

Monmouth Town Council

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MINUTES OF MEETING OF MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL Held on 9 July 2007 at 7.00pm In The Old Library Community Room

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

In Attendance: Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk

There was a presentation at the commencement of the meeting from Tracey Harry an officer from MCC and Chief Inspector Keen about CCTV. The notes are attached for information only. At the end of the presentation members requested that a formal proposal should now be sent from MCC for consideration regarding whether or not Monmouth Town Council would agree to opt back into the scheme.

28. To receive questions from members of the public for a maximum of 10 minutes.

Mrs Jane Middleton addressed members to express her concern regarding the vandalism that is being carried out at Drybridge Park. She informed members that material from skips was removed during the building of Monnow Vale which has been used to create ramps and young people are using this area as an unofficial skate and bike park. She said that not only is it dangerous for the children but also for passing motorists. She asked members could anything be done to preserve this area, it is a unique place and everything possible should be done to ensure that it is looked after.

Members advised that there was work being carried out there already and a fence had recently been erected which will prevent the wall adjacent to the ambulance station being used as a bike jump, also there are negotiations underway with an officer at MCC to look at suitable sites in the area for providing a place for young people to enjoy these kind of outdoor activities. Members were concerned that unless something was done urgently that this was an accident waiting to happen and that The Town Council should be taking a lead in finding an alternative safe site. It was agreed that this item was already on the forward plan for the Community Affairs committee and would be deferred for further discussion at the committee meeting.

29. To receive declaration of interest in items on the agenda.

Councillors Christopher, Mrs Dewhurst and Mrs Pearce all declared on interest in item 39 on the agenda and agreed that they would abstain from taking part in the vote on this item.

30. To Receive Apologies for Absence.

Councillor R Bond, Councillor G F W Buckland, Councillor Mrs S Chivers, Councillor L Robson, Councillor Mrs A Were

31. To Confirm & Sign the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 11th June 2007

The minutes were approved as correct and signed.

Proposed: Cllr R Hayward
For 9 Against 0 Abs 1

Seconded: Cllr J Fletcher

32. To receive the town clerks report (for information only).

1. The Wales Audit Office has now sent back the completed Annual return for 2005/2006. Monmouth Town Council has once again been given an unqualified certificate and opinion. There was one point raised which did not affect their opinion but that they wished to bring to the attention of the council and this was in relation to the scope of the internal auditor. They recommended that it is good practice to minuted the Council's consideration of the scope of its internal audit. I have already had a meeting with the Internal Auditor and discussed this point and we are both of the same opinion that the scope of the internal audit is that which is prescribed within the Accounts and Audit regulations. The appointment of the Internal Auditor is something that the Finance & Policy committee will consider and discuss in due course. The final stage of the audit is to display a notice advertising that the audit has been completed and making the return available for inspection by local government electors. Arrangements will be made to do this within the next week.
2. There will be an additional Environmental Affairs meeting which is scheduled to be held on Monday 30th July. This is in addition to those already shown on the meetings date list. An agenda and papers will be distributed as a reminder to everyone at the appropriate time.
3. An invitation has been received for all members to attend a special viewing of the Bordertown 20th Anniversary exhibition. It will be held in Monmouth Museum on Saturday 21st July between 5 – 6pm before being opened to the general public until 26th August.
4. The conference held in County Hall last Thursday entitled 'Citizen Centred Community Leadership' was attended by Councillors Mrs White, Hayward, Bond and myself. It was primarily as a response to the Beecham Review which was published last year and it was to consider establishing stronger community partnerships and exploring effective ways in which this could be achieved in order to deliver tangible benefits for citizens. There was an introduction given by Colin Berg and then there was an opportunity for smaller groups to work together looking at the two different models that have been put forward. The findings of the work groups will be considered and recommendations will then be made with a view to developing this strategy further. Mr Berg hopes to host another event within the next six months to consider how to take this forward.

33. To receive correspondence that the mayor wishes to place before the council.

There were no requests made to have any items of correspondence read out.

34. Matters raised by members: Nothing received in writing.

35. To consider and approve reports and minutes of the council's committees:

a. Planning.

As the Chair and Deputy Chair of the committee were not present the report was accepted as per minutes.

b. Environmental Affairs.

Cllr Mrs Mitchell reported that the committee had a long and busy meeting in which several reports were received. Cllr Mrs White gave some feedback on CSAT'S, there was a report from the Neighbourhood Police Team about the current graffiti culture and the use of the Youth Offending Team for cleaning operations, the usefulness of ASBO's, illegal parking on yellow lines and there was a request made by members for the police to concentrate on clearing vehicles from the Old Bridge and also highlighting the problem of speeding along Hereford Road. The feasibility of the Town Council in playing a strategic role in future projects was discussed, and the problem of littering on Chippenham field was considered with the decision to trial for one month a clean up operation on the weekends. There was also a report from Cllr Mrs Dewhurst about progress of the Connect2 Bid. The committee discussed the six weekly cycle of meetings and agreed to schedule an additional meeting in July.

c. Community Affairs.

Cllr Mrs Dewhurst reported that there had not been a meeting since the last Full Council Meeting but highlighted several items for discussion at the meeting to take place on 16th July, a discussion regarding the performance of the local ambulance service, there will be a presentation by Mr Williams from Monmouth Comp from the Kenya trip last year, also liaison with Monnow Vale is continuing. Work towards the Carnival is on-going and so far there has been a good response, there are posters available to advertise the event for anybody interested.

d. Finance & Policy.

