



MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

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**Minutes of meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee of Monmouth Town Council
Held on Monday 26th March 2007 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 Mrs S Chivers,
Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst and Councillor R Hayward

In attendance: Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk. Councillor J Fletcher.

1. Apologies were received from: -

Councillor Mrs V Mitchell, Councillor L Robson and Councillor D Stevens

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

Councillor Christopher declared an interest in item 11 as he is a member of the Carnival Committee
Councillor Mrs Dewurst declared an interest in item 11 as she is a member of the Carnival Committee

3. To consider for approval the minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee of 12th February 2007.

The minutes were approved and signed as correct

**Proposed Councillor Buckland
Seconded Councillor Bond**

Unanimous

4. To receive the summary of expenditure.

i) Decision Required. To approve the accounts between 01/02/2007 & 16/03/2007 for payment.

The accounts were received and approved for payment.

**Proposed Councillor Buckland
Seconded Councillor Bond**

Unanimous

ii) To review a statement of the bank reconciliations as at 28/02/2007. (Pages 2, 3 & 4).

The bank reconciliation's were received and approved as correct.

**Proposed Councillor Buckland
Seconded Councillor Hayward**

Unanimous

iii) To consider virements.

Stationery & Office Supplies is over budget by £8.00 with an additional bill of £45.00 due.
Members agreed to raise a virement in the sum of £53.00 from the postages fund.

Utilities is over budget by £125.00.

Members agreed to raise a virement in the sum of £125.00 from the copying fund.

Insurance is over budget by £95.00. (Excess Payment of £100.00 made re repairs to Deputy Mayors Pendant)

Members agreed to raise a virement in the sum of £95.00 from the contingency fund.

Subscriptions is over budget by £95.00.

Members agreed to raise a virement in the sum of £95.00 from the training fund.

I.T Help Desk will be over budget by £76.63.

Members agreed to raise a virement in the sum of £77.00 from the training fund.

**Proposed Councillor Buckland
Seconded Councillor Hayward**

Unanimous

iv) Monies remaining from 2006/2007 to be earmarked for deferred capital spending, a decision will be required by the April meeting unless made earlier. Any remaining monies not so earmarked will be transferred to general reserves.

Members agreed to defer this item until the next meeting when there would be further and more complete information from the committee's with regard to proposals for earmarking funds for capital projects.

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

One Voice Wales – Renewal of subscription £1029.00

Members agreed this could be paid from next years subscriptions budget.

MCC – CCTV Services 2006/07 £11,500.00

Members agreed this could be paid from this years budget.

MG Computers – Computer Maintenance £676.63

Members agreed this could be paid from this years IT Help budget.

RBS Software – Accounts Maintenance £200.00

Members agreed this could be paid from next years IT Help budget.

**Proposed Councillor Buckland
Seconded Councillor Hayward**

Unanimous

6. To receive RFO's report.

Update regarding cessation of members interests register.

The Clerk advised members that due to a statutory instrument dated 2004 it was now no longer a requirement to keep a register of members interests. This had been superseded by the need to keep a register of declarations of interest which should be made at the commencement of every meeting. It is within the remit of the monitoring officer of the unitary authority to request sight of this register and forms part of the Code of Conduct 2001. Members were advised that the previously kept records could not be destroyed but would be kept in the archives for future reference.

7. To consider changes to Monmouth Partnership Forum's constitution.

Members were given an opportunity to consider changes to the constitution and a variety of suggestions were made, it was agreed that The Clerk would type out the list of proposals and Councillor Mrs Dewhurst would forward them on at the next partnership meeting. The main areas of consideration would be changes to the membership to include the three secondary schools, the status of working groups and the correct channels for reporting back, the number required for a quorum, changes to who would chair the AGM and the authorisation of expenditure.

8. To agree how to dispose of obsolete electrical equipment in Town Clerk's Office.

The Clerk advised that there were a number of items of electrical equipment that have become obsolete and or broken or unusable. The procedure for depreciating items of this nature at 20% per annum means that they no longer have any re-sale value. Members were asked to agree to the disposal of the fax machine, the 'brother' black printer and the 'walkabout' phone. Where possible if there was a suitable means of recycling any of the equipment this would be preferred otherwise they would be disposed of at the local authority disposal point for waste electrical equipment.

**Proposed Councillor Buckland
Seconded Councillor Hayward**

Unanimous

9. To consider request from Wales Audit Office to appoint new external auditor.

The Clerk has received a letter from the Wales Audit Office explaining that due to changes announced by the Auditor General for Wales that it will need to stand down from being the external auditor of Community and Town Councils in Wales. The letter proposes that Mazars LLP, a major firm of Chartered Accountants and registered auditors take over and recommend that Monmouth Town Council accept their proposal. The letter highlights that fees will stay within the scales for 2006/7 – 2011/12 which were published last year.

