



MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

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**Minutes of meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee of Monmouth Town Council
Held on Monday 17th July 2006 in the Community Room starting at 7.00 pm.**

Present: Chairman, Councillor G F W Buckland
The Mayor Councillor T Christopher, Councillor R Bond, Councillor R Hayward,
Councillor Mrs V Mitchell, Councillor D Stevens and Councillor Mrs S White.

Absent: Councillors Mrs C Pearce and Mrs A Were

In attendance: Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk.

1. Apologies were received from: -

Councillors Mrs S Chivers, Mrs A Dewhurst, N Hacket Pain and L Robson.

2. 'Declarations of interest' in items on the agenda: -

Councillor Bond declared an interest in item 11 to consider the request for assistance with funding from Waldbronn Twinning Association.

3. To consider for approval the minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee of 5th June 2006 and Pink Paper minutes of same date.

The minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee of 5th June 2006 were accepted and approved.

Proposed Councillor Mrs White
Seconded Councillor Christopher

The pink paper minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee of 5th June 2006 were accepted and approved.

Proposed Councillor Mrs White
Seconded Councillor Bond

4. a To receive the summary of expenditure.

Decision Required To approve the accounts between 01/06/2006 & 10/07/2006 for payment.
(page 1)

The accounts were considered and approved.

Proposed Councillor Hayward
Seconded Councillor Mrs White

Unanimous

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

The bank reconciliations were considered and approved.

Proposed Councillor Mrs White
Seconded Councillor Hayward

Unanimous

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

N/A

6. To Receive RFO's Report.

Update on Insurance Policy cover for Fidelity Guarantee.

The Clerk had been asked to review the Town Council's insurance policy to see whether any provision was made for a member if it was necessary for legal action to be instigated following a slanderous or libellous incident. The Clerk reported that there is a provision within the policy under Section H for Libel and Slander but it only covered a case where a Councillor is sued by a member of the public for such an incident, and not if a member of the public made allegations against a Councillor.

The Fidelity Guarantee is a cover in the event of the misappropriation of council assets.

Some members expressed concern that they felt exposed due to insurance cover not being provided for court/legal fees but it was pointed out that a policy of this nature would be very restrictive and expensive.

Review of SLCC Summer Seminar.

The Clerk circulated a handout giving a summary of the University Of Gloucester / SLCC seminar which had been recently attended. The theme of the event was 'Inside Neighbourhood Governance : The Challenge for Local Councils.' The conference focused on the concept of multi-councils providing enhanced services by clustering resources, decision-making and policy action. The need for analysis of best provision of service in today's rural society and the concept of communes of communities in France, there followed a presentation on good 'Neighbourhood Governance' bringing the concepts into the context of today's local government reality. The need for new thinking in a fast moving age means looking at the way we do all things in a fresh light. The second day focused more on the Quality Assurance ratings available to councils in England and the way government and private agencies see councils performing in today's world. The knowledge that councils joining to provide better value services through greater enlightened power, quality methods and the use of technology is not new but nowadays is more relevant than ever. Councils that embrace the thinking have a better chance of prospering tomorrow than those that put their heads in the sand. Some see the old methods surviving forever, the new LGA may hit them like a whirlwind.

Update on expenditure against budget for Carbonne Twinning Reception.

The Clerk reported that the reception for the 30th anniversary of the twinning with Carbonne and Monmouth, had come in well under budget due mainly to the scaled down hospitality that had been requested by The Twinning Association. The budgets that had been set for the scroll and the reception were £464.00 and £336.00 respectively and had come in £20.00 and £243.00 under budget. This was money that had been earmarked from the 2005/2006 budget and the remaining monies would go back into General Reserves.

7. To Receive report from Councillor Mrs Chivers re distribution of monies from proceeds of The Mayors Charity Account for 2005/2006.

In her absence Councillor Mrs Chivers had sent a report of monies that had been distributed to the charities that she had chosen during her term of office. The total amount collected was not disclosed but Councillor Mrs Chivers informed members that two cheques both for £1078.08 had been presented to The Society for the Welfare of Horses and Ponies at St Maughans and St Thomas' Church. A date has yet to be set for the presentation of the cheque to The Lads Club.

