

**MINUTES OF COMMUNITY MEETING HELD AT GRAY HILL HALL, CALDICOT
SCHOOL AT 6PM ON THURSDAY 28TH APRIL 2011**

Present:

Caldicot Town Council

Cllrs D Evans [Mayor], M Stevens [Deputy Mayor], D Ashwin, J Bond, A Easson, K Harris, E Harvey, R J Higginson, V Lloyd, A Perrett, P Watts, R Stewart, S Webb,

Mon CC

Mr G Ashworth, Head of Planning, Cllr R Greenland, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Education

Members of Press and Public [75 registered electors + others]

1. **Apologies:** Cllrs C Ashwin, J Haskey, A Lloyd
2. **Declarations of Interest:** Cllrs D Evans, J Bond, A Easson, R J Higginson, D Ashwin, County Cllr J Marshall

Cllr D Evans, Mayor, opened the meeting, declared an interest and left the room. In the absence of Cllr Evans, Cllr M Stevens, Deputy Mayor, took the chair.

3. To consider sale of Caldicot School fields

Cllr M Stevens opened the meeting stating the meeting had been called at the request of residents of Caldicot to consider the sale of land at Caldicot School

Cllr Stevens introduced Mr G Ashworth and Cllr R Greenland, Mon CC representatives who responded to questions from the public in relation to various issues – **See Appendix A**

Following a lengthy debate it was proposed and seconded to hold a referendum in relation to the sale of Caldicot School fields: Vote: 54 For – 4 Against

It was requested that Mon CC undertake the referendum and set the question in conjunction with the Chairperson and Cllr R J Higginson. Cllr Stevens advised the question for the referendum must be forthcoming from the public and stressed the importance of the question being clear and unambiguous.

Following several suggestions for the question it was proposed by Mr Peter Strong and seconded by Mr David Gale that the following question be set:

“DO YOU APPROVE OF MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL’S PLANS FOR A NEW SUPERMARKET IN CALDICOT TO BE BUILT ON PART OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL FIELDS?”

Some members of the public left the meeting following the vote for a referendum

The meeting closed at 7.50pm

Appendix A

Questions and issues posed in relation to the sale of Caldicot School fields:

Q: If referendum passed, how long will it hold up/stop supermarket coming?

- Application for supermarket with MCC for many years, research updated now Waitrose opened for some time
- Political stance: Ultimately Mon CC's decision to sell off land not Town Council – MCC owns the land and currently proposes to continue with plans to sell the land.
- Views of School Governors, other members of Mon CC considered - best interest to move forward
- Town Council awaiting result from WAG on success of bid for new 21st Century School before making a firm decision
- School requires urgent attention to bring up to standard – MCC prefer to build new school.
- Caldicot School is priority – state of buildings worse than other secondary schools in Monmouthshire
- If people of Caldicot are not prepared to sell the land priority within Monmouthshire could change
- Under 21st Century Schools – MCC need to provide 30% of funding
- New school will be over provided in terms of play areas

Q: Which supermarket is coming? How will Mon CC decide who is successful?

- Agents appointed – considerable expressions of interest from 'usual' supermarket chains
- Scoring matrix point system to decide on successful applicant

Q: Has MCC given consideration to possible number of pupils, including local communities who will attend the school

- Planning/Education Departments work together
- Analysis of births/deaths for likely population undertaken

Q: Can you guarantee that money generated from the sale of land would all go into the school?

- MCC cannot guarantee - when 'education' land is sold, proceeds are ring-fenced for education purposes only and allocated to priority within the county – Caldicot School currently 100% priority at MCC

Q: If referendum opposed, will MCC abide by decision or proceed as it wishes?

- If a referendum is undertaken opportunity for MCC to reconsider its current position – result of referendum will be referred to Cabinet but ultimate decision down to MCC – dependent on strength of argument at the time.

Q: Will a referendum be put forward in timely manner?

- Cost of referendum will fall to Town Council – circ £5,000
- School children signed original petition

Q: How will the plan affect retailers and how do they feel about it?

- Chepstow Tesco – 30,000 sq feet, proposed Caldicot supermarket – 26,000 sq feet net – Waitrose 14-15,000 sq feet
- Government recommendations to place supermarkets in/near town centres with pedestrian 'linkage' to existing shops to encourage footfall and regenerate and benefit local businesses
- 25% of supermarket shoppers will also use local shops

- People of Caldicot shop outside of the town
- Issues of shops closing in Chepstow, Lydney and other areas as a result of supermarkets being built

Caldicot needs a supermarket

- 1970s – 3 supermarkets in town with then population of 4–5,000
- *Caldicot deserves 21st Century School, supermarket would generate local employment*
- *Business rates and rents are too high in the town centre*
- Town Centre landlords are private companies outside of MCC control
- *Caldicot is a dying town – needs urgent action*
- *Cannot stay still – need to progress in this matter*
- *Town Council and MCC let people down in 1970s by not including adequate infrastructure to provide for new development in the town – lack of foresight*
- MCC priorities for protection: (1) Education (2) Care of vulnerable and (3) Economic Development
- Monmouthshire School area stats: Monmouth – 76,000m², Chepstow – 86,000m², King Henry 8th 112,000m², Caldicot – 190,000m² [including Sudbrook Cricket Club area 12-15% of total area] – excess over 44% in terms of playing area
- Pupils currently choosing Chepstow and Wydean School over Caldicot – new school would attract more pupils and Caldicot could end up with a school which is too small for demand.

Q: Has size of schools and ratio of pupils to size of schools been considered?

- School population 1,500 – 1650 = recommended 6 hectares of playing fields – Caldicot currently has 9 hectares
- Plans to include multi-use play areas

Q: What revenue would S106 funds provide for use in town centre?

- Proposed to move Woodstock Way behind supermarket to enhance linkage, town centre improvements to make more attractive
- Caldicot has become a deprived area*

Q: Has relocation of Caldicot School away from town centre been considered?

- Proposals rejected – expense of transporting pupils – sufficient ground to rebuild on existing site.
- Plans published showing possibility to build new school on new part of ground before demolishing existing buildings

Q: If agree to sell land and bid not successful from WAG, how much money is MCC prepared to put in to the school?

- Caldicot School is priority but decision is a matter for Education Dept. and County Councillors to decide

Q: If supermarket not forthcoming, will the land be sold for development?

- Planning permission will only be granted for a supermarket.

Q: Have alternative sites been considered for a supermarket?

- Originally 5 sites considered – school fields is only site which can provide essential link to town centre

Q: Will referendum be publicised? – Public Meeting not publicised

- 7 days legal requirement - notices placed in prominent areas of the town.

Majority of people of Caldicot would like a budget supermarket and regeneration of the town.

Town Council supports a new school for Caldicot

- No assurance of money from WAG
- Planning stipulations can be put in place at planning stage, eg opening hours, amount of car parking, delivery times, and priorities to local jobs.
- Danger of supermarket being right size to attract people to shop

Q: Supermarkets are notorious for buying land and holding on to it, what assurance will you give to build within certain amount of time?

- Full amount of money to be paid when planning permission granted

Issues of fuel running out in future