The Clerk recommended to members that the proposal to accept Mazars should be accepted.

**Proposed Councillor Buckland
Seconded Councillor Bond**

Unanimous

10. To consider installation of a broadband connection to the Town Clerk's Office.

The Clerk advised that the current dial up system of accessing the internet was causing considerable delays and slowing down the progress of the administration in the office. It was recommended to members that the cost of upgrading to a broadband connection could be offset by the removal of the second telephone line that is presently used by the fax. Removing the fax machine would make the second line redundant. The other benefits of changing to broadband would include a number of free wireless minutes per month using VOIP technology, although it was pointed out that two additional phones would need to be purchased that were compatible with this system at a cost of approximately £10.00 each. The recommended Plusnet option would provide a 1 Port Router and it was considered that that would probably need to be upgraded to a 4 Port Router that would be necessary for the networked pc system that is in operation. The Clerk had made a comparison between Plusnet and BT and the monthly cost differed by £7.00. Members agreed that The Clerk could go ahead with the installation of a broadband connection and the purchase of two VOIP compatible phones with Plusnet and de-commission the second BT line as soon as possible.

**Proposed Councillor Buckland
Seconded Councillor Christopher**

Unanimous

11. To confirm request from Community Committee to vire and earmark funds in the sum of £1000.00 from Christmas Event Budget 2006/2007 to Carnival 2007/2008 to cover either insurance payment or band.

Councillor Mrs Dewhurst withdrew this motion on the recommendation of The Clerk and Councillor Buckland because it was agreed that this request fell outside the correct procedure for earmarking funds. It was considered that the request to help fund the carnival could not be a capital expense, rather a revenue cost. Members agreed that a request for funding would be sympathetically considered at a later date as a contingency payment as there was no specific monies within the budget for the carnival. To be deferred until further information has been obtained by Councillor Mrs Dewhurst regarding specific costs.

12. To agree recommended increase from Torfaen CBC re employers pension contribution from 17.2% to 18.2%.

The Clerk advised that a letter had been received from Torfaen CBC who is responsible for managing the employee's pension scheme advising that the recommended increase for the coming financial year of 1% be accepted. Members agreed that they were happy to confirm the acceptance of this proposal. It was discussed and agreed that when there was an appropriate opportunity to review the scheme a member with relevant financial qualifications and experience should be asked to look at the details.

13. To consider further developments of CCTV User Group.

Councillor Buckland and The Clerk had recently attended the meeting of the user group at County Hall where it was agreed that the present arrangements with the monitoring station at Caerphilly were not acceptable. It had been agreed by members that the best solution would be to have two monitoring stations one each for the north and the south of the county and based ideally at Chepstow and Abergavenny Police Stations. There would be the opportunity of bidding for some capital funding from the Community Safety Partnership budget to help with the start up costs of transferring the operation to the proposed model. It was still unclear whether or not Monmouth Town Council would remain as part of the user group although an invitation had been received to attend the next meeting where it was hoped that costings for the new proposals would be available for consideration. Further feedback would be made available to members following the attendance at the next meeting.

14. To discuss WAG consultation paper regarding recommendations following the Beecham Report - 'Making the Connections – Delivering Beyond Boundaries'

Members were advised by The Clerk that progress was being made by the working group that was initiated by the Welsh Assembly Government to introduce a charter. Although signing up to the charter would be on a purely voluntary basis it was pointed out the Monmouthshire County Council were considering this as an option. However whilst members still showed a keen interest in pursuing taking over and running some local services it was realised that the main block to any progress was still sorting out a mechanism to avoid double taxation. Until this issue has been addressed no further action can be taken. The officer at MCC responsible for this matter is Phil Cook and The Clerk was asked to write to Mr Cook and ask for a progress report.

15. Matters arising from previous meetings.

i) Risk Assessment.

On going, nothing further to report.

ii) Staff Holidays

The Clerk informed members that in accordance with the policy of staff taking any unused holiday in excess of five days as an overtime payment, thirty one hours overtime had been claimed.

iii) Any other matters arising from Finance and Policy Meeting of 15th February 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.

Councillor Mrs Chivers asked if The Clerk could write to MCC to request that the sequencing of traffic lights at the new Monnow Bridge and the intersection between Dixton and Hereford roads be looked at. There have been problems with traffic backing up Monnow Street from the bridge and around St James St from Dixton Road.

17. Next meeting Old Library Community Room Monday 30th April 2007.

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

Signature: _____

Date: _____