service provision and commissioning. The remodelling of care at home through the roll out of the Monmouthshire Care at Home is just one example of where this is the case. It shows progress from the improvement objectives set last year – the Children’s Services Improvement Programme is on track overall to deliver excellence in children’s services in the 3 year timescale of the programme. There has been particular progress in how we manage contacts with and referrals to the service, and stabilising and supporting our workforce.

3. There are also areas where risk and challenge is highlighted. People in Monmouthshire who need care and support in the community are not always receiving it from the right services as quickly as they need to, with some delays in hospital settings but more in the community. Securing sufficient quality of working with the care sector to implement the right models of care and support, and implement a workforce development plan for the care workforce is the highest priority for adult services. The report highlights the ongoing risks and areas for development in children’s social services, particularly evident in the high numbers of children on the child protection register. There is an accelerated need to integrate better targeted prevention and early intervention through the team around the family with children’s social services and to recruit more local foster carers for Monmouthshire children.

4. The Annual Report articulates a vision and associated priorities for wellbeing, social care and health in Monmouthshire which seeks to build on the many strengths that exist with the aim of delivering consistently excellent outcomes across the board. This is within the context of the new legislative framework for Social Services in Wales, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014), the increasing challenges of demography which could significantly increase demand for social services, the challenging of securing a workforce and providing services in a rural county and reducing budgets. The balance in the report is as much around wellbeing as care and support: so much of the success of social care and health is dependent on resilient people, families and communities who live the lives they want to live without the need for care and support from statutory social services.

#### **Member Scrutiny**

A Member advocated a “helping hand” brand instead of the label of Social Services would be a way of overcoming barriers to address isolation, care and support.

A Member recommended the Age Cymru website that provides a comprehensive list of services for individuals. It was commented that a priority is to highlight the many services available. For example, DEWIS is a useful wellbeing resource.

The point was made that the lack of internet, computer skills and inability to visit the Hubs is a significant issue in communication and provision of services. It was suggested that leaflets in libraries and village halls may be more beneficial but also accepted that there is a need to look for other means of engagement to communicate with vulnerable and lonely people. It was suggested, by a Member, that Elected Members have a unique role in the ward and can communicate with residents via newsletters etc.

A Member added that other barriers include busy families, people struggling to maintain independence and a reluctance to ask for help which could see some people “slipping through the net”. In response, it was acknowledged that one size does not fit all needs of communities and that digital responses are not always appropriate. The use of community connectors and befrienders, for example, aims to combat disengagement. The Chief Officer agreed it was important to reflect these elements in the priorities for next year.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June, 2017 at 10.00 am

A Member asked if the report could be amended to include communication for elderly people about the type of help available in an appropriate format.

A Member questioned if the authority had fully mapped the third sector offer to provide a list of what services are available. It was responded that part of the information from voluntary and community groups is known but not all. It was added that a Community Development Team is being established and mapping the resources in an area would be a key role.

In response to a Member's question regarding the creation of a team and how outcomes would be measured, it was explained that the authority is working with Public Health Wales and the University of Swansea to ensure that the correct measures are in use and an annual report will be made. It was commented that it will be important for Members to be aware of who the Community Development Officer is for their ward. A Member emphasised that this was vital to the success of the service.

#### **Committee Conclusions:**

**Discussion of the report highlighted the key issues of barriers to access services such as busy families, people struggling to maintain independence and a reluctance to ask for help which could see some people "slipping through the net".**

**The Committee were concerned that communication for elderly people, in particular, about the type of help available to them, must be in an appropriate format.**

**The Committee were reassured that there is some progress in mapping the third sector offer to provide a list of what services are available in areas and that provision of comprehensive lists will be a key role of the Community Development Team.**

#### **11. Corporate Safeguarding Policy**

##### **Context:**

To inform Members of the introduction of the new Corporate Safeguarding Policy

##### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that Members agree and adopt the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

##### **Key Issues**

Safeguarding children and adults at risk has the very highest priority in the Council.

- Safeguarding, under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014, is recognised as everybody's responsibility and considerable progress has been made over the last 5 years to systematically embed safeguarding culture, knowledge and practice.
- All staff, paid and unpaid, and Councillors share a responsibility both corporately and individually to ensure that children and adults at risk are treated with respect and protected from harm.
- Whilst the Council does have an existing safeguarding policy in place it is heavily focussed towards educational settings and other child and family services.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June, 2017 at 10.00 am

Safeguarding is therefore firmly embedded in some Directorates and service areas however there are varying levels of understanding as to expectations in other parts of the organisation.

