

MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
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**DRAFT Minutes of the
 Extraordinary Full Council Meeting
 held on Monday 25th January 2021 at 6.00pm
 held via BT Telephone Conference Call**

Present:

Cllr C Blair	Cllr E Bryn
Cllr T Christopher (Deputy Mayor)	Cllr A Dewhurst
Cllr M Feakins (Mayor)	Cllr J Gunter
Cllr R Jupp	Cllr J Lucas
Cllr R Roden (arrived late)	Cllr R Smith
Cllr J Treharne (arrived late)	Cllr S White

D. McNeill (Locum Clerk)
Mike Moran, MCC
2 members of the press and public

159.	To receive apologies for absence. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr K Jackson-Graham and Cllr A Legg. An apology was received from Cllr K Breeze.
160.	To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda. Cllr Christopher declared a personal interest in item no. 170.
161.	Public Participation <i>To receive questions from members of the public for a maximum of 10 minutes. (During this time of remote meetings any members of public who wish to speak/ask a question must email their request in by the Friday prior to the meeting)</i> There had been no requests from members of the public to speak at this meeting.
162.	Minutes for Approval To approve Full Council Minutes for the remote meeting held on 04/01/2021. With one minor amendment to remove the word 'chair' from the councillor attendance list, it was resolved to approve the Full Council Minutes for the remote meeting held on 04/01/2021 as a correct record.
163.	Chippenham Playground Contribution To receive information from Mike Moran on funding requirements for the Chippenham Playground Improvement scheme and to consider whether to contribute £10,000 from General Reserves toward the project. <i>Cllr Jupp entered the meeting and declared a personal interest in this item.</i>

The proposed scheme is currently out for consultation online. In better circumstances, a full public consultation would have been undertaken. The consultation closes on 31st January. To date, 315 responses have been received including 100 from children. A majority support the proposals but a significant number of comments have been received with some recurring themes coming through specifically provision of equipment for disabled children including wheelchair users, more climbing options and a zip wire. An investigation into equipment options for disabled children has identified that Chippenham playground is not the best location in Monmouth because of accessibility issues. Instead the Rockfield play area has been identified as the better option because of proximity of disabled toilets in the nearby Community Centre and vehicle access. However, the plans will be amended to install a wheelchair accessible roundabout at Chippenham and provide more climbing options for younger children. There are a number of planning conditions that need to be discharged on the play area so it is appropriate to complete the consultation and address the main issues raised first. The county council plans to start installation before the end of March, Covid and weather permitting.

The total cost of the project is £136K which will be mostly funded from s106 monies amounting to £111K, plus £10K from the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant. A further £12K grant is being sought from the Wye Valley AONB. If this latter funding application is successful, there will be no funding shortfall - but if all the funding can't be secured then elements of the project will be left until a later date.

He advised that MCC are currently reviewing all play provision in Monmouth, which has 26 separate play areas; they are seeking to reduce the number of play areas and invest in the remainder. Seeking to invest in Rockfield which has 10 small play areas to create one focused play area with good quality provision. They have commissioned a review into repurposing some of the smaller areas for wildlife or allotments and have around £80K to invest in this in the new financial year. Once the options are available, a full public consultation will be undertaken. MCC are very conscious of ensuring good quality provision in low income areas. If MTC were minded to contribute £10K, MCC would be very grateful but it would be up to the Council to decide whether to allow the funds to be used for wider play provision, e.g. at the Rockfield site.

A discussion followed and it was suggested that MTC should be focusing on investing money in our own play area in Drybridge Park and MM suggested that Nigel Leaworthy would be able to provide advice to help with this. It was asked what provision there would be for older children and it was advised that MCC annually undertake playmaker conferences with year 5 students and the overwhelming majority prefer to play in open spaces, however it was noted that they recently invested heavily in the skate park and could consider further provision there in the future. In response to a question about play investment in Wyesham, he advised that £95K has been spent there in recent years and the intention is to establish six neighbourhood play areas in Monmouth for wider provision and ten doorstep parks which will include Wyesham. There is no specific security for play equipment but a natural form of enclosure and green landscaping to prevent inappropriate access is proposed rather than fencing and all play equipment is covered by all risks insurance with weekly play inspections on high use play areas and annual inspections by an insurer-appointed independent inspector, which MCC is required to react within two weeks to any issues identified in the external reports.

It was **resolved** to approve the proposal to contribute £10,000 from general reserves

toward the Chippenham playground improvement scheme and if not required because funding is achieved from other sources, then for it to be used to contribute toward play provision in Monmouth generally.

Mike Moran was thanked for attending the meeting.

164. Finance

(a) Payments:

To approve the accounts for payment.