8. To Consider whether to make insurance claim for damage to gate at Town Field.

The Clerk advised members that a new metal gate and post had been erected following the damage at the town field. The total amount of the invoice is £260.00. The Clerk recommended to members that consideration should be given to making the payment from the town maintenance budget rather than making another claim this year against the insurance policy. The amount of the excess payment would be £100.00 in the event of a claim and could result in an increase in premium following the previous claim already made.

It was proposed that the payment of £160.00 should be made from the Town Maintenance budget.

Proposed Councillor Buckland
Seconded Councillor Mrs White

9. To Review arrangements for computer data back and consider risk implications.

The Clerk advised that a letter has been received from RBS Software the accounts package provider regarding the offering of a new service to back up the data for a charge of £7.50 per month. Members were advised that a full back up of the entire system was undertaken monthly with the copy being kept off site in case of fire. The Clerk confirmed that the worst case scenario would be losing a month's worth of work, but reported that she felt that the present arrangements were more than adequate. Members agreed that they are happy with the arrangements that are in place.

Proposed Councillor Buckland
Seconded Councillor Mrs White

10. To Agree increase in payroll processing charge which falls within the agreed budget.

The Clerk had received a letter from 'I love Payday' the company that process the salary payments to advise that a small increase was proposed from £13.50 per month to £15.00 plus vat with effect from August 2006. Members were advised that this was in line with the budget provisions that had been made. Members confirmed that this was acceptable.

Proposed Councillor Christopher
Seconded Councillor Mrs White

11. To Consider request by Waldbronn Twinning Association to offer financial assistance for planned visit in August 2006.

Mr Russell from the Twinning Association had provided information relating to the planned itinerary and the cost of the visit. Members agreed to make a donation of £300.00 from the ceremonial entertainment budget.

Proposed Councillor Buckland
Seconded Councillor Mrs White

For 6 Against 0 Abstention 1

12. To Consider request for assisted funding for bursary places at the summer film school.

It was agreed to defer this item to the next Full Council meeting pending further information.

13. To Set up working party for reviewing Standing Orders.

Members agreed that The Clerk would liaise with the following members to arrange the initial meeting, Councillors Hacket Pain, Buckland, Hayward, Christopher and Mrs White. It is envisaged that there will be a series of steering meetings before the proposals can go to Full Council for adoption.

14. To Confirm F&P objectives for forthcoming year and outline the future programme.

Councillor Buckland confirmed that the objectives outlined in the forward plan were in accordance with the requirements of the standing orders. He advised members that he felt that the priority should be in setting up a working party to meet in order to try and progress the devolution of amenities and services issue.

15. Matters arising from previous meetings: -

i) Risk Assessment.

The final part of the risk assessment course will take place on Tuesday 25th July. It is planned to go and carry out an actual risk assessment as part of the training.

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

Members were advised that no further correspondence has been received from MCC concerning this initiative. Councillor Buckland suggested that a working party should be set up to look at the strategic planning and processing issues, and how the venture will be funded. Some members felt that funding should come through the precept as it looked increasingly unlikely that there was any other way of generating income to pay for any services. The working party will consist of Councillors Buckland, Stevens, Hayward and Robson.

8.05 pm Councillors Mitchell and Christopher had to leave the meeting to attend an official function.

iii) Any other matters arising from Finance and Planning Meeting of 5th June not covered elsewhere. As they are not specifically listed, no decisions may be taken on any of these other matters arising.

N/A

16. 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.

The Clerk read out an e.mail that has been received from Jenny Lewis regarding the proposed works to be carried out on the road at Agincourt Square. It is now planned to lower the level of the road to make safe for pedestrians the new pavements outside The Shire Hall. The red and white baulks have now been removed in preparation for Monmouth Festival. The engineer is drawing up plans and once they are available a meeting at the OSS will be arranged to discuss the project.

The Clerk advised members that St Mary St will be closed this week for essential work to be carried out, the road will be closed to traffic between 9.30 – 3.30 Monday to Friday.

The Clerk drew members attention to an electricity bill for £950.00 that has been received for the last quarter and advised members that the total amount for the whole of the previous year was only £1100.00. Daily meter readings are being taken and the account has been put on hold until the matter has been resolved.

17. Next meeting Old Library Community Room Monday 29th August 2006.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.15pm.