

Monmouth Town Council

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Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee of Monmouth Town Council held on Monday 18th May 2009 in Market Hall, Priory Street, Monmouth starting at 7.00 pm.

Present: Chairman Councillor R Hayward
Councillor R Bond, Councillor G Bright, Councillor T Christopher,
Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst, Councillor J Fletcher, Councillor N Hacket Pain,
Councillor M Jones, Councillor Mrs B Smith and Councillor Mrs A Were

In attendance: Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk

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

No declarations of interest were received

2. To receive apologies for absence

Councillor Mrs S Chivers

3. To elect a Chairman of the Finance & Policy Committee

Councillor Hayward accepted the nomination of Chairman and the members agreed unanimously to his selection.

4. To elect a Deputy Chairman of the Finance & Policy Committee

Councillor Hacket Pain accepted the nomination of Deputy Chairman and the members agreed unanimously to his selection.

5. To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting dated 6th April 2009

It was proposed to delete the last part of the last sentence of Item 129.

The minutes were approved and signed as correct

Proposed: Councillor Hacket Pain

Seconded: Councillor Fletcher

For: 8

Abstentions: 2

6. To receive and approve the summary of expenditure

i) To approve the accounts for payment between 01/04/2009 & 30/04/2009.

The accounts were received and approved for payment.

Proposed: Councillor Mrs Dewhurst

Seconded: Councillor Hacket Pain

Unanimous

ii) To review a statement of the bank reconciliations as at 30/04/2009.

The bank reconciliations were reviewed and considered correct.

iii) To review a statement of income as at 30/04/2009

The Clerk confirmed that the first precept payment had now been received.

iv) 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 reminded that this item had been deferred pending the decision of the Environment Committee to earmark funds for capital projects. The committee had since met and proposed to earmark £3185.00 from the Transport Scheme budget to allocate towards the Allotment Road. The sum of £11000.00 remaining in the Match Schemes budget should be allocated as follows; £5000.00 for the lighting on the old Monnow Bridge with the remaining £6000.00 being transferred to the Street Decorations budget for additional Christmas Lights and to include the provision of monies towards a bandstand.

The committee agreed to this resolution

**Proposed: Councillor Christopher
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Mrs Dewhurst

7. To receive correspondence:
None received

**8. 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.

Engagement of conservator regarding condition and use of the maces

Members were advised that this is ongoing and that arrangements have been made for the work to be carried out at the commencement of June.

Town Clerk's report

Year End Account and Audit

The year end accounts have been closed off and completed. The Annual Return has been filled in and is awaiting approval by the Council. There will be an item on the next Full Council agenda to approve the Statement of Accounts for 2008/2009 and the Annual Governance Statement. Under the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2005 and the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 the External Auditors are required to set an appointed date for the audit, this will be Tuesday 29th September. There is a statutory requirement for all councils to provide interested parties and local electors with the opportunity to inspect the accounts and supporting documentation. The notice of appointment of the date for the exercise of electors rights will be advertised in August and the inspection period will commence on Tuesday 1st September and end on Monday 28th September.

WWYC – Admin Staff Training

The programme is both relevant and practical, enabling staff to apply its principles in the workplace. The course is divided into 'bite-sized' chunks which will help staff to perform their duties more effectively and efficiently. It consists of six core knowledge topics, which can be studied at a time and place of the candidate's choice, covering: Roles & Responsibilities, Law Procedures, Finance, Planning and Community Action. Further appropriate training was identified when Jane Lloyd's appraisal was completed last year. The course should take about a year to complete and costs £150.00.

Members requested that the course would be completed in Mrs Lloyd's time and that a letter should be issued to confirm this.

Pay Claim 2009/10

On 6th April the employers side of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services formally responded to the trade union's pay claim by making an offer of an across –the – board pay increase of 0.50%. This offer will remain on the table until 1st June. The employers' side has indicated that if a negotiated settlement has not been achieved by that date the offer will be withdrawn and there will be no pay rise for 2009/10

Regalia Storage

Alternative arrangements have now been made for the storage of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's chains. The previous arrangement with HSBC had been reviewed in light of the additional storage box for the Deputy Mayor's chain and the suggestion of a charge being introduced. After consultation with other members a decision has been made to place the regalia with an alternative bank.