It was **resolved** to approve the accounts for payment.

(b) Bank Reconciliations:

To review and approve statements of bank reconciliations for cashbook 3 at 30/11/20 and all cashbooks for 31/12/2020 as available.

It was **resolved** to approve statements of bank reconciliations for cashbook 3 at 30/11/20 and all cashbooks for 31/12/2020.

(c) VAT Return

To approve the VAT Return for the quarter dated 01/10/2020 – 31/12/2020.

It was **resolved** to approve the VAT Return for the quarter dated 01/10/2020 – 31/12/2020.

(d) Budget Reports

To consider and approve MTC Budget Reports to date.

It was **resolved** to approve the Budget reports to date.

(e) Year End Accounts Support

To approve the quote from RBS of £560 + VAT for the preparation of the year end Accounts.

It was **resolved** to approve the quote from RBS of £560 + VAT to provide support for the preparation of the year end Accounts.

(f) Lloyds Term Deposit

To approve the proposal to close the Lloyds Term Deposit and transfer the funds to the Monmouthshire Building Society.

It was **resolved** to close the Lloyds Term Deposit and transfer the funds to the Monmouthshire Building Society.

(g) Retrospective Approval

To approve expenditure authorised under delegated authority for the purchase of 2 x laptops and 3 x office chairs. The Locum Clerk advised that three laptops had been purchased, not two as stated in the agenda. It has been challenging to source like for like quotes for laptops because of the pandemic but it was noted that they were supplied by a trusted supplier used regularly in the past by the Council and whose prices were competitive. It was noted that these items are capital expenditure and financial regulations only currently permit delegated authority for expenditure on

	<p>revenue items. It was suggested this could be reviewed as part of the Whole Office Review.</p> <p>It was resolved to approve expenditure authorised under delegated authority for the purchase of 3 x laptops and 3 x office chairs.</p> <p>(h) Microsoft Project Licence To approve the Microsoft Project Licence for up to 5 users for £22.50 per month and retrospectively approve a £7.50 per month licence purchased when resolving significant and ongoing IT issues.</p> <p>It was resolved to approve the Microsoft Project Licence for up to 5 users for £22.50 per month and retrospectively approve a £7.50 per month licence purchased when resolving significant and ongoing IT issues.</p> <p>(i) Mobile Phone Contracts To approve two mobile phones on contracts for staff use and to determine which model, company and contract (report attached).</p> <p>It was resolved to approve two mobile phones on contracts for staff use, to accept the officer recommendation in the report and ensure contracts are reviewed at the end of the term.</p> <p>(j) Internal Audit Recommendations from FYE 31st March 2020 To note progress on the internal audit recommendations from the previous financial Year.</p> <p>It was resolved to note progress on the internal audit recommendations from the financial year end to 31st March 2020.</p>
<p>165.</p>	<p>Financial Regulations</p> <p>To review financial regulations. The locum clerk advised that draft proposed amendments included allowing the use of debit or credit cards, subject to appropriate internal controls and amendments to reflect the fact the clerk and RFO would no longer be in separate roles.</p> <p>It was resolved to adopt financial regulations with the proposed amendments.</p>
<p>166.</p>	<p>Service Level Agreements</p> <p>To receive further information regarding the charge for SLA's this financial year given the pandemic situation and reduced service provision.</p> <p><i>Jamie Treharne entered the meeting 18.53</i> <i>Richard Roden entered the meeting 18.56</i></p> <p>The locum clerk advised that the work under the grounds maintenance, street sweeping and street decorations contracts have continued as per the agreements. Regarding the toilets contracts, the Blestium Street toilets have remained open throughout but the Agincourt toilets have not been open the entire time. MCC report there has been no reduction in staff hours because of the additional cleaning required during the pandemic but we could write if we want them to consider a rebate.</p>

