

MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

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**DRAFT Minutes of the
Extraordinary Full Council Meeting
held on Monday 22nd February 2021 at 7.00pm
held via BT Telephone Conference Call**

- Present:**
- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Cllr C Blair | Cllr E Bryn |
| Cllr Breeze (left early) | Cllr T Christopher (Deputy Mayor) |
| Cllr A Dewhurst | Cllr M Feakins (Mayor) |
| Cllr J Gunter | Cllr Jackson-Graham |
| Cllr R Jupp | Cllr J Lucas |
| Cllr R Roden | Cllr J Treharne |
| Cllr S White | |
- D. McNeill (Locum Clerk)**
Roger Hoggins, MCC
5 members of the press and public

178.	To receive apologies for absence. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr R. Smith. No apology was received from Cllr Legg.
179.	To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda. Cllrs T Christopher and S White declared a personal interest in minute 195.
180.	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> No requests to speak at the meeting by members of the public had been received.
181.	Minutes for Approval To approve Full Council Minutes for the remote meeting held on 25/01/2021. It was resolved to approve the minutes of the remote Full Council Meeting held on 25/01/2021 as a true record.
182.	Monmouth Town Centre Enhancement Proposals To consider proposals from Monmouthshire County Council for temporary street enhancements to Monnow Street including planters and to consider a request for funding

support for the maintenance of the planters with funds approved to be taken from the Town Council Covid 19 Town Recovery budget.

Roger Hoggins advised of plans previously reported to the Environment Affairs Committee involving improvements to Monnow Street including temporary kerbing infilled with tarmac to mimic the line of the white barriers, which will widen the pavement whilst keeping some parking spaces. Challenges include providing adequate drainage and ensuring indiscriminate parking is minimised and for this it is proposed to install over 30 planters, some with juvenile trees which will also brighten up the street scene. The temporary solution will be in place for approximately 12 – 18 months until a permanent scheme has been decided and funding secured. Initial consultation undertaken on a permanent scheme will influence the design which will be further consulted on.

This temporary scheme is funded by Welsh Government as a one-off capital scheme and there is limited funding available for the maintenance of the planting scheme. It is this that MCC is seeking funding support from MTC for. It is estimated to cost in the region of £15K in 2021. If the Town Council was minded to fund the scheme, there are three options:

- a) extend existing contractual arrangements
- b) employ a staff member directly (20hpw over 52 weeks)
- c) fund MCC to undertake the work under an SLA.

Whichever option is taken forward, a schedule of works would be required.

The hard landscaping work including kerblines and back filling will hopefully start next week. An order was placed this week with a local company to make the wooden planters to order which will take several weeks for delivery.

Councillors queried the nature and detail of the planting scheme including whether it would include bee pollinators, whether the planters would have water reservoirs, whether there would be ramps for bicycles in the new kerblines and whether the road markings would be permanent (or stickers as previously used which peeled off).

Councillors were generally in favour of the scheme but felt that more information was required and it was proposed to set up a task and finish group to meet as soon as possible to consider all aspects of the proposals in greater detail. Roger Hoggins offered to support this group either himself or another member of the team.

It was **resolved** to set up a task & finish group to meet as soon as possible to consider the details of the Monmouth town centre proposals and to make recommendations on whether to support the scheme and if so, the best option for maintaining it to the March meeting of Full Council.

A named vote was requested:

For – Cllrs Blair, Breeze, Bryn, Christopher, Dewhurst, Feakins, Gunter, Jackson-Graham, Jupp, Lucas, Roden, Treharne, White
Against – None
Abstention - None

183. Contracts Review

	<p>To review contract agreements.</p> <p>It was resolved to approve the contract agreements as per the list provided.</p>
<p>184.</p>	<p>Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Payments: To approve the accounts for payment for the period 19/01/2021 to date and any late payments. b) Bank Reconciliations: To review and approve statements of bank reconciliations for all cashbooks at 31/01/2021. c) To approve payment by direct debit for: BT Conferencing; the mobile phones contracts with Three (approved at the last meeting) and Blueglow/Synergy ICT. d) Council debit card <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) To note the terms and conditions of the Council debit card. ii) To suspend financial regulation 6.17 to allow a Council debit card to be issued in the name of the Finance Support Officer until the new Town Clerk/RFO is in post and review at that time. iii) To adopt internal controls for the use of the Council's debit card. e) Update from Internal Auditor To receive an update from the internal auditor, with comments from officers on points raised, following the first visit (note this is not a formal interim audit report). <p>It was resolved to approve all the above items.</p>
<p>185.</p>	<p>Committee Structure and Working Groups Review</p> <p>To receive a report from the Task and Finish Group to include proposals for a new committee structure, a review of the purpose, function and effectiveness of current working groups and a draft schedule of meetings for the forthcoming civic year.</p> <p><i>Cllr K Breeze left the meeting</i></p> <p>Councillors were generally very supportive of the proposals for restructuring committees although there were some reservations expressed about the August recess and the workload for one committee of combining the Communities and Environmental Affairs committees. However, proposals for ways to reduce the committee workload were welcomed.</p> <p>It was suggested that a better name for the new committee could be considered, two proposals included "People and Places" or "Town Affairs". With regard to the proposed requirement for councillor requests for agenda items to be accompanied by supporting papers, it was suggested that if a proposal item found general favour, consideration needed to be given as to whether it should be paid officers or volunteer councillors who then prepared the detailed papers.</p>

In general, it was noted that the proposals are aimed at helping the Council to achieve outcomes and to split strategy (decision making) from operational matters (delivery).

