



## MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Mayor's Parlour, Shire Hall, Monmouth, NP25 3DY  
Telephone number:(Town Clerk's Office) 01600 715662  
Email address [townclerk@monmouth.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@monmouth.gov.uk)

### **Minutes of meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee of Monmouth Town Council Held on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2006 in the Old Library / Community Room starting at 7.00 pm.**

Present: Chairman, Councillor G F W Buckland

The Mayor Councillor T Christopher, Councillor R Bond, Councillor Mrs Sue Chivers,  
Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst, Councillor N Hacket Pain, Councillor Mrs V Mitchell  
Councillor Mrs C Pearce, Councillor D Stevens, Councillor Mrs A Were  
and Councillor Mrs S White.

In attendance: Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk.

**1. Apologies were received from: -**  
Councillors Hayward and Robson.

**2. 'Declarations of interest' in items on the agenda: -**  
Councillor Mrs Pearce declared an interest in item 10 to consider the request for assistance with funding for legal costs.

**3. To Elect a Chairman of the Committee.**

Councillor Buckland was the only nominee and was duly elected Chairman of the Committee

**Proposed Councillor Buckland  
Unanimous**

**Seconded Councillor Mrs White**

**4. To Elect a Deputy Chairman of the Committee.**

Councillor Mrs Chivers proposed Councillor Robson and Councillor Hayward had already advised The Clerk that he wished to be nominated. It was put to the vote and each candidate received 5 votes, as there was a tie the Chair had the casting vote and Councillor Hayward was duly elected as Deputy Chairman of the Committee.

**5. To consider for approval the minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee of  
24<sup>th</sup> April 2006 & 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2006.**

The minutes of 24<sup>th</sup> April 2006 were considered and approved.

**Proposed Councillor Bond**

**Seconded Councillor Mrs Pearce**

The minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2006 were considered and approved.

**Proposed Councillor Hacket Pain**

**Seconded Councillor Mrs Dewhurst**

**6. a To receive the summary of expenditure by 'Cheque' page 1 of annexed accounts.  
Decision Required To approve the accounts to date for payment.**

**Proposed Councillor Hacket Pain  
Unanimous**

**Seconded Councillor Mrs White**

The Clerk believes that cheque no 2420 is a Section 137 payment, and as such requests approval.

**Proposed Councillor Mrs Pearce  
Unanimous**

**Seconded Councillor Mrs White**

**b To review a statement of the bank reconciliations (pages 2,3 & 4).**

**C To receive Trial Balance, Balance Sheet and Working Details for Annual Return for 2005/2006**

**(pages 5,6,7,8 & 9)**

**Proposed Councillor Stevens  
Unanimous**

**Seconded Councillor Mrs White**

This decision will be recommended to Full Council for approval at the next meeting due to be held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

**7. To consider the authorisation of payment of the following invoices and decide where to allocate spending within the agreed budget:**

**Zephyr - Replacement Union Jack Flag £69.95 plus carriage**

Members agreed that a replacement flag could be purchased and monies to be taken from Misc Office expenditure

**SLCC – Summer Seminar at University of Gloucestershire £136.00 plus accommodation**

Members agreed that The Clerk could attend the seminar and that a budget of a maximum of £250.00 to include accommodation was proposed.

**Proposed Councillor Mrs White  
Unanimous**

**Seconded Councillor Stevens**

**8. To receive RFO,s Report.**

**Update on Financial Year End for 2005/2006.**

The Clerk advised members that most of the work for the 2005/2006 audit had been concluded but that the Internal Auditor would need to complete the audit form once it had been received. The Clerk has contacted The Audit Office to request the date of when the audit would be called but was advised that the paperwork had not yet been prepared however it was anticipated that it would be sometime in the Autumn.

**Confirmation from Chair of F&P that internal accounts checks have been carried out.**

The Clerk read out a letter that Councillor Buckland had written to confirm that the internal checks have been carried out on the required sample of payments and that everything had been recorded to his satisfaction.

**9. To Review Employers Pension Contribution Payment for Town Clerk.**

A letter has been received from Torfaen County Borough, the administrator of the pension fund, to advise that there is a shortfall in payments of £174.74 for 2005/2006. This is due to an increase from 15% to 16.1%, which was not accounted for when the contributions were made. Members were asked to approve this one off payment, which will be made from the salaries budget.

The Clerk also advised that for the present financial year there is an additional increase from 16.1% to 17.2%, which has been taken into account when setting the budget. Members were asked to approve this increase.

**Proposed Councillor Mrs White  
Unanimous**

**Seconded Councillor Stevens**

**10. To Consider making a financial contribution towards legal costs for Councillor Mrs Pearce to defend a potential libel action against Monmouthshire Electors Community Pressure Group.**

It was proposed to defer this item until the close of the meeting and to exclude members of the public and press and adjourn to closed session.

**Proposed Councillor Mrs Were  
For 10 Against 0 Abstention 1**

**Seconded Councillor Mrs Chivers**

**11. To Agree budget for entertaining Captain and Officers of HMS Monmouth to a maximum of £75.00**

The Clerk advised that Commander Tim Peacock the new ship's captain from HMS Monmouth would be making his first visit to Monmouth along with a number of officers. Monmouth Town Council has offered to host a lunch, which is due to be held at The Castle on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2006. The members were asked to approve expenditure from the Civic Entertainments Budget to a maximum of £75.00.