- This policy will be a mechanism to evaluate understanding, systems and training throughout the Council and ensures that safeguarding is firmly placed as core to the business of the council.

#### **Member Scrutiny:**

A Member commented that this was a hugely comprehensive report with high aspirations and questioned the membership of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Co-ordinating Group. It was confirmed that the group is chaired by the Chief Officer, Social Care, Health and Housing. The membership comprises Chief Officers or Heads of Service from each directorate plus representation from the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit. It was explained that the aim of the group is to provide a comprehensive approach and effective governance. It was confirmed that there is no member involvement in the Group but this could be considered. The Chief Officer questioned if scrutiny through Select Committees provided enough assurance alongside reports to Cabinet and Council or if it was felt necessary to have member involvement in the Group which has a more operational role.

A Member agree that all councillors should be trained to Level 1 Safeguarding and queried how quickly training will be provided and asked how to ensure all members complete the training. It was confirmed that there is a session on 10<sup>th</sup> July session at 2pm and that those who don't attend will be identified to attend another session.

A Member asked how the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit will be monitoring the effectiveness of scrutiny and it was explained that representatives will attend Select Committee meetings, to present both their own reports but also to observe and monitor other items of business. Members were reminded that all committee reports should contain a section to identify and address "Safeguarding Implications". The inclusion and quality of these statements will be sampled across all committees by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit to scrutinise safeguarding arrangements.

The level and availability of training for volunteers was queried. It was responded that support and training for volunteers is provided in a proportionate and convenient format. It was explained that a new Volunteering Policy is being prepared that will rank the level of training against the volunteer role.

#### **Committee Conclusions:**

The Committee concluded that this was a hugely comprehensive report with high aspirations.

Discussion centred on:

- whether there should be Member involvement in the Whole Authority Safeguarding Co-ordinating Group;
- agreeing strong support for all Elected Members to complete Level 1 Safeguarding training;
- how the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit will be monitoring the effectiveness of scrutiny; and
- that sufficient and appropriate levels of training for volunteers is available, noting that a new Volunteering Policy is being written and will be subject of scrutiny.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June, 2017 at 10.00 am

#### 12. Action List

**Stroke Services:** It was agreed to consider the inclusion of further scrutiny of Stroke Services in the forward work plan. It was proposed that the forward work plan should be considered in more detail at the next meeting.

**Ambulance Service:** An update was provided that there is a defibrillator in Usk County Hall in Reception.

**Usk Prison:** It was suggested that the dialogue with Usk Prison continues. It was proposed to revisit this topic in 18 months' time to consider progress in relation to the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.

**Community Health Council:** It was agreed to maintain contribution from the Community Health Council by issuing an invitation when the next scrutiny with the Health Board takes place.

**Supporting People:** It was agreed to add this item to the work programme.

#### 13. Adult Select Committee Forward Work Programme

The Adult Select Committee Work Programme will be discussed at the next meeting at which time, co-option of members will be under consideration to ensure representation from across the county. In preparation, Members were invited to consider representation from possible organisations or suitable individuals for co-option noting that witnesses for specific topics can also be invited to meetings to enrich the discussion.

#### 14. Cabinet and Council Work Programme

It was explained that Officers have been asked to populate the work programme with all strategies and decisions for at least the next six months for publication and also to assist in planning pre-decision scrutiny.

Members' attention was also drawn to matters for single member decision.

The Chair explained about the planner which is updated on a Friday and encouraged members to be aware of changes.

A Member asked if there was any scope to ask for reports on specific subjects and it was explained that this is for committee to decide adding that the Policy and Performance Manager will come to next meeting to help identify and prioritise areas for scrutiny, and to organise the Adult Select Committee's workload. Members were requested to think about the topics for possible scrutiny e.g. Mental Health.

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held  
at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 20th June,  
2017 at 10.00 am**

**15. To discuss the timing of meetings**

The date and time of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at 10.00am. It was agreed that meetings would continue to be held on Tuesdays at 10.00am.

**16. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting as 25th July 2017 at 10.00am**

**The meeting ended at 11.50 am**