Commercial Telephone Banking Service

The Clerk has been registered for this service to enable information to be obtained over the telephone. This service will also enable the transfer of funds as well as other routine banking functions. A copy of the terms and conditions are available for inspection if any member wishes to see them as they create legal obligations between the bank and the Town Council. The agreement confirms that the authorised signatories are happy for the Clerk to access the account to use this service and that authorisation is given to the Bank to act on any instruction given by the Clerk.

Memorial for Graham Powell

The Clerk in conjunction with the Mayor made arrangements for the purchase of a wreath for the funeral of Graham Powell. The cost was £40.00 and will come from the ceremonial budget and will be approved for payment at the next Finance Meeting. It has been suggested that a donation of £100.00 should be made in memory of Graham and the family has indicated that they would like to arrange to install a bench in town. This is something that can be approved at the next meeting.

9. To receive report from the Shire Hall Project Board meeting

Councillor Hackett Pain advised members of his recent meeting with the Board and that there had been a gap of eighteen months between meetings. He explained that there had been a profuse apology for the lack of communication and that the reason for this had been the mitigating circumstances regarding the encountered problems with the scaffolding. At present there is a fifteen week delay on the project due to the situation with the scaffolding in Beaufort Court, however there is a court hearing due at the beginning of June which should finalise these matters. This has necessitated work being delayed and in particular the render on the back wall. There are huge budget implications and the delay is costing an additional £14,000 per week. The deficit at this stage is £210,000 but there will no doubt be further problems which will have an impact on this still further. It is anticipated that the total deficit will be £225,000 against the contingency of £178,000. It was discovered that the wall plate was rotten which resulted in additional works at an unbudgeted cost of £50,000. In trying to project the shortfall the best case scenario would be likely to be not less than £150,000 and the worse case £300,000. Several options were available including the reduction in scale of the works on the entire building, however as the grant from the HLF is dependent on the works being done, no work equals no money. Another option available would be to request further funding from other partners to the scheme but this remains an open question at the moment. It has been necessary to modify the Interpretation Plan to place a greater emphasis on education rather than tourism as this will generate more income. Mr Helme from MCC is writing a report regarding this to be presented at the next Project Board meeting on 16th June. It has been suggested that a visit to the site should be arranged for members to have a proper update on progress of the project.

Councillor Bright requested details of the Court Hearing.

10. To appoint Councillors to carry out internal six monthly review of accounts

It was agreed unanimously to appoint Councillors Hayward and Hacket Pain.

**Proposed: Councillor Bond
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Bright

11. To consider Forward Plan for 2009/2010

The committee agreed to accept the draft that had been circulated in advance

**Proposed: Councillor Hacket Pain
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Fletcher

12. To consider and agree contents of committee's submission for the Annual Report

Councillor Hayward advised members that this had not been completed and asked that it be deferred.

13. To consider the Welsh Assembly Government's model Charter and confirm response

The committee agreed in principal with the main thrust of the charter and in particular the possibility of having more power to take over services. It was considered that the document would be organic and that it provided the framework for opportunities to explore change. Members were concerned that there would be pressure from the Unitary Authority to devolve local services and the committee expressed that caution must follow and the need to ensure that double taxation would not penalise residents. There was some optimism shown by members with the hope that MCC would be taking a new direction with the appointment of a new Chief Executive.

The Clerk had made some suggestions for change and it was confirmed that those recommendations should be forwarded to One Voice Wales (OVW) in time for its next meeting for further discussion. It was also suggested that any individual member could also contribute and should write to OVW if they wished

**Proposed: Councillor Jones
For: 9 Against: 1**

Seconded: Councillor Bright

Abstentions: 0

14. To consider process for co-opting for vacancy in the Wyesham ward

Members were reminded that the selection process was in order to choose the best candidate. However there was no requirement to choose any one if members did not consider that they were suitable. It was agreed that it was not necessary to ask each of the candidates the same questions as it was recognised that this would reduce scope to ask appropriate questions relevant to each of the candidates. It was agreed though that there must be a number of core questions that must be addressed to all applicants, these are:

1. Why do you want to be on the Council?
2. What are your strengths?
3. Do you have any particular skills that you could bring?
4. Have you any experience of Town/Community Councils?
5. Why didn't you stand for election last time?
6. Will your current commitments allow you sufficient time to serve the Council?

