

Monmouth Town Council

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MINUTES OF MEETING OF MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Held on 23 January 2007 at 7.00pm

At Osbaston Church in Wales School Monmouth.

Present: Chairman The Mayor Councillor T Christopher, Deputy Mayor Councillor R Bond, Councillor Mrs M Atkins, Councillor Mrs S Chivers, Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst, Councillor J Fletcher, Councillor R Hayward, Councillor N Hackett Pain, Councillor Mrs V Mitchell, Councillor Mrs C Pearce, Councillor L Robson, Councillor D Stevens and Councillor Mrs A Were.

In Attendance: Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk and Mrs Jane Lloyd Clerical Assistant.

There was a presentation from MON TV. It is planned to create a local TV station that will operate via the broadband network, firstly for Monmouth and then eventually covering more areas within Monmouthshire. It would be a community-based service with news items, history programmes and it will provide an opportunity to share & discuss issues with the people of Monmouthshire. The plan is to start this summer firstly with a weekly half hour programme for news, sports and weather, by the third year of operation hope to progress to a daily feature. Also there are plans to involve local groups, schools and local government using a password-protected space. BT will be introducing IBTV in the next couple of years, which will mean TV will come through telephone lines, therefore broadening the opportunities for access. It is hoped that there will be financial assistance from Offcom and the Welsh Assembly and also by way of sponsorship. If the finances are not forthcoming it could mean a delay with the start of the project.

1. To Receive Declaration of Interest in Items on the Agenda:

Councillor Mrs Dewhurst – Item 14

2. To Receive Apologies for Absence.

Councillor G F W Buckland and Councillor Mrs S White.

3. To Confirm & Sign the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 11 December 2007:

Confirmed Correct.

Proposed: Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst

Seconded: Councillor J Fletcher

For: 12

Abstentions: 1

4. To Receive the Town Clerks Report (For Information Only):

1. The Mayor's showcase spectacular will once again be held to raise funds for the Mayors charities. This will be the 6th event of its kind and will be taking place on Tuesday 13th Feb at 7.00pm at HMSG. Many pupils from the schools in Monmouth will be taking part including the Brass Band from Monmouth School, HMSG Choir, Savoy Youth Theatre and Monmouth Comprehensive School Orchestra. If you can spare some time on the evening to help with manning the front of house please let The Mayor know.
2. There has been much excitement recently with the announcement of the funding of the refurbishment of The Shire Hall. However it should be noted that at this stage the trustees of the HLF have only approved the stage one application of the project, this is only approval rather than a full grant award. If approved it will enable a grant of £3.1m to be awarded to help with the £4.5m renovation work. Development funding of £196k has been granted for the work that will now start the process of refining the details required for stage two to be passed, if this is granted then the money will become available for the work to commence.
3. I have been trying to find out what, if any progress is being made in connection with the proposed works in Agincourt Square. Unfortunately so far I have been unable to establish whether or not any further plans have been drawn up. I will continue to try and follow this up and ensure that The Town Council is consulted regarding any proposals.
4. I have been in touch with MCC Planning Dept today regarding a fence that is being constructed around the proposed site for the new Lidl Store on the old County Garage site on Redbrook Road. Major concerns have been raised about the fence not only in terms of its height but more so the obstruction to drivers line of sight at the junction of Redbrook Road with Staunton Road. I was advised by George Ashworth, Head of Planning that they do need planning permission to erect a fence, and that this has not been granted. The enforcement team have already begun negotiations with Lidl's management to ensure that the work stops and the Highways Dept have been engaged in discussions regarding traffic safety in this very busy area.

Cllr Robson commented on the Shire Hall that he was concerned that after the Town Council being one of the main contributors and work over the years that people of the Town should be informed that we have been a major player in the project.

Councillor Bond pointed out that at the Stewards meeting held on The Town Council was thanked for their part. It was suggested that when the bid is confirmed a press release be made stating that the Town Council is one of the partners involve.

