

Monmouth Town Council

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Finance & Policy Committee

**Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee
held on Monday 7th March at 7.00 pm at The Market Hall, Priory Street, Monmouth**

Present: Chair Councillor R Hayward
Councillor Mr R Bond
Councillor Mrs S Chivers
Councillor J Fletcher
Councillor Mrs J Hall

Deputy Chair Councillor N Hacket Pain
Councillor Mr T Christopher
Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst
Councillor Mrs J Gunter
Councillor Mrs S White

In Attendance: Mrs S James, Town Clerk, Ms M Mardell.

A short presentation was given by Mandy Mardell regarding the new Monmouth Town Guide

Ms Mardell produces Monnow Voice and the Ross Voice magazines, and explained that she was approached by Monmouth Chamber of Trade to produce a new Town Guide. It is hoped to publish 8000 copies in April/May this year. This is based on 16,000 copies of a previous edition published, that lasted 2 years. The guide is to include information on the town – The Shire Hall, its heritage, attractions, accommodation, shopping, events etc. Much information has been provided by the Tourist Information Centre. Its target audience is to be tourists and people moving to the area, as well as being useful to existing residents. It is estimated to cost £4000 – which is £2500 printing costs, £500 design, and £1000 production. The MDCTC will be giving £500, it is hoped Monmouth Town Council will give £500, and the rest to be raised through advertising – currently £750 so far. The guide will be free and distributed through various outlets.

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

None received

127. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllr Mr G Bright and Cllr Mr M Jones

**128. To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meetings dated
Monday 24 January 2011**

Approved

Proposed: Cllr Mr R Bond Seconded Cllr Mr J Fletcher

Unanimous

129. To receive and approve the summary of expenditure

- i. To approve the accounts for payment between 21/1/11 and 04/03/11
- ii. To review a statement of the bank reconciliations as at 31/1/11 and 28/02/11
- iii. To review a statement of income as at 28/2/11
- iv. To receive quarterly report on committee's expenditure to date

It was explained that the bank statements for February had not yet been received, so the information given was incomplete in that Standing Orders, Direct debits and receipts not banked by the Clerk during February were not included. The Bank Reconciliation for Cash Book 1 for February was not available. It was noted that the Office equipment budget was overspent due to the purchase of a new computer, but this would be covered by the Clerk's contingency fund.

The accounts were approved

Proposed: Cllr Mrs J Hall Seconded: Cllr Mrs J Gunter

Unanimous

130. To receive correspondence

- i. MCC: Notice of Referendum
- ii. C Boase: Email re. Co-option iia WAG: Amendment to Section 37 expenditure limit
- iii. SLCC: Welsh Training Bursary (N/A MTC) and SLCC events 2011
- iv. Jenny Lewis MCC: Invite to signing of Charter 23.3.11 – formal invite to follow
- v. Jenny Lewis MCC: Final Draft of "A shared Community"
- vi. Greater Gwent Torfaen Pension Fund: Triennial Actuarial Valuation as at 31/3/10
- vii. Greater Gwent Torfaen Pension Fund: Employee contribution bandings
- viii. MCC: Fire risk assessment of Market Hall
- ix. MTC: Copy of letter to Buckholt WI regarding CCTV
- x. Andy Mason: CCTV Shared Resource Centre Blaenavon
- xi. CSAT: agenda for 7/3/11 meeting and minutes from 7/2/11

Letter ii: from Mr Boase was read aloud. Some discussion took place regarding a suitable response, with reference to a draft response from Cllr Mr R Hayward. The Clerk explained what Mr Boase was presumed to refer to regarding "part of" Mr Murray's advice. It was agreed Mr Boase should be informed that advice had been sought, and the Council maintained its right to co-opt as it saw fit and previously agreed.

Letter iv: from Jenny Lewis, regarding an invitation to an evening to celebrate the signing of the Charter. The Charter was briefly explained by Cllr Mr R Hayward, who agreed to attend the signing as the Mayor was unable to attend.

Copies of the Draft Charter were requested by Cllr Mrs S Chivers and Cllr Mrs S White.

Letter ix: from Buckholt WI was read out, along with the response from the office. Late correspondence letter 6 from Nat West Bank requesting return of a payment wrongly credited to the Council's account. The Clerk explained that until the February bank statements were received, this could not be confirmed or acted upon.

131. To consider action review summary and receive Town Clerk's report

Outstanding Actions were noted, the majority not able to be completed until return of the Office and Council to the Shire Hall.

Town Clerk's Report

As a benefit of joining the Local Council Advisory Scheme in November a 30% discount on the Engineering reports we normally receive on the playground equipment has been secured.

This is a saving of £73.

Mr Mike Booth has kindly agreed to present the draft business plan for the Shire Hall at the next Finance and Policy meeting on 18th April.