In addition to these core questions members will have the opportunity to address individual questions to the candidates as appropriate.

It was agreed that all candidates should be asked to leave the meeting room at the commencement of the selection so that clarification could be given for members about the procedure.

The voting procedure was discussed and there was an agreement to use a points system to score each of the candidates so that an outright winner would be chosen immediately and eliminate the need for further rounds of voting. The system would allow for each of the candidates to be given a score on the basis that as there were four, the candidate most favoured would receive a score of four and the next candidate would receive a score of three and so on. It was agreed that in the interests of fairness and to eliminate tactical voting every member must give each candidate a score of between four and one but not using the same score more than once.

Proposed: Councillor Bond
Unanimous

Seconded: Councillor Jones

15. To discuss appropriate response to the CCTV petition

An analysis and audit of the recent CCTV petition was shown to reveal some inconsistencies with the published figures. Members agreed the size of the petition was not as great as had been depicted and that concerns relating to such things as whether people knew where the cameras are and what extent they cover had not been addressed. The petition was not clearly worded enough as to indicate that residents know what they want re-instated and it also does not say to whom the petition is addressed. However members agreed that it has shown that there are some people that want CCTV within the town. The previous recommendations included a review of the situation if circumstances changed and in the light of this it was agreed to reform the working group to take a further look at this issue. Members however still expressed reservations that the system is inflexible and that consideration should be given to how the system works in town. There was also a strong opinion that it was dangerous to make comparisons between the system in Monmouth and those in other towns as the circumstances, trade, economy and crime patterns are very different.

The members agreed that a Press Release should be made to advise that the working group would be re-convened to look again at all aspects of the system. A vote was taken to accept that the members of the working party would remain as before.

Proposed: Councillor Hacket Pain
Unanimous

Seconded: Councillor Christopher

16. To consider alternative accommodation for meetings

Members were advised that Monmouth Priory had been offered for the use of meetings for a nominal fee which would cover the cost of heating the building. It was unanimously agreed that the present arrangements were unacceptable and that concerns relating to fire safety and evacuation had already been taken up with MCC. The situation at present does not promote public participation and that a change of venue for Full Council meetings to accommodate increased numbers was necessary. The committee agreed that the generous offer should be taken up and that the cost would be paid for by the Town Council.

Proposed: Councillor Mrs Dewhurst
Unanimous

Seconded: Councillor Bond

17. To consider the provision of identification for Councillors

It was agreed that whilst most members were well known and had never had issues with providing proof of identification some members could experience problems. It was recognised that in today's day and age where many rogue traders prey on vulnerable people that a system of identifying Councillors would be a sensible option to consider. It was agreed that the Clerk would investigate the possibility of having an identification card with a photo and report back to the committee.

Proposed: Councillor Jones

Seconded: Councillor Hayward

For: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 3

18. To agree items of business for next meeting

None

19. Next meeting: Market Hall, Priory Street on Monday 29th June 2009 at 7.00pm

20. To resolve to exclude members of the public and press under Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds of confidentiality.

**Proposed: Councillor Bond
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Christopher

21. To confirm backdated staff salary final award from ACAS of 2.75% backdated to April 2008

Members were reminded that an interim salary award of 2.45% had already been paid to staff. It was agreed to accept the final ACAS recommendation of 2.75% and put this to Full Council for confirmation.

**Proposed: Councillor Hacket Pain
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Mrs Were

22. To confirm increase of salary for the Clerk of one point to SCP 36 with effect from 1st May 2009 (as per terms of the Contract of Employment on the successful completion of the Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy).

Members were advised that confirming this pay award was simply a formality as it formed part of the Clerk's terms of employment. It was agreed unanimously to recommend to the Full Council that the Clerk should be awarded this upon recognition of completing the University of Gloucestershire course.

**Proposed: Councillor Christopher
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Hacket Pain

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signature: _____ Date: _____