It was **resolved**

- a) For Full Council to meet monthly except August
- b) For Finance and Policy Committee to meet four times per year with extraordinary meetings to be called if required
- c) To proceed with combining Community Affairs and Environment Affairs into one new committee to meet monthly, with the name to be agreed at the next meeting following suggestions from councillors
- d) Planning Committee to meet as and when required in the same manner it has been during the pandemic (to be reviewed periodically)
- e) To separate committee structure from Standing Orders and provide clearer remits and delegations to committees and the Clerk and to consider at the March meeting of Full Council (including appropriate recommended revisions to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations to facilitate the proposals) following review by the task and finish group
- f) To have a meetings recess in August (except for Planning)
- g) To note recommendations from officers for reducing committee workloads including developing policies for regular items, to be further considered by the task and finish group and report back to Full Council
- h) To remove outside bodies from every agenda and to report to committee(s) as necessary.
- i) That council adopt a policy for members when requesting an item be added to an agenda of “no supporting papers, no agenda item” requiring a brief paper initially and more detailed once the principle has been approved and to consider whether officers or councillors should prepare detailed papers.
- j) To approve the draft meeting timetable from 1st April 2021.

186. Community Partnership Agreements

- a) Partnership Agreement Principle

It was **resolved** to approve the principle of partnership agreements for funding support of specific organisations offering services to the community in order to provide certainty for those organisations and to reduce administrative and meeting workloads.

- b) Monmouthshire MIND

To consider and approve a draft partnership agreement.

It was **resolved** to approve the draft partnership agreement with Mind Monmouthshire and to consider appointing a councillor to the Trustee Board of Mind Monmouthshire at the next meeting of Full Council.

Subject to approval of a) and b) above to also consider the principle of offering partnership agreements to:

- c) Monmouth Savoy Trust

To consider a proposed 3-year partnership agreement with the Monmouth Savoy Trust (MST) and agree an annual financial commitment (sum to be agreed) to support MST in lieu of free youth passes for all Monmouth Town primary school children aged between 5 and 11 years old for one Saturday a month at the theatre.

A figure of £15,000 per year was proposed.

Cllr Feakins advised that following discussion about grant funding for MST by Council last year, he had been in discussion with them about possible options for a partnership funding arrangement and he was very excited at the prospect of being able to support Monmouth's children and the theatre with this proposal. Whilst it was well received by Councillors, it was agreed that more detail was required including how the proposal would be managed and where the funding would come from. It was noted that as neither MST nor MTC had the capacity to manage a system for the passes, it was intended to approach the primary schools for assistance.

It was **resolved** to approve the principle of entering into a 3-year agreement subject to drafting an acceptable partnership agreement, with further details to be brought back to the next meeting of Full Council in March.

d) Monmouth Rotary Club for the Green Wall

To consider a proposed 3-year partnership agreement with the Monmouth Rotary Club to fund the Green Wall and agree an annual financial commitment (sum to be agreed) and to refer the details of the partnership agreement to Finance & Policy for approval in order to provide funding by the end of March. A figure of £2,000 per year was proposed.

It was noted that the partnership agreement should include reference to ensuring bee pollinators are included in the planting scheme and that the Town Council is acknowledged on signage and publicity.

It was **resolved** to support a 3-year partnership agreement with the Monmouth Rotary Club to fund the Green Wall and agree an annual financial commitment of £2,000 and to refer the details of the partnership agreement to Finance & Policy for approval in order to provide funding by the end of March.

e) Citizens Advice Monmouth

To consider a proposed 3-year partnership agreement with the Citizens Advice Monmouth and agree an annual financial commitment.

It was **resolved** to approve the principle of entering into a 3-year partnership agreement and to appoint Councillor Feakins to approach Citizens Advice Monmouth to discuss the feasibility and report to the next meeting of Full Council.

