

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 22nd September 2008 in Market Hall, Priory Street, Monmouth starting at 7.00 pm.

Present: Deputy Chairman Councillor N Hacket Pain
Councillor R Bond, Councillor T Christopher, Councillor Mrs S Chivers and
Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst

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

Apologies were received from Councillor G Bright, Councillor R Hayward,
Councillor M Jones and Councillor Mrs A Were

**47. To consider for approval the minutes of the previous meeting dated
18th August 2008**

The minutes were approved and signed as correct.

Proposed Councillor Bond

Seconded Councillor Christopher

Unanimous

48. To receive and approve the summary of expenditure

i) To approve the accounts for payment between 01/08/2008 & 12/09/2008.

The accounts were received and approved for payment.

Proposed Councillor Mrs Dewhurst

Seconded Councillor Mrs Chivers

Unanimous

ii) To review a statement of the bank reconciliations as at 31/08/2008.

The bank reconciliations were reviewed and approved as correct.

iii) To receive a quarterly report on expenditure as at 12/09/2008

The Chair reminded all members that due to the large sum committed to the Shire Hall refurbishment and the guarantee to the Stewards that tight budgetary control would need to be exercised. It was recommended that any non essential expenditure should be vetoed as the level of General Reserves was extremely low.

iv) To review a statement of income as at 31/08/2008

The Clerk advised members that the majority of income for the first five months was derived from the precept payments, interest due and vat refunds

- 49. To confirm authorisation of payment of the following invoice and agree where to allocate spending within the agreed budget**
N/A

It was agreed to suspend Standing Orders and bring item no 58 up the agenda for discussion as there were other items that were related to this issue.

58. Matters arising from previous meetings

i) CCTV Working Group

Members were told of the recent visit by the Working Group to the Monitoring Centre at Caerphilly. There are six panels in total in the viewing room, five dedicated to the Caerphilly area and one for Monmouthshire which was not centrally positioned for easy viewing. The Monitoring Centre has recently lost the contracts it had with Newport and Torfaen. It is staffed by local people from the Caerphilly area but the members recognised the importance of knowing the geographical area that is being viewed, that local knowledge is vital if successful monitoring is to happen. There are some experienced members of staff who can use the equipment to its full potential; these have also visited some of the Monmouthshire towns to gain local knowledge of the area. However there have been staffing problems which have been resolved by taking a number of part time staff with no experience or knowledge of this area. The staff reported that the 'hot spot' areas are usually where the pubs and clubs are located, when asked what 'hot spot' areas there were in Monmouth none of the staff could identify even one area. It was mentioned that compared with other towns Monmouth was very quiet. Questions were also asked about police involvement and whether the staff could remember requests from police in the Monmouth area for tapes. It was also noted that the staff operating the centre were also responsible for manning the telephones for emergency call outs in the Caerphilly area and this took them away from their monitoring duties. There were concerns expressed over available manpower to police call outs resulting from CCTV monitoring.

At the end of the report members concluded that it seemed that there was little call for cameras in town where the crime rate is still very low and that the expense cannot be warranted. The system was described as an 'expensive toy'.

The working group have arranged another meeting on 30th September to progress this issue.

Members were advised of another issue relating to CCTV that had come to light in recent weeks relating to the non payment of an invoice dating back to 2003/2004 for £11,500. The Clerk informed members that a cheque had been raised and posted to the cashbook by the previous RFO in March 2004. However it seemed that due to service issues and other concerns by the Council that the payment was never authorised. The monies had been received in 2003/2004 via the precept and as the expenditure was not authorised at the end of the year the unspent money was transferred into the General Reserve account.

Members asked the Clerk to make further investigations as to why the payment had not been authorised and write to MCC to explain what those issues were. Members were of the opinion that the invoice should not be paid if their initial concerns still remained unresolved.

ii) Shire Hall Project

Councillor Hackett Pain reminded members of the letter from Mr Greenslade regarding the Town Council payment of £125,000 for the project. Members were reminded that there had been no formal agreement with the County about when the payment would be made. He suggested to members that staging the payment would be the best proposal for the Town Council and suggested that two payments of 25% each in March 2009 and September 2009 with the final 50% being payable along with the guarantee for the Stewards shortfall upon completion of the project. Members were reminded that once the Shire Hall had been restored there would be an ongoing commitment for service charges that would be payable annually which would in effect replace the £10,000 that had been earmarked for the last nine years. It was also suggested that if a delay for the first instalment of the service charge could be negotiated it would assist with the replenishment of finances. Councillor Hackett Pain proposed that the payment schedule as above be recommended to Full Council for approval.

Proposed Councillor Hackett Pain
Seconded Councillor Mrs Dewhurst

Unanimous

iii) Review Standing Orders – update from other Town Councils regarding non attendance of meetings

The Clerk reported the findings from the investigations with other clerks and One Voice Wales in relation to non attendance at meetings by members. There was little feedback that suggested other councils have a problem with non attendance and that the law gave little re-dress for taking any action other than under the six month rule as laid down in the LGA 1972. It was suggested that members attendance should be reviewed six weekly at Full Council by means of a spread sheet showing all the meetings and those present and absent. This method would ensure that it forms part of the minutes and as such is a public record.

The Clerk reported that another change would be required in line with legislation that would affect the quorum of the Planning Committee. At present the Standing Orders state that a quorum of five is required, the law states that a quorum is a third of members or three whichever is the greater.

