

# Monmouth Town Council

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Minutes of meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee of Monmouth Town Council held on Monday 22nd October 2007 in the Community Room starting at 7.00 pm.

Present: The Chairman Councillor D Stevens  
Councillor R Bond, Councillor GFW Buckland, Councillor Mrs S Chivers  
Councillor T Christopher, Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst, Councillor N Hacket Pain  
And Councillor Mrs V Mitchell.

In attendance: Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk

**45. To receive declarations of interest on items on the agenda**

None received

**46. To receive apologies for absence**

Councillor R Hayward

**47. To approve minutes of the previous meeting dated 10th September 2007**

The minutes were approved and signed as correct

**Proposed Councillor Hacket Pain  
Seconded Councillor Mrs Dewhurst**

**For 4 Against 0 Abs 4**

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

- i) **Decision Required. To approve the accounts between 15/08/2007 & 30/09/2007 for payment. (Page 1)**

The accounts were received and approved for payment.

**Proposed Councillor Mrs Chivers  
Seconded Councillor Hacket Pain**

**Unanimous**

- ii) **To review a statement of the bank reconciliation's as at 30/09/2007. (Pages 2,3,& 4)**

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

**Proposed Councillor Mrs Chivers  
Seconded Councillor Hacket Pain**

**Unanimous**

#### **49. To receive correspondence and discuss**

- a) Quote for removal from Shire Hall A-Z Removals & Storage
- b) Quote for removal from Shire Hall - David Gundy Removals & Storage

Members were advised that three companies had been approached to provide quotes for removals when The Town Council leaves The Shire Hall.

Only two of the three companies had come back with estimates.

The Clerk explained that the companies had been asked to provide two figures one to include packing and one without packing charges. Members requested that another local company be approached for another quote and that the cheaper of the quotes should be accepted on the basis that it was like for like, i.e. insurance, charges for crates etc.

The Clerk will report back with details at the next meeting.

#### **50. To consider request for financial support for additional PCSO in the Monmouth area**

This item had been fully discussed at a recent Full Council meeting and it was agreed that members of the F&P Committee should debate this request further. Councillor Stevens reminded members of the cost of supporting an additional PCSO over a three-year period. Members agreed that there had been no guarantee given that the officer would be on duty exclusively in the Monmouth area and could potentially be deployed to other areas across the region. On this basis it was unanimously agreed that the request should be turned down.

**Proposed Councillor Mrs Chivers**  
**Seconded Councillor Hackett Pain**

**For 0 Against 8 Abs 0**

#### **51. To receive report on 'Consultation on relationship building measures and charters for unitary authority and community and town councils' ( Councillor Stevens )**

Councillor Stevens reported that the purpose of the proposed charter was to provide a seamless engagement with service providers. The document aspires to a partnership mode of integration. It would be voluntary not statutory and would be for a four year period. One of the main aims is to foster trust and a mutual respect between the unitary authority and the town and community councils. The delegation of services would not be an automatic entitlement but this document would provide an agreed framework of contact and communication. Any delegation of services would be as a result of further negotiations but it was still not clear what funding mechanism would be in place to ensure that double taxation would not occur.

Members were advised that this is still only a consultative document, a questionnaire has been provided for completion and the WAG would publish a summary of responses.

Members agreed that Councillor Stevens and The Clerk would complete the consultation questionnaire and it would be circulated to members for further comment before being submitted.

#### **52. To receive report on ' Revised Community Strategy' ( Councillor Mrs Dewhurst )**

Deferred until next meeting

### **53. To review pay and service conditions of staff**

The Clerk advised members that there had been a meeting of the Executive of the National Joint Council for Local Authority Staff held in August when a new pay offer had been tabled. The offer consisted of an increase of 2.475% backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007. This offer had been rejected and a final settlement is unlikely in the near future.

The Clerk informed members that there have been recent changes made to the national model contract of employment which was adopted by this council and that there needs to be a review of these changes. It was suggested that as this would be quite a time consuming task that Councillors Stevens and Christopher in conjunction with The Clerk would have delegated authority to review the changes and make their recommendations at the next meeting which would then have to be ratified by Full Council.

**It was resolved to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with the provisions of the LGA 1972 on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of confidential information.**

### **54. To consider increase of salary of one point to SCP 33 for The Clerk to reflect additional qualifications**

See minutes on Pink Paper

### **55. To review and monitor expenditure of other committees**

Councillor Stevens briefly commented on the committee expenditure and noted that to date the management of expenditure against budget was on track and that there were no areas for concern. The Clerk advised that a cheque had been received from Monmouth Flower Project, which represented the residual monies from the bank account now that the contract had been formally terminated. Members were asked to agree that this money should revert back to the Street Decorations budget within the Environment Committee.

**Proposed Councillor Buckland  
Seconded Councillor Mrs Chivers**

**Unanimous**

### **56. To consider request from The Community Committee to vire monies between budget heads**

Councillor Mrs Dewhurst made a request on behalf of The Community Committee to vire £3000.00 from the Summer play scheme budget into the Community Grant Scheme budget. Members were advised that following a meeting at a recent committee meeting with Mike Moran (MCC) that there was no request for financial assistance with the scheme for this financial year, as the operation had been scaled-down quite considerably from other years. Councillor Mrs Dewhurst stated that the committee believed that this year would be a one off opportunity to increase the amount available for distribution to the numerous schemes and projects being taken on by different groups and organisations.