5. To Receive Correspondence that the Mayor Wishes to Place Before the Council:

Letter from Roger Joy (MCC) regarding the out to tender of street lighting. A request for a member of the Town Council to attend a meeting to be held on Wednesday 7th February regarding clauses that could affect Christmas lights next year if not attended.

6. Matters Raised by Members: -

None received in writing.

7. To Receive and Consider Reports & Minutes of Committees:

a. Planning Committee: As per minutes

Councillor Bond gave a summary of the applications that had been considered at the meeting that had been held earlier in the evening.

b. Environmental Affairs Committee:

As per minutes. Issues discussed included the problems of littering, a new bin to be placed at Drybridge and a new bench to be placed near the river at the rowing club replacing the previous one. Traffic Management scheme was also discussed (part of the Partnership Forum sub group). De-cluttering of the town centre as part of the transport proposals. There

are a number of long standing skips placed in the town The Police have been asked to enforce licensing regulations regarding this.

c. Community Affairs Committee:

As per minutes. The Committee have awarded £300 to Border Town 20 Years on to assist with their exhibition and celebration of the 20-year anniversary. The Candle lit ceremony held in December went well involving many people from Monmouth. The audit of Play areas was reviewed, and the committee is waiting to summarise the replies regarding One Stop Shop Cash Office closure. The forward plan was amended to incorporate Health, Play, and Music facilities. Also it is hoped to foster more links with the Carnival Committee.

d. Finance & Policy Committee:

As per minutes. Discussed the detailed Budget proposals, virements for Officers travelling expenses and increased utilities costs, recommendation to purchase new photocopier as current lease runs out on the present one shortly. The payroll facilities have been transferred to another company based away from Monmouth, following the closure of the Monmouth operation. The Clerk has been asked to look at local companies but if costs are cheaper, then the current arrangements will stay in place. A request for funding for World Challenge was received and the decision was made that the Community Affairs Committee can donate up to £500 to Monmouth Comprehensive to go towards there World Challenge Group, as individual awards cannot be given. Recommendations have been made for a working party to be set up for the management of Town Council business while the Shire Hall renovations are underway.

Proposed: Councillor R Hayward
Unanimous.

Seconded: Councillor Mrs V Mitchell

e. Monmouth Partnership Forum:

As per minutes. AONB: Lottery heritage bid overlooking the Wye project to include The Kymin, Monmouth Quay and Priskwood. MCC have been given £27,000 from Wales Safer Community Group towards kits for the removal of graffiti in and around the town. Cycling and Walking Group held a mapping session (public consultation) on Saturday to help develop future routes around Monmouth. Traffic and Transport: Dissatisfied with traffic and parking in Monmouth a preliminary report by the sub group has made some recommendations.

f. Others:

Attik: The visitor count for November was 1,147 with a similar figure for December. There is a substance misuse worker spending time with schools who is mainly based at Attik. The snack bar on a Saturday morning is going well and the group is very interested in the 'Keep Wales Tidy' week and will be liaising with the Town Council regarding this.

One Voice Wales:

Councillor Mrs Dewhurst attended a recent conference and in her opinion she felt that there is value for money now even though there is a hefty subscription fee. The Chief Executive Simon Wight now has direct contact with the assembly; Monmouth with the other larger councils and have direct contact with Central Welsh Government.

**STANDING ORDERS SUSPENDED IN ORDER TO BRING FORWARD
AGENDA ITEM 13.**

Proposed: Councillor R Bond
Unanimous.

Seconded: Councillor T Christopher

13. To Receive Report from Inspector Smith about Joint Policing Initiatives in Monmouth:

Inspector Smith reported that figures for crime are slightly higher than last year. Areas of concern are criminal damage and theft from vehicles. He stated that Monmouth didn't until recently have a serious graffiti problem but the latest initiative to clean up areas had given a couple of local lads a challenge.

The problem of damage to vehicles cannot be put down to any particular pattern and may be drink related. Thefts from unattended vehicles are more likely down to travelling criminals who see Monmouth as easy pickings. The police have launched a high profile campaign to increase public awareness. There has been a drop in violent crime; from June to January 2007 there have been twenty offences. With regards to community intelligence, the police have tried to highlight local hotspots that could make the public uneasy such as the graffiti and broken lights in the subway, which make the people in Wyesham worried to use the underpass late at night, the police are trying to identify other problem areas.