Cllr Stevens reported that most of the work from the previous meeting had been procedural with the election of a chair and deputy chair, there had been authorisation of an additional contribution for the employers pension scheme, the annual audit had been received, and the committees objectives were considered although it was agreed to defer this item until the next meeting. The forward plan was accepted, there was also consideration given to a request from the Monmouthshire Show for a donation which had been refused. There had also been a lively debate concerning the non attendance of members at committee meetings, and also some revision was made to the Annual Review both of which were items for discussion at this Full Council meeting. It was agreed that a future item for discussion would be the introduction of a policy for press releases to highlight the excellent work that the committees are undertaking.

Members were asked to accept and approve the minutes and reports.

Proposed: Cllr J Fletcher
For 9 Against 0 Abs 1

Seconded: Cllr N Hacket Pain

e. Shire Hall Renovation Project.

There was no report given as Cllr Buckland was not present.

f. Monmouth Partnership Forum.

There was no report as there had not been a meeting since the last Full Council meeting, the next forum meeting is due on 26th July 2007.

g. Others.

Cllr Mrs Dewhurst advised members that she would give a full report on One Voice Wales at the next meeting. She reported that she feels confident that with improved communication with the WAG more direct influence should make way for clearer democracy. It was reported that there is a conference for Larger Local Councils and also a Planning seminar and that if any members had questions that they would like to put to please let her know.

Cllr Christopher invited members who represented The Town Council on outside bodies to consider giving a report at the next meeting. He stated that it would be useful for members to receive information.

36. To consider adopting the One Voice Wales model complaints procedure.

The Clerk informed members that the model procedure had been developed further to discussions with the Public Services Ombudsman. Members were advised that the current procedures as set out in the Standing Orders are too flimsy and that a more robust system needs to be in place to handle complaints effectively. The model clearly sets out what a complaint is, the importance and elements of a good complaint handling system, and the suggested three stage model. The Clerk recommended the introduction of a complaints book in which every complaint could be recorded, no matter how seemingly trivial. It would be good practice for the Finance & Policy committee to review the complaints book on a quarterly basis to ensure that the system is working effectively. Members agreed to adopt this model procedure.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs S White
Unanimous

Seconded: Cllr Mrs C Pearce

37. To adopt the Town Council's Annual Report for 2006/2007.

A copy of the report had been circulated in advance for members' consideration following some changes that had been made at the recommendation of the Finance & Policy committee. It was agreed to adopt this document and members were asked to agree on the format for publishing it. There were suggestions that as well as the local newspapers and the Town Crier, it would be a good idea to distribute it to School Councils and also to request that MCC could include it on their website.

Councillor Mrs Dewhurst reported that she felt strongly about the publishing of the unabridged version of the report that offered in comprehensive detail information about more specific subjects that had been considered by the committees and the outcome of their objectives. She requested that this also could be included on The Town Council website. Members agreed to adopt this document.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs S White
Unanimous

Seconded: Cllr Mrs A Dewhurst

38. To consider proposal to amend standing orders regarding committee attendance by members.

This proposal came at the recommendation of the Finance & Policy committee further to recent discussions that had taken place at the last meeting. Members agreed that the Standing Orders needed to be reviewed in relation to the non attendance at committee meetings without offering any apologies in advance. The current procedure of barring a member for non attendance at two consecutive meetings without reasonable cause was not ideal because the purpose was not to exclude members or prevent them from sitting on a committee. Members should be judged by their peers and be given a right to reply, but also that if this proposal was accepted it would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and would provide evidence to the public that ward members had failed to attend on their behalf. Members want the electorate to know who is working for them and monitoring the attendance at committees is one way to show this. After further discussion by members it was agreed to amend the standing orders as follows:

Appendix 2

Section A - Guidelines for Selection of committees

Item 10

A member who fails to attend 2 consecutive meetings or fail to provide prior apologies of a particular committee without reasonable cause will be deemed to have failed to comply with the spirit of these Standing Orders and as a consequence will be named, verbally, as failing to attend at the next Full Council meeting. An opportunity to justify non attendance will be given as an item on the Full Council agenda. Acceptance of the stated justification will be indicated by a vote of members attending the Full Council meeting. If the justification is not accepted, or no justification is presented then the failing members name will be recorded in the Full Council meeting minutes as a matter of public record.

Proposed: Cllr R Hayward
Unanimous

Seconded: Cllr N Hackett Pain

39. To consider one off payment to Monmouth Festival Committee of £1050.00 for insurance of event from reserves.

This request has been made further to recent discussions at the Community and Finance & Policy committees. It was made clear to members that this would be offered on a one off basis and should not be seen in any way as setting a precedent. The insurance premium will ensure cover for the Festival and Carnival and is a reduction on the amount that was paid last year. It is hoped that providing this cover will see an increase in participants for the Carnival this year.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs A Dewhurst
For 7 Against 0 Abstentions 3

Seconded: Cllr D Stevens

40. To approve the Statement of Accounts for 2006/2007 and Annual Governance Statement.

The Annual Return was circulated in advance to all members and The Clerk asked that a vote could be taken to approve the Accounts as shown in Section 1. The Clerk and Chairman duly signed in the presence of members that the return presents fairly the financial position of the council.

Proposed: Cllr R Hayward **Seconded:** Cllr D Stevens
For 9 Against 0 Abstentions 1

The Clerk advised members that in accordance with the Accounts and Audit regulations there was an affirmative response to each of the different points on the Annual Governance Statement and members agreed that The Chairman and Clerk could sign to show approval.

Proposed: Cllr R Hayward **Seconded:** Cllr D Stevens
For 9 Against 0 Abstentions 1

41. Any other business.

N/A

42. To agree meeting dates.

Date of next meeting Monday 20th August 2007 at 7.00 pm.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 8.55 pm