

Monmouth Town Council

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Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee of Monmouth Town Council held on Monday 29th June 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 J Fletcher, Councillor N Hacket Pain,
and Councillor Mrs B Smith

In attendance: Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk, Councillor J Hall and Mr Tim Buckland

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

Councillor Bright declared a personal interest in item no. 35

24. To receive apologies for absence

Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst, Councillor M Jones and Councillor Mrs A Were

25. To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting dated 18th May 2009

The minutes were approved and signed as correct

Proposed: Councillor Hacket Pain

For: 7

Against: 0

Seconded: Councillor Bond

Abstentions: 1

26. To receive and approve the summary of expenditure

i) To approve the accounts for payment between 12/05/2009 & 22/06/2009.

The accounts were received and approved for payment.

Proposed: Councillor Fletcher

Unanimous

Seconded: Councillor Hacket Pain

ii) To review a statement of the bank reconciliations as at 31/05/2009.

The bank reconciliations were reviewed and considered correct.

iii) To review a statement of income as at 31/05/2009

The Chair confirmed that the majority of income was from the first precept payment and the VAT refund from the last quarter

iv) To receive quarterly report on committee's expenditure to date

Members were advised that all of the expenditure codes were within budget to date

30. To confirm Press Release relating to the audit of accounts

It was agreed that this was acceptable and should be published in due course.

**Proposed: Councillor Christopher
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Mrs Smith

31. To receive update from the CCTV working group

Councillor Hacket Pain advised members that the working group had agreed to take a step by step approach to the review and deal with each issue one at a time. The first obstacle was the exclusion of the Town Council from the CSAT Partnership. A letter had been written to Inspector Boycott to request that a representative be allowed to join, it has been confirmed that this will be discussed at their next meeting. There have been no further comments recently in the press and members were advised that another Press Release is being drafted which is based on a study done by Cambridge University on behalf of the Home Office. This study has shown that CCTV has very little effect on the level of crime and no effect on the level of prosecution. Further news will be reported in due course.

32. To receive update from the Services working group

Councillor Christopher reported on the last meeting held on 20th May 2009 at which Debbie McCarty (OSS) was present. Several actions points were agreed including setting up a meeting with the Allotment Association with a view to the best way forward for the allotments. The Millennium Field was also discussed and it was noted that Tim Bradfield (MCC) in principal would have no objection to the Town Council taking over responsibility for this area although due to its status as common land there could be some legal issues. It was agreed that to consider taking over St Mary's Churchyard could have substantial financial implications due to the poor state of repair of the pathways, also potential problems could include the wall which has listed railings on the top. In addition further costs would be incurred for grass cutting and tree management. The public toilets in town were another consideration and Councillor Christopher advised the committee that further discussion would need to take place regarding this as there were significant cost implications. The committee was advised that the Area Committee is setting up a working group to continue discussion on services and it was agreed that Councillor Christopher should be the representative to join.

33. To receive report from the Shire Hall Project Board representative and consider financial implications to the Town Council regarding the projected overspend

Mr Tim Buckland was invited as a former Town Council representative on the Project Board to give a brief background into the history of this project.

Councillor Hacket Pain advised members that at the recent meeting with the Board on 16th June details were given of the out of court settlement between the Authority and the Beaufort Court Management Company which provided £500.00 per week to the company for a minimum of 26 weeks whilst the scaffolding at Beaufort Court remains in situ, after this time the cost would increase to £5000 per week. Each side was ordered to pay its own costs. Members were informed that there are three tenants whose properties are affected by the scaffolding.

There is also another Court Case pending relating to storm water drainage and damage that has been caused which is subject to a £35,000 claim which will be a long term matter to resolve.

The HLF has been approached with a request to consider increasing its financial contribution in light of the scaffolding problems and the additional costs that have been

incurred. This is being considered although it could be December at the earliest before the outcome of this is known. Further cost savings are being looked at and the Project Team and Project Board will be meeting shortly to discuss areas where expenditure could be cut. The committee considered a letter that had been sent by Steve Greenslade (MCC) in which he stated that the Town Council would be entitled to use the room currently designated as the Council Chamber for its normal frequency of meetings and that as this will be a bookable facility the Town Council will need to make advance bookings. He added that as the space will be multi-functional this effectively means that fixed furniture will not be provided. This provoked members to debate but it was agreed that this could be considered further in due course. Any request for further funding for the project would need to be for discussion at Full Council.

It was agreed that no further action should be taken at present but pending the Project Team and Project Board meetings taking place.

8.30pm Councillor Bond left the meeting.

34. To consider first draft of the Council's three year programme as set out in Shaping our Future II

Members considered the document and agreed on some amendments which would be recommended to Full Council for consideration and adoption.

**Proposed: Councillor Christopher
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Hacket Pain

35. To consider the letter from the Royal British Legion in relation to the arrangements for the Remembrance Day Parade

Councillors Christopher, Mrs Chivers and Fletcher declared a personal interest in this item.

Members were advised that following receipt of the letter from the Legion about the Remembrance Parade further investigations with One Voice Wales have revealed that it is the responsibility of the Town Council. In almost all known cases throughout the Country this is however organised and run by the Royal British Legion. It is set out in statute that it is the requirement of the Local Authority to be responsible for the Civic Remembrance Day service and parade.

It was agreed that a letter to the British Legion Monmouth Branch should be sent to confirm that the Town Council would like it to continue to organise the event on behalf of the Council. Members wished it to be recorded that they recognised what a great job the Legion does and the appreciation of members for all of their efforts and hard work. It was agreed that the Legion would continue to send invitations on behalf of the Council to those individuals and organisations that are normally represented. Any other requests should be directed to the Town Council who will consider them on a case by case basis.

**Proposed: Councillor Hayward
Unanimous**

Seconded: Councillor Hacket Pain

36. To consider the Town Council's media coverage

This item has been placed on the agenda following a recent article seen in the Monmouthshire Beacon entitled 'Town Council News'. Concerns had been expressed by members that this would appear to be an official press release by the Council when in actual fact it was not. It was agreed that a letter would be sent by the Clerk to clarify the situation and request that in future it should be made clear whose report it is and whose views it expressed. It was also noted that as the Beacon had not sent a reporter to the meeting that evening that a question regarding the source of the material should be raised. Members requested that the letter should make it clear that this is a personal item of correspondence between the Town Council and the Beacon and should not be for publication on the 'letters' page.

37. To review subscriptions, contracts, fees and charges

It was agreed to defer this item until the following meeting.

38. To review the Town Council's Risk Management process

A review of the Town Council's risk management process has been undertaken and the Chair identified some of the points covered. The Clerk assesses and manages risks and these documented existing practices must be reviewed at least annually. It was agreed to delegate this item for further consideration and approval to the Chair and Deputy Chair to complete in association with the Clerk.

39. To agree items of business for next meeting

As per Forward Plan

40. Next meeting: Market Hall, Priory Street on Monday 17th August 2009 at 7.00pm

Members were advised that this date has changed from the original meeting date planned. Due to staff holidays it has been necessary to re-schedule to 17th August.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.20pm

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____