



**MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL**

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**Minutes of meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee of Monmouth Town Council  
Held on Monday 23rd July 2007 in the Community Room starting at 7.00 pm.**

**Present:** The Mayor Councillor T Christopher, Councillor R Bond, Councillor GFW Buckland  
Councillor Mrs S Chivers, Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst and Councillor N Hacket Pain

**In attendance:** Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk

In the absence of the either the Chairman or the Deputy Chairman, members agreed that Councillor Buckland should chair the meeting.

**17. Apologies were received from: -**

Councillor R Hayward, Councillor Mrs C Pearce and Councillor D Stevens

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

None received.

**19. To consider for approval the minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2007.**

The minutes were approved and signed as correct

**Proposed Councillor Hacket Pain  
Seconded Councillor Bond**

**For 5 Against 0 Abstentions 1**

**20. To receive the summary of expenditure.**

**i) Decision Required.** To approve the accounts between 01/04/2007 & 13/07/2007 for payment. (Pages 1 & 2)

The accounts were received and approved for payment.

**Proposed Councillor Buckland  
Seconded Councillor Bond**

**For 5 Against 0 Abstentions 1**

**ii)** To review a statement of the bank reconciliations as at 30/06/2007. (Pages 3,4 & 5).

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

**Proposed Councillor Buckland  
Seconded Councillor Mrs Chivers**

**For 5 Against 0 Abstentions 1**

**iii)** To receive quarterly report on expenditure to date.

The Clerk reported to members that a check had been undertaken on all items of expenditure to date and that everything was within budget. There was no area of concern with any item. Members agreed to accept the Clerk's assurance that all matters of expenditure are acceptable and in line with the budget.

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

**University of Gloucestershire – Local Policy 2 Year Course**

**£2490.00**

The Clerk advised members that this course is the follow on from the 'Working with your Council' course that is due to be completed shortly. It is a Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy which covers ten modules, however with the completion of the 'WWYC' course this will provide exemption from one of the modules. The university have confirmed that the costs can be spread out over the two years and payments can be made monthly. The cost reflects a reduction for part time students. It is anticipated that there will be some further costs associated which will cover travel to tutorials in Cheltenham, two residential weekend courses each year and other miscellaneous items. It is hoped that books can be borrowed from another clerk who had already completed the course. Members were advised that The Clerk would continue on the same basis as before and that study would be undertaken in her own time if the Council are happy to continue with financial support. Members thanked the Clerk for her commitment to continued study as it was recognised that this would be to the Council's advantage to have a better qualified and experienced clerk.

**SLCC Welsh Conference**

**£40.00 plus vat**

It was agreed that The Clerk could enrol on the policy course as detailed above and that the item regarding the conference would be deferred to Full Council to give all members an opportunity to attend.

**Proposed Councillor Buckland  
Seconded Councillor Bond**

**Unanimous**

**22. To receive RFO's report.**

Review of Ombudsman Annual Report 2006/2007

The Clerk circulated a brief summary of some of the findings set out in the Ombudsman's report. It was noted that there had been an increase of approximately 10% in the number of new cases received since 2005/2006. One of the targets set by the Ombudsman is to improve the time taken to conclude complaints from the date an effective complaint was received and figures revealed that there has been an improvement in achieving this target. Figures showed that in the sectoral breakdown of complaints the biggest sector with 72% of all complaints was the County/County Borough Councils with the Town and Community Councils only accounting for about 1%. It was pointed out that because of the scope of the ombudsman having changed that the latter figure was not representative and in the Ombudsman's opinion he felt that this would increase significantly next year. The top four areas of complaint by service area have been planning (25%), housing, health and social services and there were figures that backed this up. Interestingly the disproportionate amount of trivial complaints that the ombudsman expressed concern about last year have dropped dramatically. The majority of these, he reported, had been petty allegations of misconduct against members of community councils. The full report can be viewed at The Clerk's Office.

**23. To review Committee's objectives as set out in 'Shaping Our Future'.  
(deferred from meeting of 18 June 2007).**

Members reviewed the objectives that had been set at the outset of the new Council back in 2004 and agreed that on the whole they had been reached. It was agreed that as the council is now in its' final year that to consider changing them would not be appropriate. The main aim would be to continue to keep as up to date as possible with developments that continue to come from the WAG and other bodies and to maintain what has been achieved to date.