**Proposed Councillor Mrs White  
Unanimous**

**Seconded Councillor Mrs Mitchell**

**12. To Agree expenditure for Civic Service from Ceremonial budget.**

The Clerk advised that five catering companies had been approached with regard to the reception for the Civic Service due to be held on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2006. Last years reception had cost £5.50 per head and The Clerk requested that members approve a budget of £6.00 per head. Members were informed that approximately 120 guests had responded so that the catering should cost about £720.00. There was also other miscellaneous expenditure to cover the cost of hiring Monmouth Priory, the cost of hiring the Church and the services of the organist, and other incidental costs for printing invitations etc. The Clerk anticipated that these other costs should be in the region of £120.00 and requested confirmation for the agreement of this expenditure.

**Proposed Councillor Mrs Dewhurst  
For 10 Against 0 Abstentions 1**

**Seconded Councillor Bond**

**13. To Review Committee's objectives as set out in 'Shaping Our Future'.**

All members had received a copy of the objectives and Councillor Buckland summarised that broadly the objectives have been reached and highlighted several that still needed attention and would be on going over the coming months. These included looking at amending the Standing Orders, developing relationships with outside organisations and considering requesting changes in the allocation of S106 funding so that The Town Council would receive monies. He also mentioned that although there had been no formal development of councillors training with planning that there were schemes available and this should be looked into for the future. Councillors Hayward and Mrs White volunteered to join the working party, which would be set up shortly to review the Standing Orders.

**7.45 pm Councillor Mrs White has to leave the meeting.**

**14. To Consider proposed Forward Plan for 2006/2007.**

All members had been given a copy of the forward plan that Councillor Buckland had prepared, he advised members that most of the items included were a requirement of the Standing Orders. Councillor Buckland asked members to give any feedback to either himself or The Clerk.

**15. To Appoint Councillors to carry out six monthly check of accounts.**

Councillors Buckland and Hayward both indicated that were prepared to carry out the required six monthly checks of the cashbook.

**Proposed Councillor Mrs White  
Unanimous**

**Seconded Councillor Mrs Dewhurst**

**16. Matters arising from previous meetings: -**

**i) Risk Assessment.**

The Clerk advised members that the follow up session of training for the Risk Assessment and Management Course will be held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2006 at 2.00pm.

**ii) Update re offer from MCC re taking over services and amenities.**

Members had been given a draft proposal for the devolution of services, which it was suggested would form the basis of negotiations with Monmouthshire County Council as a first step.

Councillor Buckland felt that the suggested list of services to be devolved was too extensive and that perhaps it should be reduced to include Car Parking and Public Open Spaces as a priority. He also expressed concern that under the present arrangements with the office staff, it meant that there was no capacity to increase their workload.

Councillor Stevens urged caution and said that he did not want to see progress made at a rapid rate for obvious reasons. He indicated that it would be prudent to take small steps at first rather than a giant leap, but as a starting point the document should be amended and used as an indicator to open up discussions.

Councillor Hackett Pain said that he was concerned about the financing of such an initiative and whether or not MCC would just see this as an opportunity to offload the problem services to The Town Council. Councillor Mrs Chivers suggested that a specific meeting should be held to invite the Chief Exec/Leader of MCC to address members.

Suggestions about turning this around were made so that the question should be asked of MCC as to what services they might be willing to hand over? It was again reiterated the importance of not levying a double tax on residents in Monmouth and that this fundamental issue would need to be made clear. It was agreed that this could be an opportunity for Monmouth Town Council to take a lead in a trial of this kind and promoting this as a positive step.

**iii) Any other matters arising from Finance and Planning Meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> April not covered elsewhere. As they are not specifically listed, no decisions may be taken on any of these other matters arising.**

**17. Any Other Business, ie general information or notification of future discussions, no decisions can be made at this meeting on items that arise under this heading.**

Councillor Buckland stated that he would like to include on the next Full Council agenda the proposal to have a sworn statement from Derek Watts, a former clerk, as to the usage of The Shire Hall by the council prior to the changes that took place in 1974 with the old Borough Council.

The Clerk brought to members' attention that The Finance & Policy committee is currently oversubscribed in accordance with the criteria that has been previously agreed. It was also noted that the number could increase if the new Chair of Environmental Committee was not a present member of F&P. The Clerk asked members to consider whether or not they would wish to reduce the current membership numbers.

Councillor Mrs Chivers informed members that she would like to see this committee re-instated to Full Council status and would like to include this as a resolution at the next Full Council meeting.

The Clerk informed members that there had been a number of letters written to the press recently that contravened the press and public policy statement that the Council has adopted.

Councillor Bond said that he felt unhappy about changing the present arrangement with The Clerk being given prior notice of any items that are written using a council members status.

Councillor Buckland agreed and said that this was not a censorship motion simply a prudent procedure to keep the Clerk informed and advised.

Members requested that the policy should be amended to reflect that a letter or article may be written to express an individual opinion however it must be made clear to the Editor that the individual was doing so in their private capacity and not as a Councillor. The Clerk suggested that an amended document should be circulated outlining this and that it should be included on the next Full Council agenda as a proposal.

Councillor Mrs Pearce advised members of a recent incident that had happened when Boots the Chemist shop had been raided during the night. The incident was picked up by the CCTV cameras and Police were alerted and later apprehended those responsible for the theft.

**18. Next meeting Old Library Community Room Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2006.**

**There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.50pm.**