

Monmouth Town Council

Market Hall
Priory Street
Monmouth NP25 3XA

Tel: 01600 715662

Email: townclerk@monmouth.gov.uk

www.monmouth.gov.uk



Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee of Monmouth Town Council held on Monday 30th June 2008 in the Gallery, Bridges Community Centre, Drybridge Street starting at 7.00 pm.

There was a presentation at the commencement of the meeting by Mr Chris Norman from MCC in relation to the CCTV System

Present: Chairman Councillor R Hayward,
Councillor R Bond, Councillor T Christopher, Councillor Mrs S Chivers,
Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst and Councillor N Hackett Pain.

In attendance: Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk
Councillors Mrs J Hall, Mrs B Smith, Ms C Edwards and M Jones
Mr David Cummings, Mr Michael Skidmore and Mr Jason Cooper

The Chair advised members of the public that there would be a ten minute session prior to the presentation from Chris Norman for an opportunity for questions from members of the public but after that Council members only would be invited to take part in the meeting.

Mr David Cummings said he considered that without the CCTV cameras Monmouth would become a soft target for crime. He expressed concern that the BT lines would be removed on 6th July and that would make it more cost prohibitive to reconnect the cameras. In his opinion he stated that they were a proven deterrent although he understood that the system had poor quality images and there had been issues regarding the availability of feedback. He asked what improvements could be made regarding the quality and monitoring issues. He supported the motion for a feasibility study and thanked members for the opportunity to speak.

Councillor Mrs Hall reiterated concerns regarding the poor visual images available.

Mr Michael Skidmore emphasised the points that had already been made regarding the picture quality, and also more importantly the monitoring facilities at Caerphilly. He posed the question as to why the monitoring facility could not be situated at local police stations.

Councillor Ms Edwards considered that it could be worthwhile contacting the other towns in Monmouthshire where CCTV was operational for their feedback on the upgraded system.

At this point the Chair invited Mr Chris Norman from Monmouthshire County Council to make his presentation.

Mr Norman advised that he had been in post since September 2007 and his brief was to develop the CCTV system in Monmouthshire. He was a former senior police officer with involvement in crime management as well as being an operational detective. He stated that he had a feeling for social issues and he wished to use his experience to try and open previously closed doors and to

Finance & Policy Committee

30 June 2008

Initials: _____

develop a strategy within the 4 towns where CCTV was situated. The remit that he had been given by MCC was to review the current structure and present a report outlining the value of the cameras and whether or not they were fit for purpose. He was to identify the response to cameras by police, ascertain the benefit in prosecutions, and evaluate the monitoring processes. He was fully aware of the history of the system and the previous problems that had been encountered. His research started with visits to other areas where CCTV is operational, Cardiff, Blaenau Gwent and Coleford to look at comparative systems. He asked what the criteria for measuring success was, and it became clear that the best systems operated with a clear strategy and a policy of what the towns were hoping to achieve. In particular he studied two important documents produced by the Association of Police Officers and the Home Office. Following this initial research a draft strategy document and action plan would be drawn up and this would detail the responsibilities and accountability that each of the agencies would have. Also part of the research was to establish with police co-operation what the police expected, whether the cameras needed to be monitored 24/7, or at certain peak times only or whether or not pre set monitoring would be more appropriate. This was possible by looking at a crime pattern analysis to identify hot spot areas and consider whether or not the cameras were sited in the most appropriate locations. A crime prevention survey was done in Monmouth town to establish where anti social behaviour was taking place that was not necessarily in view of the cameras. The purpose of this exercise was to reveal any weaknesses in the system with a view to looking at ways to solve this problem. The existing structure was looked at in detail and the review was undertaken in a scientific manner with the guidelines of existing Home Office documents. Mr Norman reported that with improved G3 telecommunications and mobile CCTV units that a bespoke model for Monmouth could achieve the towns aims. With quarterly feedback from the monitoring station it would be easy to benchmark performance from now so that improvements could be identified.

Members asked a number of questions in relation to the presentation, and one of the main concerns was whether or not the Police would be required to sign up as one of the partners to the agreement. Member expressed doubt that without this provision the police would not be committed to the further use of the system therefore calling into question its value. Mr Norman advised that other Town Councils would be willing to confirm the improved picture quality and additional benefits with the deployment of the mobile unit. Members also expressed concern regarding the potential cost of future developments for the system as no agreement was in place. Mr Norman explained that additional funding streams had been identified that could be made available. Also there was a question in relation to back payments for 2007/08 and Mr Norman confirmed that this money would not be requested and that payment for the CCTV following any decision to re-instate the cameras would be payable quarterly in advance.

The presentation concluded and the members of the public and those councillors in attendance who were not on the committee left the meeting.

Councillor Jones requested that he be co-opted onto the committee for the purpose of the negotiations of the CCTV system and the Chair, Councillor Hayward agreed.

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

None Received

19. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor G Bright and Councillor Mrs A Were

20. To consider for approval the minutes of the previous meeting dated 19th May 2008

The minutes were approved and signed as correct.

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

Unanimous

21. To receive and approve the summary of expenditure

i) To approve the accounts for payment between 13/05/2008 & 20/06/2008. (Page 1)

The accounts were received and approved for payment.

**Proposed Councillor Hayward
Seconded Councillor Bond**

Unanimous

ii) To review a statement of the bank reconciliations as at 31/05/2008. (Pages 2,3,& 4)

The bank reconciliations were received and approved as correct.

