

Monmouth Town Council

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Minutes of meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee of Monmouth Town Council held on Monday 14th January 2008 in the Community Room starting at 7.00 pm.

Present: The Chairman Councillor D Stevens
Councillor R Bond, 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

Members agreed that Councillor Hacket Pain should chair the commencement of the meeting as Councillor Stevens had advised that he would be late arriving.

79. To receive declarations of interest on items on the agenda

None Received

80. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor GFW Buckland, Councillor R Hayward and Councillor L Robson

81. To approve minutes of the previous meeting dated 4th December 2007

The minutes were approved and signed as correct

Proposed Councillor Bond

Seconded Councillor Mrs Chivers

For 5 Against 0 Abs 1

82. To receive and approve the summary of expenditure

i) To approve the accounts for payment between 28/11/2007 & 31/12/2007. (Page 1)

The accounts were received and approved for payment.

Proposed Councillor Bond

Seconded Councillor Mrs Dewhurst

Unanimous

ii) To review a statement of the bank reconciliations as at 31/12/2007. (Pages 2,3,& 4)

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

Proposed Councillor Mrs Chivers

Seconded Councillor Bond

Unanimous

- iii) To consider a virement for Officer Travel which is over budget by £37.00 with additional expenditure due.

The Clerk advised members that with additional travel to Cheltenham for attendance at tutorials it was anticipated that the total annual expenditure this financial year would be in the region of £400.00. Members agreed to vire £250.00 from the Staff Training Budget to cover the shortfall.

Proposed Councillor Mrs Chivers
Seconded Councillor Hacket Pain

Unanimous

83. To receive a quarterly report on expenditure to date

The Clerk circulated a print out of budget details for the Finance and Policy Committee showing the Administration and Civic Affairs expenditure to date. The Clerk gave a report of the estimated spend for the full twelve month period on a line by line basis. It was reported that most of the items would come in under budget but there would be several budget heads where a virement would need to be considered by members. The Clerk recommended that a further report on expenditure should be made available towards the end of the financial year so that final details could be considered then and decisions made regarding virements.

7.20pm Councillor Stevens arrives and takes over as the chair.

84. To confirm authorisation of payment of the following invoice and agree where to allocate spending within the agreed budget

Dell Computers - £643.78 incl vat

Monty Software - £70.00 (upgrade for Mountbatten Brailier)

The Clerk advised members that the pc in the Clerks Office had become redundant. It was using Windows 95 for the operating system and although it was networked to the other computer and laptop it had become impossible to continue to use any longer. It was too old to be networked onto the new printer/copier and had been taking longer and longer to access the programmes. Several alternative systems had been looked at and after discussion with the Council's IT Consultant it was agreed that a Dell pc be purchased. The cost included the hardware and the licences for the software, as well as the Antivirus and Firewall protection. It would be necessary to upgrade the software for the Braille machine to enable compatibility with the new pc. The Clerk had obtained one quote of £70.00 and was in the process of trying to find an alternative supplier.

Members agreed that both of these items should be paid for from the General Reserve Account.

Proposed Councillor Christopher
Seconded Councillor Mrs Chivers

Unanimous

85. To receive correspondence

Shire Hall Stewards – Confirmation of acceptance of terms of guarantee

Noted.

The Clerk reminded members that the next fund raising event would be the Shire Hall 'Closure Party' on March 6th and advised the tickets were available for sale in the office.

86. To consider request by MCC to review Polling Districts, Places and Stations

This item had been passed to the committee after the Full Council meeting that was held in November. The Clerk had already responded to MCC in line with the discussions that had been held at that meeting and the letter was read out to members.

Members were in full agreement that there was no more to add to the representation previously made and that no further action was necessary.

87. To consider changing standing order Appendix 2 –Item 10 ‘Failure by members to attend committee meetings’

Members felt unanimously that the purpose of including this clause had been to encourage members to attend meetings and take full part in the work of the council. This would ensure that each of the wards would have full representation. It was noted that when this had been discussed at the Full Council meeting and members had been asked to account for their reasons for not giving apologies, it had been very uncomfortable. There was agreement that it had had the desired effect and members were now giving advance apologies for non attendance. The Clerk was asked to publish the spreadsheet showing the chart for the annual attendance for each of the Councillors at the end of the year.

It was agreed on this basis that the Finance Committee would not recommend changing the Standing Orders to exclude this clause.

Proposed Councillor Bond
Seconded Councillor Mrs Chivers

For 6 Against 0 Abs 1

88. Matters arising from previous meetings

i) Risk Assessment.

The Clerk advised that the register is almost complete. The assessments for events are always completed in advance and kept on file. There has been a delay in completing the equipment lists and this has now been finalised. The last stage is to give each category a provisional risk rating. The register will be kept in the office for inspection and will form part of the Audit procedure at year end.

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

Councillor Stevens advised that he had been to a seminar in County Hall entitled ‘Connections’. It had been well attended with about thirty councillors, some clerks and officers from MCC as well as Mr Colin Berg and County Councillor Chris Woodhouse who chaired the meeting. The document sets out a partnership plan for working together, it outlines the interdependency that the unitary authority and town and community councils have and need for building trust between the parties. Some of the attendees voiced concern regarding the lack of partnership opportunities with the development of Local Service Boards. Other issues related to the response times for emails and letters which had been suggested as fifteen days. The reason for this was given as the rural community councils only employing part time clerks and a shorter response time would be unrealistic. It was recognised that the document must be ‘citizen’ focused and lay out clear roles and responsibilities. It should outline the detail of the delivery of local services. Councillor Stevens reported that he felt happy with the concept of the agreement but was concerned at the poor communication channels that presently exist. The draft document will be circulated to all members. The next stage would be to consider whether or not to sign up to the agreement before the proposed deadline of May 2008 prior to the election. It was suggested that the two County Council members who are also Town Councillors should be invited to give a report at Full Council meetings outlining developments within MCC.

iii) Response to Local Development Plan

The Clerk advised that this item had been deferred to the Planning Committee and that a series of meetings for a working group had been arranged. This item was for discussion at the next Planning committee meeting due to be held on Monday 21st January.

iv) Town Council move to Market Hall

The Clerk advised that the proposed move to the Market Hall is scheduled to take place on Tues/Wed 11/12 March. Preparations are in hand and there is nothing further to report. The Clerk sought clarification from members that if the lottery funding was not successful that there would not be any requirement to leave the Shire Hall. Members confirmed that in the event of the bid not being accepted The Town Council offices would remain in situ.

v) Any other matters arising from Finance and Policy Meeting of 4th December 2007 not covered elsewhere. As they are not specifically listed, no decisions may be taken on any of these other matters arising.

N/A

89. 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 asked if the date of the next meeting could be changed as it clashed with a planning training session. Members agreed that the meeting could be brought forward one week.

The Clerk advised members that the artist commissioned to produce a new role has almost completed the work. He has taken the old role to model the frame for the new one and has recommended that a new mount is made and that the role should be cleaned. Members asked if this could be discussed at the next meeting as there will be a financial implication.

90. Next meeting Community Room, Shire Hall, Monday 18th February 2008 at 7.00pm.

Please note that this is a change to the date on the meetings date list, to accommodate the planning training seminar that would have clashed with the original date of this committee meeting (as above – item 89)

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.00pm

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____