#### **24. To consider policy for making Press Releases.**

Councillor Christopher expressed concerns that members of the public are not being kept informed and up to date of what work The Town Council is doing on behalf of the residents of Monmouth. This is due mainly to the fact that members of the press do not attend meetings other than Full Council and that the biggest body of work is now carried out by the committees. In keeping with the policy of being open and accountable it was suggested that the committees should write a brief press release to summarise their work.

Members agreed that this should form part of the agenda in order to formalise the arrangement and that the Planning Committee should report back on a quarterly basis with the Environmental and Community Affairs committee reporting after each meeting.

It was agreed that this policy would be recommended to members at the next Full Council Meeting.

#### **25. To review subscriptions, contracts, fees and charges.**

Members agreed that it would create a certain amount of duplication in reviewing this item in detail due to the committee structure and the delegated authority that each of the committee's have. It is the remit of the F&P Committee to act as the body that oversees the work of the other committee's but the fact that there was an opportunity for each one to review their commitments and expenditure provided a good self monitoring tool.

#### **26. To consider recommending induction programme for the mayor.**

The Clerk's appraisal last year had identified the development of a document to provide guidance to in coming mayors as one of the objectives for the coming year. It is recognised that a steep learning curve is faced when commencing a term of office for any new mayor. The Clerk circulated a draft proposed document for consideration based on the feedback that had been provided by a number of past mayors. It is meant as an informal guideline offering advice and helpful information about a range of duties. It is anticipated that this is a working document that will evolve and need revising from time to time.

Members agreed to recommend this document to Full Council for approval.

#### **27. To review Town Council's Asset Register.**

The Clerk circulated an up to date register for members' consideration. The information had been updated in order to provide a figure of the Council's assets on the Annual Return. It is recognised that depreciation costs are not an exact science and that generally the rule is to depreciate equipment over a 5 year period at 20% per year. The regalia figure has been estimated on the basis that it would appreciate at a rate of 10% a year. The Clerk recommended that The Council consider having a formal valuation of the regalia next year as it has not been done since Feb 2004.

#### **28. To consider quote for new Town Clerk's Role.**

The Clerk had been asked to make enquiries regarding the commissioning of a new list for Town Clerks since the re-organisation of local government in 1974. The previous one which is situated in The Council Chamber covers the period from 1690 – 1974. Two artists have been approached and a comprehensive quote had already been received from one with an illustration of the proposed role. The other had not yet been received and The Clerk requested that a decision be deferred until the other quote was available. Members were also advised that the List of Mayors has been updated for this present year but there was only one more line available and that next year a new role for Mayors would need to be considered. The Clerk also noted that members should think about where these important historical documents should be displayed after the refurbishment of The Shire Hall, particularly as there will no longer be a room solely dedicated as a council chamber.

## **29. Matters arising from previous meetings.**

### **i) Risk Assessment.**

On going.

### **ii) Connecting the Spheres/Making the Connections/Delivering Beyond Boundaries.**

The Clerk advised members that following the recent seminar in County Hall feedback from the group sessions had been sent to those attending. The group discussion had been centred around the following topics, how we agree our understanding of the outcomes that matter most to citizens, how we ensure that we collectively deliver on those outcomes, how we manage relationships and partnership behaviours, the sort of situations where we move from voluntary co-operation to pooled sovereignty and how we encourage citizens to trust us. A copy of the findings will be annexed to the minutes and circulated to all members.

### **iii) Civic Service.**

The Clerk advised that there was still one outstanding invoice for the hire of the Church and the organist. However based on the cost last year and assuming that there would be no significant increase the total expected expenditure would be approximately £845.00 against an agreed budget of £1200.00. This is a reduction on the amount spent last year due in large to not having to meet the expenses of the military band.

### **iv) Any other matters arising from Finance and Policy Meeting of 30th April not covered elsewhere. As they are not specifically listed, no decisions may be taken on any of these other matters arising.**

N/A

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

The Clerk advised that a request had been made by the organisers of the Masked Ball fundraising event for The Shire Hall to borrow the Clerk's robe and wig for the evening. There was some concern in case any damage occurred and there was a suggestion that perhaps the Off Centre Theatre would be able to assist with the props.

Councillor Buckland reported that following the recent Shire Hall project board meeting where the Stewards gave a report on potential fund raising, new figures were available which suggest that anticipated grants, sponsorship and income from events should raise the required balance of £28,000.00. The Clerk reported that advice from One Voice Wales regarding the position of drawing up a legal document for the guarantee was still awaited and that a further report would be provided once that had been received.

## **31. Next meeting Old Library Community Room Monday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2007.**

**There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.05 pm.**