**Proposed Councillor Hayward
Seconded Councillor Bond**

Unanimous

iii) To review a statement of income as at 31/05/2008 (Page 5)

The Clerk informed members that the majority of income for the first two months was derived from the first precept payment, interest due and the vat refund

iv) To receive quarterly report on expenditure against budget to date (Pages 6 & 7)

Members asked for some minor changes to be made to the way in which this report was presented. The Clerk confirmed that this would be actioned in time for the next meeting.

v) To review balance of General and Earmarked Reserves

The Clerk circulated a spreadsheet detailing the earmarked reserves, the anticipated expenditure for this financial year, and what the balance of general reserves was expected to be at the end of the year once all of the precept monies had been received. The Chair advised that with the commitment that the Town Council has given to the Shire Hall restoration project of £125,000 and the guarantee to the Shire Hall Stewards that there was enough within the general reserves to fulfil these commitments but that it would leave the reserves depleted. In his opinion he stated that it would be prudent to have reserves in the region of £25,000/30,000.

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

N/A

23. To consider correspondence

MDCTC: Request for subscription £57.00

Members were in unanimous agreement that this invoice should not be paid. The Clerk was asked to write to MDCTC.

24. To receive reports from R.F.O

Review of expenditure for Civic Service.

The Clerk confirmed that although there was still one final invoice outstanding from St Mary's Church for the hire and the organist that the anticipated total spend for this year would be £860.00 against the total last year of £845.00.

25. To review subscriptions, contracts, fees and charges

The members suggested that each of the committees should be responsible for reviewing its contracts but that this committee should monitor the exercise and note recommendations made. It was agreed that the Clerk would put this as an item on the appropriate committee agendas.

26. To establish a working group to look at the viability of the Town Council providing a CCTV system in town

Following the presentation from Mr Norman the members agreed that it was now imperative to establish a working party to review the CCTV system and look at other options available. It was noted that the approach should be met with an open mind and that a dialogue should be entered into with MCC and the Police. Progress will need to be made quickly and it was agreed that meetings would take place every three weeks with a report back to each F&P committee meeting. The working group will be made up of Councillors Hacket Pain, Christopher, Hayward and Jones with Councillor Hacket Pain taking responsibility for chairing the meetings. The first meeting will take place on Wednesday 9th July at 7.00pm.

27. Matters arising from previous meetings

i) Objectives for new Council (Working Group to review Shaping our Future)

Members agreed that rather than setting up a working party it should be put on the agenda of the individual committees for each one to make its own submission. The F&P committee could then collate, review and recommend the document for adoption at Full Council.

ii) Employer Contribution Rate for Local Government Pension Scheme

At the previous meeting The Clerk had circulated a letter from Torfaen CBC, the administrators of the staff pension fund. It outlined some changes and advised that for Monmouth Town Council the rate at which employers can contribute is now optional. The Clerk advised members that the rate set was dependant on the average age of the employees and also the performance of the money markets where the funds are invested. Investigations with Torfaen CBC had revealed that a change in the employer's contribution would not have a direct impact on the final pension as this was calculated on the basis of the applicable number of years service multiplied by sixtieths of the final salary. It was pointed out that there could be benefits in maintaining the levels as they stand in order to minimise the effect of a sharp increase in the future. However members felt that if there was a short term benefit in reducing the expenditure then the lower rate should be applied.

- iii) **Any other matters arising from Finance and Policy Meeting of 19th May 2008 not covered elsewhere. As they are not specifically listed, no decisions may be taken on any of these other matters arising.**

Members asked that the Clerk write to MCC and advise of the changes in representation regarding the Shire Hall. Councillor Hackett Pain will now take over from Tim Buckland as the member on the Project Board, and Councillor Sue Chivers will be on the Project Team. It was also requested that a letter be sent to Debra Hill Howells MCC to ask for information regarding the financial timetable details and also to ask for a meeting of the Project Board.

28. **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 informed members that an overtime request from the Admin Assistant had been received. An additional 53 hours have been worked this year and 20 hours had been requested for payment, the remaining hours would be expected to be taken off as time in lieu. The Clerk has authority to allow the Assistant to work up to 16 hours per week and the overtime payment will be made within these terms. Members expressed concern that so many additional hours were being worked and requested that monthly time sheets for both the Clerk and Admin Assistant be made available for the committee to review. The Clerk informed members that the work had been necessary due to the preparation and move from the Shire Hall and the subsequent elections.

The Clerk advised that a letter had been received in the office from WAG asking for comments in relation to the review of electoral arrangements. Members requested that a response should be made outlining the anomalies in relation to the ward boundaries in Drybridge and Town Wards that exist between the Town and County Council boundaries, a copy to be sent to Steve Greenslade.

29. **Next meeting: Market Hall, Priory Street on Monday 11th August 2008 at 7.00pm**

Councillor Richard Bond left the meeting at this point.

To resolve to exclude the public and press from the meeting during consideration of the following items:

30. **To consider inclusion of further Town Council employees into a pension scheme**
See separate Pink Paper Minutes
31. **To confirm increase in SCP for Town Clerk to reflect examination success for Part 1 of Cert HE Local Policy**
See separate Pink Paper Minutes

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.50pm

Signature: _____ Date: _____