

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 6th April 2009 in Market Hall, Priory Street, Monmouth starting at 7.00 pm.

Present: Chairman Councillor R Hayward
Councillor R Bond, Councillor G Bright, Councillor Mrs S Chivers
Councillor T Christopher, Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst,
Councillor N Hacket Pain and Councillor M Jones

In attendance: Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk, Councillor Munslow

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

No declarations of interest were received

118. To receive apologies for absence

Councillor Mrs A Were

119. To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting dated 12th January 2009

The minutes were approved and signed as correct

Proposed: Councillor Bond

Seconded: Councillor Hacket Pain

For: 4

Abstentions: 4

To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting dated 23rd February 2009

The minutes were approved and signed as correct

Proposed: Councillor Hacket Pain

Seconded: Councillor Christopher

For: 5

Abstentions: 3

120. To receive and approve the summary of expenditure

i) To approve the accounts for payment between 14/02/2009 & 30/03/2009.

The accounts were received and approved for payment.

Proposed: Councillor Jones

Seconded: Councillor Bond

Unanimous

ii) To review a statement of the bank reconciliations as at 28/02/2009.

The bank reconciliations were reviewed and considered correct.

iii) To review a statement of income as at 28/02/2009

The Clerk advised members that the majority of income was derived from the precept payments all of which had now been received, interest due and vat refunds.

iv) To review the committee's expenditure for 2008/2009

The Clerk reminded members that a number of payments had been authorised from the General Reserve in the budget code for Civic Entertainment. The total overspend against this budget head for the year was £1014.00. Members were advised that with the exception of the two virements that appeared on this agenda the Administration budget was within budget and that there was a small under spend at the end of the financial year. It was noted that the Community Affairs budget had been almost completely spent at the year end. The Environment committee budget at present still shows an under spend however it was expected that the committee would earmark some funds for projects such as lighting on the old Monnow Bridge and the Churchyard at Llangattock.

v) To consider a virement for Staff Training and Subsistence in the Administration Section which is over budget by £269.00

It was agreed that this amount should be vired from the Admin Contingency Fund budget head to cover the over spend.

Proposed: Councillor Hayward
Unanimous

Seconded: Councillor Jones

vi) To consider a virement for Postage in the Administration Section which is over budget by £4.00

The Clerk advised members that since the agenda had been prepared there was a further £5.00 expenditure for postage stamps and requested that members consider transferring the sum of £9.00 from the Stationery budget. This was agreed.

Proposed: Councillor Bond
Unanimous

Seconded: Councillor Christopher

vii) To confirm virements recommended by the Environment committee

Standing Orders require that all virements by committees should be confirmed and agreed by the Finance committee. Members were advised that the overspend of £866.00 on the Heritage Schemes budget was due to the cost of a 'Blue Plaque' guide that had not been budgeted for. There was also an overspend on the Street Decorations budget of £855.00. A transfer from the Town Centre Enhancements budget had been authorised by the committee at the meeting on 9th March

Proposed: Councillor Christopher
For: 7

Seconded: Councillor Mrs Dewhurst

Abstentions: 1

viii) To consider monies remaining from 2008/2009 to be earmarked for deferred capital spending. Any remaining monies not so earmarked will be transferred to general reserves.

Members were advised that this item should be deferred pending the decision of the Environment Committee to earmark funds for capital projects.

121. To consider payment of the following invoice:

One Voice Wales – Subscription for 2009/2010

£1127.00

The Clerk read out a letter from OVW detailing some of the improvements to services that had been delivered over the last year. They included the increasing role in the development of policy for the Local Government sector and ensuring that Town and Community councils are considered in all relevant matters. Also the development of the National Training Development Programme and the delivery of local courses. The Clerk advised members that their services had been used on a number of occasions in relation to a number of legal issues.

It was agreed that the subscription would be renewed and reconsidered on an annual basis.

**Proposed: Councillor Mrs Dewhurst
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Christopher

122. To receive correspondence:

One Voice Wales: eTrading for Community and Town Councils

The committee considered the request to join the pilot scheme for eTrading but decided that it would not be appropriate.

Torfaen CBC : Confirmation of employers rate payable for Local Government Pension Scheme

Members were advised that there would be no change to the employers rate for 2009/2010

123. To consider Action Review summary and Town Clerk's report

'Shaping our Future'

The document entitled 'Shaping our Future' is still outstanding due to submissions that are overdue but work is ongoing to finalise this.

Memo re nominations for Mayor and Deputy Mayor

Members were advised that this has now been completed.

Town Clerk's report

Section 137

S137 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits a community council to spend on activities for which it has no specific powers if the council considers that the expenditure is in the interests of and will bring direct benefit to their area, or in any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants. This is on the proviso that the benefit is commensurate with the expenditure. There is also scope to spend for certain charitable purposes but in both instances there is a spending limit. The Act sets out a formula which means that for 2009/2010 the maximum sum allowable to be spent using the power of S137 has increased from £5.86 to £6.15 per elector.

Staff Holidays

The Clerk will be taking 5 days leave over the Easter period. Cover will be provided by the Admin Assistant. This will leave the Clerk 12 hours leave which will be carried forward to the following year. This is in line with the agreement to allow a maximum of 25 hours to be brought forward. There is no time in lieu owing at present.