The Clerk raised a concern that recent correspondence from Mike Moran indicated that the amount requested for the next year could be in the region of £8000/9000 and that consideration should be given to the impact on the budget and possibly the £3000 from this year could be earmarked towards next year's contribution.

Councillor Stevens believed that there were three options available: to vire all of the monies to the community grant scheme budget as a one off payment, to earmark all of the monies for the following years play scheme or to split the money and give £1000 to community grants and earmark £2000 for the following years play scheme.

A vote was taken on the different options and the majority of members agreed that the final option to split the money was the most acceptable.

**Proposed Councillor Stevens**  
**Seconded Councillor Bond**

**For 6 Against 2 Abs 0**

**57. To agree finances and protocol for authorisation of expenditure for staff training courses**

The Clerk had approached Councillor Stevens due to concerns that there was no procedure in place for authorising reimbursement of personal expenditure for The Clerk when using delegated authority within the Administration Budget. It was agreed that in future any payment made to The Clerk to reimburse expenses would have to be signed off by two of the following: Chair or Deputy Chair of F&P or The Mayor.

The Clerk requested that the travel and subsistence allowance recommended by One Voice Wales be used when officers were asked to carry out the instructions of the Council which involved travelling and staying away overnight, such as courses etc.

Members agreed unanimously to accept this proposal.

**Proposed Councillor Stevens**  
**Seconded Councillor Mrs Dewhurst**

**Unanimous**

**58. To review Town Council insurance renewal policy documents**

The Clerk asked that this item be deferred as the renewal papers still had not arrived due to the postal strike. Members were advised that the renewal, which is due on October 24th, would go ahead and that there would be any opportunity to review and make any changes at the next meeting.

**59. To consider adopting a Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Individuals**

The Clerk had circulated a draft proposal for members' consideration and it was agreed that this would provide a useful framework to protect staff from individuals whose behaviour became unacceptable. There was some additional work that needed to be done to make the document more relevant to the circumstances of Monmouth Town Council and members asked The Clerk to make the necessary adjustments. Members felt that there was a need to set up a 'Working Practices Review Group' made up of a small number of councillors who could act as arbiters in order to resolve a conflict situation. It was agreed that once the changes are ready that the document would be circulated to all members and that it would be put forward to Full Council for adoption and to agree the terms of reference for the 'Working Practices Review Group'.

8.15pm at this point Councillor Bond left the meeting

## **60. To consider the future role of the Mace Bearers in relation to training a deputy**

The Clerk reported that a meeting had taken place with both of the Mace Bearers individually and then together to discuss the possibility of recruiting a trainee macebearer. There was wholehearted agreement by Mr Blake and Mr Powell that taking on somebody to train as a deputy who could act as a relief when either Mace Bearer was not available for civic duties was a good idea. Members were in full support that the best way to deal with this initially would be to set up a working party. The following members agreed to be on the working party, Councillors Mrs Chivers, Christopher and Hacket Pain. The Clerk agreed to arrange a date to meet to consider what the next steps would be.

## **61. To review balances of earmarked reserves and consider allocation of funding and expenditure of earmarked reserves**

A request has been made by The Environment Committee to allocate monies from Earmarked Reserves to be used as follows:

A project to re-grade the allotment road which will cost approximately £2000.00 and also an amount of £1500.00 which has been allocated for the 'Monmouth Links' project.

It is proposed that these are paid from the balance in the 'Footpaths' earmarked reserves account of £3000 and the 'Allotments Fencing & Road' account of £250.00. The outstanding balance due of £250.00 will be paid for from the 2007/08 Environment transport scheme budget. There is also a request to use £500.00 from the 'Millennium Trees & Plaques' earmarked reserve to fund the purchase of a blue plaque for The Shire Hall.

The committee approved this recommendation and The Clerk will agenda this item for confirmation at the next Full Council meeting.

**Proposed Councillor Stevens**  
**Seconded Councillor Hacket Pain**

**Unanimous**

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

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

On going

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

No further update

### **iii) Bank Interest Rate Review**

The Clerk reported to members that research had shown that the difference in interest rates between an investment for one month and six months was only .08%. The market is still quite uncertain at the moment and interest rates have been unstable in recent weeks. The Clerk recommended that in view of the very small increase for a more long-term investment there would be little benefit to setting up new bank accounts at this time.

**iv) Town Council move to Market Hall**

The Clerk confirmed that following her letter to MCC outlining the decisions made at the previous meeting a response had not yet been received. Members were advised that this would be followed up and reported on at the next meeting.

**v) Any other matters arising from Finance and Policy Meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> September not covered elsewhere. As they are not specifically listed, no decisions may be taken on any of these other matters arising.**

N/A

**63. 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 was asked what progress had been made in relation to developing the website. Members were advised that due to pressure of work this item had not received any attention as it was not considered a high priority. The Clerk asked if there was any member that wanted to take a lead on the project but there were no volunteers.

Newport Chamber of Trade & Commerce have offered The Town Council two free pages in their directory and it was suggested that this offer should be taken up and that the summary from the Annual Report could be included.

In a report received from MCC there appears a response to the recent consultation about the Local Development Plan. It would seem that there is a mistake in the information that has been published under the response from Monmouth Town Council and The Clerk agreed to follow this up to ensure that there was no foul play just a clerical error.

The Clerk was asked to write to Mr Andrew Helme from the Museum to follow up a request regarding the re-painting of the town crest which is on the end of the Market Hall building.

**64. Next meeting Old Library Community Room Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2007.**

**There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.40 pm**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_