CCTV Monitoring station visit It is proving very difficult to find a date/time for this visit to suit all, but Thursday 24th March at 5pm has had the most positive response.

Both Andy Mason and the staff at the centre are keen to show councillors some new technological developments, to discuss the service now available, and to give visits to the control room.

Redundant Office Computer. Charitable causes have been suggested and one Councillor has shown an interest in the old computer. However, there will now be a charge to clean the computer of all information if it is to be passed onto a third party. This will also mean that it will no longer contain Windows software, which would have to be repurchased by any new user, and as the computer is approximately 6 years old, it is now intended to leave our IT contractor to clean and dispose of it accordingly

Staff Pensions. The staff pension scheme -Greater Gwent (Torfaen) Pension Fund, in a recent report has shown that the whole (99%) of Monmouth Town Council liabilities are funded. Thus the Town Council's employers contribution is to be set at 11.9% for next year, -a reduction of 0.4% on 2010-11. We have received further Councillor training dates from One Voice Wales, which will be circulated to all.

- 132. To discuss CSAT'S issues** Cllr Mr R Hayward, being the new Monmouth Town Council representative on CSAT reported that it would be approximately 6 weeks before another meeting was to be held. Cllr Mrs S Chivers reported seeing two Community Officers together in the Wonastow Road area, suggesting they would be better deployed separately. Cllr Mrs A Dewhurst reminded members that Sophie Whiting had attended a Community Affairs Committee meeting recently and had confirmed that parking infringements and anti-social behaviour should continue to be reported every time by telephoning 101. This would highlight continued similar offences.

133. To discuss request regarding the new Monmouth Town Guide

Discussion took place regarding the £500 funding request from Mandy Mardell at the earlier presentation. Cllr Mr T Christopher reminded members that £750 was given towards the production of 16,000 copies over 2 years of a previous Town Guide. Cllr Mrs A Dewhurst supported the Guide in that it would be a valuable benefit to tourism and promote the town. Other members agreed with this and Cllr Mr R Bond suggested that it is also useful for local people and businesses as a reference.

It was proposed that the Town Council contribute £500 towards the production of the new Monmouth Town Guide.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs J Hall, Seconded: Cllr Mrs A Dewhurst

For: 7 Against: 3 Approved

Cllr Mrs S Chivers asked for a named vote to be recorded, but this was not seconded.

It was then proposed that the £500 should be taken from General Reserves.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs A Dewhurst Seconded: Cllr Mr R Bond.

For: 7 Abstentions: 3 Approved

Cllr Mrs S White requested that the funding be provided on the condition it was returned if the project did not go ahead, which was agreed.

134. To receive further valuer's report and restoration quotes for chairs at the Shire Hall and to make decision on storage/restoration/disposal/location

Cllr Bond reported that the working group had met, and that Mr Williams was meeting Cllr Bond later in the week to discuss which chairs were suitable for repair, which were not worth keeping, but ensuring enough remained for the Mayor's Parlour and Council meetings in the Council Chambers. Cllr Mr R Hayward reminded members it was previously agreed that the working group was to decide on which chairs were to be kept and which not, and it was confirmed that no money would be spent until Full Council had received their recommendations and decisions. The Clerk reminded the committee that the chairs currently stored in the Town Clerk's office could soon become problematic for the office return to the Shire Hall. Cllr Mr R Hayward suggested that the working group should report back to the Full Council meeting on 28th March, hence before the next Finance and Policy Committee meeting. Cllr Mrs S Chivers asked about the progress on labelling of the chairs

135. To discuss framing charges for Mayors photographs

Although this item had been discussed at a previous meeting, no minute was recorded regarding payment for the frames for the Mayor's photographs.

It was proposed that Mayors pay for the framing of their own photographs. The frames were to be of the type previously agreed, with diffused glass, at approximately £32.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs S White

Seconded: Cllr Mrs J Gunter

136. Update protocol issues including protocol for Mace Bearers

The Protocol working group had produced a report giving protocol for Mace Bearers duties. Cllr Christopher asked for clarification over who issued instructions to the Mace Bearers, the connection with the Town Clerk, and order of proceeding at the Civic function and Remembrance Day. It was agreed the Mace Bearers go first, then the Town Clerk, the Mayor and the Consort. This is the order of precedence for all Civic functions. It was confirmed that the Mace Bearers should guard the Mayor when wearing full regalia, and should be present with the Mayor.