The members also recognised the importance of developing skills within the Council and considered ways in which the Standing Order that requires liaison between the Chairs and Deputies could be more effectively used to achieve this. It was agreed that a recommendation would be made that would require the Deputy Chair of each committee to undertake the writing of the minutes after each meeting. Members considered that this would essentially mean improved communication and better involvement as well as providing opportunities to develop new skills.

Members also wished to see the Standing Orders being used fully in committee meetings to ensure better order. It was suggested that more formality would help the chairs to conduct the business more easily.

It was agreed that a recommendation to introduce a dress code for all meetings not just Full Council. Members were in agreement that gentlemen should wear shirts, ties and jackets and that there should be a no jeans policy for all meetings.

It was agreed that the Clerk would include all of the above points for recommendation by this committee on the next Full Council agenda.

iv) Shaping our Future – a four year plan

The work by the committees has nearly been finalised with a working group for the Environment Committee meeting shortly. Once this has been received the Clerk can compile a revised document for consideration.

v) Any other matters arising from Finance and Policy Meeting of 18th August 2008 not covered elsewhere. As they are not specifically listed, no decisions may be taken on any of these other matters arising.

N/A

Standing Orders were re-instated

50. To consider correspondence

MCC Debra Hill Howells: Request for items for agenda for Project Board Meeting
Members were advised that a date for project team meeting has now been set for Wednesday 8th October 2008 and a request has been received for items of discussion for the agenda. It was agreed that a request should be made in advance for copies of the following: - the contract between MCC and the Contractor, a schedule of payments due to the Contractor and a schedule of works.

Members asked for the following to be considered as items for discussion to be placed on the agenda for the forthcoming meeting; what responsibilities does the Project Manager have on a day to day basis and what, if any, delegated authority does he have, communication, to identify the roles of the Project Team and the Project Board, and what contingency arrangements are in place in the event of going over budget?

The Clerk will send these requests to Debra Hill Howells for action.

51. To receive reports from R.F.O

N/A

52. To review committee's expenditure

It was noted that the Community committee expenditure was almost complete for the year with the exception of the Christmas event and the summer play scheme contribution.

The Environment committee still had a large balance of uncommitted expenditure and that projects would need further consideration in advance of this current financial year end.

Members were reminded that any unspent monies would automatically go into the General Reserve account unless a resolution was passed to earmark monies for the following year but this could only be for capital expenditure and not revenue.

53. To review pay and service conditions of staff

Members were reminded that a comprehensive review of the Administration Assistant's job description had been completed and recently agreed at Full Council.

The National Joint Council of the employers and major unions are still in deadlock regarding the pay review for local government pay for 2008/2009. A resolution has been passed with the aim to resolve as soon as possible the current pay dispute through intensive negotiations. The objective is that by the end of December 2008 the NJC will endorse a national agreement which each side will have consulted on. The Clerk advised that the agreement would be backdated to April 2008 and that there had been an estimated 3% increase allowed for within the current budget.

54. To review Asset List

The list was considered and it was noted that there were some minor alterations that need to be made mainly in connection with the location of bins and planters. Members were advised that the replacement value column was for insurance purposes and the depreciation column was used for the Annual Return to assess the Town Councils fixed assets. At present depreciation is calculated at 20% per annum, whilst the regalia is appreciated at a value of 10% per annum.

Members were in agreement that the Mace Bearers uniforms should also be included in the asset list.

55. To consider re-valuation of regalia for insurance purposes

Members agreed to defer this item until further details regarding the cost of a valuation and also what insurance arrangements would be necessary for the transportation of the regalia.

56. To review insurance arrangements

The renewal of the Town Council insurance policy is due on 24 October 2008. The current policy is with Zurich and was a five year long term arrangement which is due to expire on the above date. Historically Zurich has been late in sending out renewal information and although they have already been approached with a view to obtaining a renewal figure, this has not been possible to date.

Two other companies have been approached both of whom offer a discount for a long term policy although the term would be for a maximum of three years rather than the current five. Norwich Union has quoted and offered an interest free payment facility. The Clerk recommended that this method of payment should be considered as currently one payment is made at the commencement of the term of the policy.

The members agreed to delegate authority to the Clerk to make a recommendation on its behalf to Full Council at the next meeting which is on 13th October 2008 providing all of the paperwork has been received.

**Proposed Councillor Hackett Pain
Seconded Councillor Bond**

Unanimous

57. To approve expenditure for musical accompaniment for Civic Service 2009

Members were reminded that this year it had proved impossible to book any musical accompaniment despite several options being explored. If music was required for 2009 then it would be advisable to book something well in advance so that it could be guaranteed rather than having to wait until nearer the time. The Clerk advised members that the last time a payment was made for a Band was in 2006 when the Corp of Drums from Cardiff attended at a cost of £150. Members agreed to commit a sum up to a maximum of £250.00 from next year's budget. The Civic Service is due to be held on Sunday 14th June 2009.

**Proposed Councillor Mrs Chivers
Seconded Councillor Christopher**

Unanimous

59. 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

Councillor Mrs Dewhurst advised that she would be unable to attend the One Voice Wales conference for Larger Local Councils and asked if the Clerk could please try and find another Councillor that might like to attend instead.

60. Next meeting: Market Hall, Priory Street on Monday 3rd November 2008 at 7.00pm

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.40pm

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____