The Mayor had made officers aware of complaints that he had received from women feeling uneasy walking towards the top of town after 10.00 at night. The police have since put a foot patrol officer to patrol this area. Shoplifting, one arrest made of someone from outside the area which led to £1,000 of goods being recovered.

Councillor Mrs Atkins asked about enforcement of littering laws and also with the associated problems of reported drug taking behind Woolworths and the path leading towards Vauxhall Fields. Inspector Smith explained that it is a difficult problem as the person has to be seen dropping the litter and asked to pick it up, if refusal happens then the police can enforce, the police have been watching the area it was suggested that this area be added to the 'Community Intelligence list and the patrol plan.

STANDING ORDERS REINSTATED

8. To Receive Recommendations from Finance & Policy Committee Regarding 2007/2008:

The Finance and Policy Committee recommend to Full Council a 3% increase to the precept bringing an increase of just under £4000.00. This equates on a Band D Property to approx 3p per week on Council Tax for residents of Monmouth. The total amount of the precept demand is £128098.00

**Proposed: Councillor R Hayward
Unanimous.**

Seconded: Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst

9. To Nominate Town Council Representative to Sit on GAVO:

Councillor Mrs A Were was nominated and duly elected.

**Proposed: Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst
Unanimous.**

Seconded: Councillor L Robson

10. To Set Up and Agree Terms of Reference for a Working Party for The Shire Hall Renovation Project:

The Town Council has made quite a large financial commitment to the project and have agreed to give £125,000. To date £70,000 has already been raised from the precept with the balance due from future precepts and general reserves. A senior officer from MCC will be overseeing the project management and a member of the Town Council is represented on the Project Board. The F&P committee would recommend to Council that a working group consisting of 4 or 5 members should be set up. There will be quarterly meetings with Jo Carter (MCC Project Manager) and information will feed back to the Town Council. It is

anticipated that part of the groups terms of reference will include managing the move by The Town Council and the protection and storage of furniture particularly in The Court Room and The Council Chamber. It is important that the Council helps manage this transition effectively as nobody wants to see a repeat of the problems that arose previously with the Roman drains when the cobbles in front of Shire Hall were replaced. Nominations were received for Councillor GW F Buckland, Councillor R Hayward, Councillor Mrs S Chivers, Councillor Mrs A Were and Councillor R Bond.

It was agreed that The Clerk would arrange the first meeting and advise members.

**Proposed: Councillor R Hayward
Unanimous.**

Seconded: Councillor R Bond

11. To Receive a Report from 'Friends of Monmouth Cemetery'.

Mrs J Brettell explained that the group was formed after seeing an advertisement placed in the Monmouthshire Beacon by Councillor Mrs V Mitchell working under the umbrella of the Partnership Forum. Those members who have joined make up a diverse team with many and varied interests. An important side of this project concerns not only social history but also flora and fauna over approx seven acres. This site is coming to the end of being able to provide space for burials but it is important to safeguard the existing site with a conservation and management plan. There is a countryside team and wildlife trust working to produce a plan which has been adopted and this will enhance the environment and save the wildlife there such as protecting a colony of glow worms that reside there at present. Surveys and risk assessment have been completed on the oaks on the boundary negotiated with MCC grounds maintenance for major hedgerow planting. Also the provision for compost and storage facilities on site has been introduced. It is hoped to involve the Royal Monmouthshire Engineers to make a record of the military graves on site. A database has been compiled which will go on the Internet for access for people wishing to trace their family history. MCC have now completed the structural testing of headstones and hoping to leave standing for a period of six months those memorials whose families cannot be contacted. There will be a need for practical help over the next six months and any volunteers wishing to join the group would be welcomed.