187. Welsh Language for the Website

To note and approve the offer of Welsh language translation for the static pages of the website by the Welsh Language and Equality Officer at Monmouth County Council. It was noted that this also required a decision on how to incorporate the Welsh language into the website and of various options, officers recommended a duplicate website, to be paid

	<p>from EMR Welsh Language. It was also noted that any documents uploaded to either website would be in English as it would be impractical to translate everything.</p> <p>It was resolved to accept the recommendation to create a duplicate Welsh language website at a cost of £650.</p>
	<p>Online Meeting Platform</p> <p>It was resolved to defer item 11 to later in the meeting.</p> <p>A recorded vote was requested.</p> <p>In favour: TC, AD, JG, JL, RR, JT, SW</p> <p>Against: CB, EB, J K-G, RJ</p>
188.	<p>Service Level Agreements</p> <p>To receive an update following the request for a rebate on the toilets SLA and the Shire Hall rental charges for the upstairs office.</p> <p>No update was available on the toilets SLA rebate. The Shire Hall rental charges have been confirmed at 10% of the usual charge for both the upstairs and downstairs offices given the lack of access to the building over the year. It was noted the invoice was approved for payment at 184 a) above.</p>
189.	<p>Chamber of Commerce Subscription for 20/21</p> <p>To discuss and agree a voluntary amount to be paid for 20/21 subscription to the Chamber of Commerce (usually £60 paid per annum).</p> <p>It was resolved to pay £60 for the 20/21 subscription to the Chamber of Commerce.</p>
190.	<p>Committee Membership</p> <p>(i) To consider a request by Councillors Lucas and Roden to resign from the Planning Committee.</p> <p>(ii) To consider a request by Councillor Legg to join the Planning Committee.</p> <p>It was noted that the two councillors requesting to leave the committee make a valued contribution to the committee which will be missed.</p> <p>It was resolved to approve the requests for Councillors Lucas and Roden to resign from the Planning Committee and for Councillor Legg to join the committee.</p>
191.	<p>By-elections</p> <p>It was noted that a by-election for the current vacancy for the Town ward is to be held on 25th March which will be formally notified from Thursday 18th February 2021 and candidates will have from that date until 4pm on the 26th February 2021 to submit nomination papers to stand for election.</p>
192.	<p>Review of the Independent Panel Remuneration Framework for Wales</p> <p>To agree any representations to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales – Principles relating to the Reimbursements of the Costs of Care and to note any comments</p>

	<p>must be received by 1st March 2021 (previously circulated).</p> <p>It was resolved that individual members would submit their views to the Clerk to compile a response to submit by 1st March 2021.</p>
193.	<p>Draft Code of Conduct for Councillors</p> <p>The draft Code of Conduct for Councillors from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and that any comments must be received by 28th February 2021 was noted. Councillors were advised if they had any comments to submit them directly.</p>
194.	<p>Monmouth Beacon Weekly Column and Community Engagement</p> <p>To consider committing office time to writing a weekly column for the Monmouth Beacon to report on Monmouth Town Council activity.</p> <p><i>It was resolved to suspend standing order 3w to allow the meeting to continue beyond 9pm to allow the remaining business on the agenda to be transacted.</i></p> <p>It was noted that Abergavenny Town Council already do this on a weekly basis and it is a great opportunity for the town council to engage with the community, especially for those who do not use social media. It was suggested that it could also be used as a platform to help other organisations which the Town Council supports to promote their activities.</p> <p>It was resolved to commit office time to writing a weekly column for the Monmouth Beacon to report on Monmouth Town Council activity.</p> <p><i>Cllr Jupp left the meeting.</i></p>
195.	<p>Online Meeting Platform</p> <p>To formally approve the use of BT Conferencing for Council meetings and to review whether other platforms may be more appropriate.</p> <p>It was advised that the internal auditor had noted that the use of BT Conferencing as the platform used for Council meetings during the pandemic had not been formally approved by Council and recommended this be done. He had also raised concerns about the cost of this platform given there are other more widely used and affordable platforms available. Councillors considered a report setting out the pros and cons of various platform options and which recommended an alternative.</p> <p>Some Councillors expressed concerns about BT Conferencing including the cost, the specific issues including lack of control over background noises acting as a distraction, that it is not accessible, and causes anxiety.</p> <p>However, the majority view was that the Council had managed this far with the current system, that the end of restrictions were now in sight when the Council can return to face to face meetings, and it was noted that this system is used by the court service and other government departments.</p> <p>It was resolved to formally approve the use of BT conferencing and review other</p>

	<p>platforms in the future.</p> <p><i>Cllrs SW, CB, EB, K J-G, RJ, left the meeting. With seven members remaining, it was confirmed that the meeting was still quorate.</i></p>
196.	<p>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>
197.	<p>IT Contracts</p> <p>To approve the recommendation from the working group for the appointment of an IT contractor following a tender process.</p> <p>It was resolved to accept the recommendation to award the IT contract to Company B with a contract start date of 1st April 2021.</p>
198.	<p>Staffing Sub-Committee Recommendations</p> <p>To consider and approve the recommendations of the Staffing Sub-Committee meeting held on 16/02/21.</p> <p>Ellis Whittam advised that the Council was free to set any date to apply the salary changes.</p> <p>a) It was resolved to accept the recommendations in the report as referred by Staffing Sub-Committee and to approve a start date for new salaries from 1st January 2021, to be backdated.</p> <p>b) It was resolved to retrospectively approve the additional hours over three days per week already worked by the Locum Clerk and that they be paid for working any additional hours over the current agreed three days per week as required to meet the workload of the Council to a maximum of four days per week.</p>
199.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next scheduled remote meeting will be Monday 22nd March 2021 at 6:00pm.</p>

The meeting ended at 9.34pm