The Admin Assistant has 13 hours in lieu and 10 hours holiday to carry forward to 2009/2010.

124. To consider budget for Mayor Making ceremony from Civic Hospitality

Councillor Hayward advised members that the expenditure last year had totalled £67.55. He recommended to members that this should be increased to £100.00 and that the Clerk should be asked to purchase from a local supermarket wine and light refreshments for after the Mayor Making meeting.

**Proposed: Councillor Jones
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Hacket Pain

125. To discuss communication issues relating to the Shire Hall Project

Members were informed of the recent cancellation of the Project Team meeting with no notice. Representatives of the council on the group advised that the current arrangement of not circulating agendas well enough in advance and of only distributing minutes of the previous meeting at the next meeting was not satisfactory. Concerns were expressed regarding the under resourcing of the Estates Team at MCC and the perception that the department was not functioning properly due to this. The members expressed a strong desire to participate in the project and that at present the opportunity was not being presented. As a major stakeholder the members felt that it was important that their views should be considered. The members made it clear that in no way did they wish to jeopardise the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund.

It was agreed that the Clerk would write a letter to Mr Greenslade at MCC to express concern regarding poor communication. Also a letter would be sent to invite Keith Davies, Project Manager, to the next Full Council meeting to give a presentation regarding the current situation and an update on progress. A request would also be made for a schedule of bi-monthly Project Team meetings with papers distributed in advance.

**Proposed: Councillor Mrs Chivers
For : 7
Against: 1**

Seconded: Councillor Hacket Pain

126. To confirm amended terms regarding the changes to statutory rights to staff annual leave from 4.8 weeks to 5.6 weeks with effect from 1st April 2009 and consider the implications regarding public and bank holidays

Members were advised that since October 2007 all workers have had a statutory right to at least 4.8 weeks paid annual leave. However with effect from 1st April 2009 this will rise to 5.6 weeks. The Clerk's contract already falls within these terms but the Admin Assistant's will need to be adjusted to take this into consideration. Councillor Hayward advised the committee that the Admin Assistant's contract at present only allowed for 6 bank and public holidays although there are 9 during the course of the year. It was suggested that this should be increased so that there would be a full entitlement to all public holidays with immediate effect.

Members agreed unanimously to accept these changes.

**Proposed: Councillor Bond
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Jones

127. To confirm re-appointment of Mr Clive James as Internal Auditor as per the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations

The committee agreed that it was pleased with the work that the auditor had undertaken in previous years and accepted the Clerk's recommendation to re-appoint Mr James again this year.

**Proposed: Councillor Hacket Pain
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Bond

128. To confirm storage arrangements for regalia

Members were shown the two new storage cases that had been recently made for the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's chains. The Clerk reminded members that until now the Mayor's chain has been stored in the strong room at a local bank without any charge. Discussions followed regarding whether or not now there were two boxes to store the bank could consider making a charge for this service. It was agreed that the Clerk should speak to the bank and report back to the committee if there were any changes. Members were reminded that it is the responsibility of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to ensure that arrangements are made with the bank to collect and return the chains when necessary.

129. To consider response to the National Assembly in relation to the promotion and use of the Welsh language and which services should be able to be received bilingually

The National Assembly have been consulting on the following questions;

1. The promotion and use of the Welsh language
2. On which services the public should be able to receive bilingually
3. On the freedom of persons to use the Welsh language with each other

The Clerk advised that enquiries have revealed that translation costs average 7p per word, however costs can vary between 5p per word to 10p per word. Based on the last set of minutes of the Full Council translation costs could be within the range of £100.00/£ 200.00. The cost will also vary depending on the required timescale for completion. Members were advised that if there were an average of 50 meetings per year the cost of translation could be up to £10,000.00 per annum just for minutes.

Members were in unanimous agreement that any move to impose this by the National Assembly should be vehemently opposed on the basis that it would be a waste of public money. The facility of translating documents into Welsh is not freely available and would prove to be very costly.

It was agreed unanimously that a letter should be sent advising that Monmouth Town Council does not support this action and that the National Assembly should not make laws governing the promotion and use of the Welsh language.

**Proposed: Councillor Hayward
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Bright

130. To consider engaging a Conservator to appraise the condition of the Maces and make recommendations in relation to their future use

The members were reminded that the Museum Curator had spoken to the Clerk regarding his concern about the future use of the maces. They are over 300 years old and valued at £55k. A discussion about the merit of an independent assessment by a specialist conservator was considered as this would provide more detail about the condition of the maces and recommendations regarding how to protect them from future damage or deterioration. The general consensus was that whilst every endeavour should be taken to protect them that they should be available for use for Civic ceremonies and not become museum pieces. It was agreed to engage the services of Rowena Hill at a maximum cost of £350.00 from the Civic budget to advise on the condition of the maces and make recommendations regarding their care and conservation in order to prolong their lifespan.

**Proposed: Councillor Bond
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Jones

131. To agree items of business for next meeting

To consider current banking provision
Use of Town Council notice boards
Identification for Councillors
Meeting room provision
Response to CCTV petition

132. Next meeting: Market Hall, Priory Street on Monday 18th May 2009 at 7.00pm

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signature: _____ Date: _____