12. To Consider Play Facility Needs in Osbaston with Dixon Ward.

Councillor Mrs Dewhurst reported that the survey on play and leisure facilities in other wards has been completed and it had been hoped that more local residents would be able to attend the meeting tonight wanting to gather information and possibly offer feedback about aspirations for their ward. No members of the public were present who wished to discuss this item so it was referred back to Community Affairs to continue with this task.

14. To Receive Questions form Members of the Public:

Mrs Hall:

1. What is going to happen to the Old Monmouth Hospital now that it has been sold?

Councillor R Hayward explained that to date no one had submitted plans and no information was available as to the identity of the purchaser.

2. What Direction does Monmouth intend to go?

A school based society, a retired centre for the elderly of Wales and England, a dormitory town for commuters or a visitor's paradise and if so then a first class and large hotel is needed.

Councillor Christopher along with Councillor Mrs Dewhurst has spoken with The Planning Dept and as yet no plans have been put forward for the redevelopment of the site. Councillor Hayward said that in relation to the lack of accommodation in town he understands that there have been plans to build a large hotel on the land behind the BP

Garage at the bottom end of town. Although to date nothing official has been submitted for consideration.

Mrs Hall expressed her concern regarding some of the shops and banks that are being allowed to develop in the town.

Councillor Stevens's response was that he would like to see the town cater for all four options. He reminded members that the Shaping Our Future document covers the aims and objectives of the Town Council over a four-year period and encompasses a whole variety of the issues and concerns that had been expressed.

Councillor Mrs Atkins explained that a number of different groups are trying to improve tourism, together with a project to develop cycling and walking around Monmouth with a network of paths joining up all four wards of the town.

Councillor Mrs Chivers pointed out that the Town Council has fought long and hard to try and preserve Monmouth as a small market town recommending refusal of the larger Rockfield development and had recommended refusal on the planning application for the latest bank in town.

Mr Osbourne: On behalf of the children of Osbaston Church In Wales School, Mr Osborne advised members that the school has a group of children who take part in a dance group, called Dance Blast which is run through funding from MCC and Welsh Arts. The finances for this project have been cut back and there is a threat to the continuation of the class unless alternative funding is made available. The children thoroughly enjoy the group and pay £1.00 each session to the non-profit making group. Mr Osbourne is asking for a letter of support from the Town Council.

This item to be deferred to the Community Affairs Committee.

Mr G Bolton: An item of correspondence in relation to access and highway issues along the path between Osbaston and town.

This item to be deferred to the Environment Affairs Committee.

Mr & Mrs I Smith: An item of correspondence in relation to access and highway issues particularly regarding disability issues.

This item to be deferred to the Environment Affairs Committee.

15. Any Other Business:

Councillor Mrs Chivers asked members what The Town Council are doing about the closure of the Job Centre:

Councillor Christopher and Councillor Mrs Dewhurst have contacted The Job Centre and were referred to an office in Cardiff. Information is being sought in relation to the planned closure of the Jobcentre. Jenny Lewis from the One Stop Shop has been asked if there is the possibility that an office could be available for a time to have a 'hot line' for people to ring the Benefits Office. People of Monmouth should not be made to feel disadvantaged by having to travel to Abergavenny to look for employment. Councillor Mrs Dewhurst has brought this to the attention of One Voice Wales and feels that it should be referred to the National Assembly, as this is a government issue.

Councillor D Stevens asked members whether or not the services of The One Stop Shop could be under threat, as he has heard that there will be an amalgamation to make the present four areas into three. Councillor Hayward explained that there are proposals that the Area Managers are cut from 4 to 3, the offices and staff will remain the same and there will not be any change to services but there is a possibility of merging the Monmouth and Abergavenny offices so that they come under one manager.

Councillor L Robson pointed out that the managers cover many services and areas operated by MCC and to cut back on one manager could have adverse affects on services. He said that he is against any cutbacks and condemns any closures.

To be discussed at the next Community Affairs Meeting.

16. To Agree Meeting Dates: Agreed.

Next meeting to be held on Tuesday 6th March at Bridges community Centre.

There being no further business the Meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

Signature: _____

Date: _____