	<p>Regarding the rental of the offices in the Shire Hall, notification was received today (following provision of dates of access), that they propose to reduce the annual fee for the downstairs office from £9677.22, to £967.22. There was no mention of the fee for the upstairs office.</p> <p>a) It was resolved to ask Monmouthshire County Council whether there is a chance of a rebate on the SLA for the toilet provision given that the Agincourt toilets have not been open entirely.</p> <p>b) It was resolved to thank Monmouthshire County Council for the 90% reduction in the fees for rental of the downstairs office and to ask whether the reduction also applies to the upstairs office.</p>
<p>167.</p>	<p>Committee Structure and Working Groups Review</p> <p>a) To consider adopting a new committee structure by March 2021</p> <p>b) To consider a report outlining the structure of the ACE working group and its sub-groups.</p> <p>c) To review the purpose, function and effectiveness of current working groups.</p> <p>d) To consider setting up a task and finish group to undertake this review (report attached).</p> <p>It was resolved to set up a task and finish group consisting of six members to include all three officers and Cllrs Blair (as Chair of Communities), Feakins (as Chair of Finance & Policy) and Christopher (as Chair of Environment) with the following remit:</p> <p>To review the current committee structure, delegations (to Officers and committees) and current working groups including their purpose and effectiveness and make recommendations to the February meeting of Full Council to include a proposed timetable of meetings for the next civic year.</p>
<p>168.</p>	<p>Schedule of Meetings</p> <p>To approve a schedule of meetings for February and March 2021 (until a new committee structure is in place from April 2021).</p> <p>It was resolved to approve the schedule of meetings for February and March 2021.</p>
<p>169.</p>	<p>Committee Membership</p> <p>To consider a request by Councillor Bryn to join the Planning Committee.</p> <p>It was resolved to appoint Councillor Bryn to the Planning Committee.</p>
<p>170.</p>	<p>Sight Awareness</p> <p>To nominate a sight loss champion on behalf of Monmouth Town Council. Cllr Christopher reported on the recent sight loss awareness training recently provided by Sight Cymru.</p> <p>It was resolved to appoint Cllr Christopher as the sight loss champion for Monmouth Town Council.</p>

<p>171. Website</p>	<p>To consider Welsh language options.</p> <p>It was generally felt that MTC should be incorporating the Welsh language into the website to support the Welsh Government’s Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers strategy and to be proud to be Welsh.</p> <p>Members were mindful of the logistics, complexity and cost of having it completely bilingual as there would be issues with keeping the website up to date in both languages especially reports and documents. However it was felt that a partial transition to Welsh would be a step forward and it was suggested that the static pages could be translated into Welsh as well. The comment was made that the Welsh translations on the current website were very poor.</p> <p>It was resolved to progress with a partial inclusion of Welsh for the static pages on the website but to ensure the use of good quality Welsh translation with the uploaded documents to remain in English, to seek quotes for translation and to report back to Full Council.</p>
<p>172. Monmouthshire Electoral Review</p>	<p>It was noted that the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales is conducting an electoral review of Monmouthshire (details here https://ldbc.gov.wales/reviews/12-20/monmouthshire-electoral-review) with draft proposals affecting the Drybridge ward. Consultation period closes 10th March 2021. Councillors were encouraged to respond to the consultations independently of the Council.</p>
<p>173. Postponement of Elections</p>	<p>The communication received from the Welsh Government regarding the postponement of elections until 1st March 2021 – 6th May 2021 was noted.</p>
<p>174. ACE Green Spaces Tree Planting</p>	<p>To note that the proposed tree planting scheme approved at the last meeting is to be delayed until next planting season (November 2021 onwards) owing to coronavirus restrictions and to approve a recommendation to vire the funds to earmarked reserves for this purpose.</p> <p>It was resolved to note that the proposed tree planting scheme approved at the last meeting is to be delayed until next planting season and to vire the unspent funds to earmarked reserves for the next planting season.</p>
<p>175. Exclusion of the Press and Public</p>	<p>To resolve to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business, by the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960, Section 1 (2), on the grounds of confidentiality.</p>

	<p>It was resolved to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business, by the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960, Section 1 (2), on the grounds of confidentiality.</p>
<p>176.</p>	<p>Staffing Sub-Committee Recommendations</p> <p>To consider and approve the recommendations of the Staffing Sub-Committee meeting held on 19/01/21. It was suggested to set a maximum advertisement budget and approve where the funds would be spent from.</p> <p>It was resolved to approve the recommendations of the Staffing Sub-Committee regarding the appointment of the Town Clerk/RFO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) that the SSC be responsible for the recruitment of the Town Clerk with ad hoc support to be provided by the Locum Clerk and OVW as required. b) the proposed salary scale range, draft job description and person specification and draft advertisement to Full Council for approval. c) that the vacancy be advertised in the South Wales Argus (up to £300 for one week), on Indeed (up to £1,200), with the Society of Local Council Clerks using their Gold package (4 weeks - £337 + VAT), with OVW (free), using social media (free) and on MTC website (free) to a maximum of £2,000 (FR 11.1 a) ii) applies). d) To recommend approval of the proposed recruitment timetable. e) that the interview panel be made up of members of the SSC plus one other as an independent observer/participant and to give delegated authority to the SSC to determine the number and make-up of the sifting and interview panel. <p>It was asked that the staff be thanked for all they do from the whole Town Council and the people of Monmouth and the kindness with which they do it.</p>
<p>177.</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next scheduled remote meeting will be Monday 22nd February 2021 at 7:00pm.</p>

Meeting closed at 19.57