It was discussed that in the past, the Mayor, Town Clerk and Deputy Mayor met in the Mayor's Parlour before the meeting, then the Deputy Mayor entered the room, the Town Clerk knocked on the door and everyone stood until the Mayor was seated. The Clerk raised the issue of timing with planning meetings often scheduled before Town Council meetings. Cllr Mrs Dewhurst believed that the Mayor simply standing and introducing the meeting was sufficient. There was some feeling that tradition and formality of Town Council proceedings had diminished over the past few years which was voiced by Cllr Bond, Cllr Mrs White and Cllr Mrs Chivers.

It was proposed that this tradition be re-instated.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs S White Seconded: Cllr Mr R Bond

For: 5 Against:: 5

Chair gave the casting vote against the proposal, and the status quo is to remain Therefore the protocol regarding the Mace Bearers was accepted, but not the last 4 items/sentences.

The Clerk then requested protocol guidelines regarding the Civic Service. Road Closures need to be arranged before the Mayor Making, so a route needed to be agreed beforehand. It was agreed the route should be from the Shire Hall, via Priory Street, Whitecross Street towards St Mary's Parish Church, which would also encompass procession variations to other Churches, except St Thomas' Church in Overmonnow. This would be discussed again if the need arose, or charges are made.

Cllr Mr B Bond left the meeting

The Clerk also requested feedback from the protocol group regarding the de-briefing notes from the Remembrance Day Parade. Views were asked regarding the suggestion of a local marching band which could also march at the Civic service, as the Drums Corps had not yet confirmed their availability. It was suggested that as the organisation of the Remembrance Day Parade is delegated to the British Legion, it is up to them to arrange as they see fit. Further protocol guidance was also requested from the Protocol group, in a step-by-step form for the Civic Service, similar as produced for the Remembrance Day parade, to avoid any last minute issues or confusion.

137. To agree official policy for giving and acceptance of Apologies

Cllr R Hayward explained that apologies should be given to the Chair or Clerk, and reasons should be given. Cllr Mrs S White objected that it was not always possible at the last moment, and was unhappy about having to give reasons.

It was proposed that members should make every effort to contact the Clerk or Chair, or failing that, another member of the Committee, to pass on apologies before a meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs S White Seconded : Cllr Mr J Fletcher

For: 4 Against: 3 Abstentions: 2

The Clerk advised One Voice Wales had confirmed that Apologies should be given, with reasons, so that the apology can be accepted, and pointed out that Councillors are summoned to attend meetings, as in a court of law, reasons should be given for absence. The Clerk also requested that apologies should be left with the office, as a message if the office is closed.

After further discussion,

It was then proposed that if apologies are given, they will be accepted by the Chair, without reasons having to be given.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs S White Seconded: Cllr Mrs J Gunter

For: 6 Against: 2

138. To review Standing Orders

Cllr Mr R Hayward felt that the Standing Orders were generally well written and in good order. There was one contradiction which required correction. It is stated that a member can only chair one committee, but also that a Chair of another committee can also stand as Chair of Finance and Policy Committee.

After discussion about the volume of work required to fulfil a Chair's duties, it was proposed that a member can only be Chair of one committee

Proposed: Cllr Mrs S White Seconded: Cllr Mr N Hackett Pain

Cllr Mr R Hayward also brought to the attention of members that Standing Orders state that all votes should be public votes. Members may request a recorded (written) vote, but the named result can also be requested recorded. There is no provision for secret votes within standing orders. This also applies to voting regarding the choice of Mayor. There was no decision made to alter this.

Standing Orders include an agenda item for Councillors questions – either in writing 5 days before a meeting, or a verbal question, to which an answer may be deferred to the next meeting. This could potentially do away with any other business. No discussion would be permitted. This was explained to members by Cllr Hayward. Cllr Mrs Dewhurst pointed out that it may be open to abuse and it was also discussed that this may be used mischievously. Cllr Christopher stated that the timescale implied that questions could be added to the agenda of committees anyway. The Clerk gave One Voice Wales advice for this being that this questioning should only be used in case of emergency issues.

It was also suggested that agreed that for future meetings of any committees
It was proposed to keep this in Standing Orders as it is.
No further standing orders issues were raised.

139. To agree the virement of £3000 from match funding to town maintenance within the Environmental Affairs Committee budget

The Environmental Affairs Committee had already agreed this virement and it was put to Finance and Policy Committee for further approval.

Proposed: Cllr Mr R Hayward, Seconded: Cllr Mrs A Dewhurst.

Unanimous

140. To set up a Council Management Committee to oversee use and costs of Agincourt Street public toilets

Cllr Hayward proposed that the same committee that is currently negotiating with Mr Roger Hoggins regarding the Service Level Agreement continues to oversee use and costs of Agincourt Street public toilets.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs S White, Seconded: Cllr Mr J Fletcher Unanimous

141. Items of discussion for future meeting

None

142. Date of Next meeting: Confirmed as Monday 18 April 2011

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.58pm