

Monmouth Town Council

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MINUTES OF MEETING OF MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL held on 10 December 2007 at 7.00pm in the Community Room Shire Hall

Present: Chairman The Mayor Councillor T Christopher, Deputy Mayor Councillor D Stevens, Councillor G F W Buckland, Councillor Mrs S Chivers, Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst, Councillor J Fletcher, Councillor N Hacket Pain, Councillor Mrs V Mitchell, Councillor Mrs C Pearce, Councillor L Robson, Councillor Mrs A Were and Councillor Mrs S White.

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

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

Ms J Lloyd gave a presentation on behalf of the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Three new trainees have been recruited bringing the total now to eleven advisers with five staff. A new position has been introduced with a debt adviser working one day a week and from January CAB will be opening four days a week. Statistics show that only 1% of telephone calls are answered at present and a pilot scheme is to be introduced to Monmouthshire for a new telephone system which is to be in operation for twelve months. This will then mean that bookings can then be taken for appointments to cut down on the amount of people calling into the office, calls will be taken from the Monmouthshire area only. Satisfaction surveys are taken once a year and the results show that for the most this is an excellent service but the main complaint is the waiting times for calls to be answered and the new system will hopefully deal with this issue. MCC have given an increase in funding due to the collaboration with the other bureaux in Monmouthshire but, this has to be match funded. Ms Lloyd said that CAB is very grateful for the support shown each year by the Town Council.

Ms Crosby gave a presentation on behalf of Monnow Vale Health & Social Care Facility. She explained that there are three distinct divisions of the service, Out Patients, In Patients and the Day Hospital. The Day Hospital is for those people with physical injuries and this is run in conjunction with GP's from the two town surgeries. In Patients has the capacity for 25 beds but have 19 as they feel it is better to invest in 'intensive treatment at home service'.

There is also a Minor Injuries Department, but it is not easy to define 'minor injuries' and if the injury bleeds or there is the possibility that is a broken bone it cannot be dealt with at Monnow Vale. It was agreed by members that further discussions on this subject could be deferred until the next Community meeting.

90. To receive declaration of interest in items on the agenda:

Councillor Christopher Agenda Item 99 (CAB)

To resolve to exclude the public and press from the meeting during consideration of the following item

Proposed by: Councillor Mrs Dewhurst **Seconded by:** Councillor Mrs White
Unanimous

91. To receive the recommendation from F&P Committee regarding the National Salary Award for 2007/2008

(See separate pink paper minutes)

It was resolved to return to open session

Proposed by: Councillor Mrs Chivers
Unanimous

Seconded by: Councillor Stevens

Standing Orders were re-instated.

92. To receive question from members of the public for a maximum of ten minutes:

No questions.

93. To receive apologies for absence:

Councillor Mrs M C Atkins, Councillor R Bond, Councillor R Hayward, Councillor S Roberts
Councillor Mrs S Chivers asked in view of Agenda Item 100 regarding Councillors absence from meetings if any councillors were giving a blanket absence from meetings. Councillor T Christopher explained due to further on going medical treatment one Councillor had, and that two Councillors who were absent on extended leave out of the country also had.

94. To confirm & sign the minutes of the meeting held on 12th November 2007 and the minutes on Pink Paper dated 12th November 2007:

Confirmed correct with the following amendments,

Agenda Item 82 should read 'to consider by Hamilton Baille Associates'

Agenda Item 83 regarding ward boundaries should have included 'to be forwarded to the next Finance and Policy Committee'

Agenda Item 85 should read 'virement' and not 'vehement'

Agenda Item 86 should read 'Woodland View' not Woodlands

Proposed: Councillor Mrs White

Seconded: Councillor Stevens

For: 11

Against: 0

Abstentions: 1

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

1. The office will close for the Christmas holidays after business on Friday 21st December and re-open on Wednesday 2nd January. I will post a notice on the board to advice members of the public and also the answer phone will be available for anyone wishing to leave a message.
2. The Town Council has once again had a very busy year and in the last year held a total of 74 meetings, 12 Full Council, 27 Planning, 12 Community, 13 Environment and 10 Finance & Policy. In addition to this there have been a number of working parties including discussing the move from The Shire Hall, Town Centre Regeneration and the appointment of a Deputy Mace Bearer. There have also been a number of competitions which included the design for the Mayors Christmas Card, Christmas Fancy Dress and the planting competition for the design of the planters in and around town. Some of the other events organised have included The Mayor's Civic Award scheme and the Community Grants, in addition to other civic occasions such as Mayor making, the Civic Service and Remembrance Day.

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

Councillor Mrs Pearce: HMS Monmouth update.

97. Matters Raised by Members:

Nothing received in writing.

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

a. Planning Committee: As per minutes. There had been two principal plans for consideration firstly the re-development of the Old Hospital which was recommended as a refusal, as it was considered that there would be over development and also the height of the proposed properties would be too high. The second being the Old Clinic in Dixton Road, as concerns regarding the access from The Burgage meant that it would not be suitable due to school access issues. It is felt that access should be via Dixton Road. This also has been recommended as a refusal by the Town Council. Councillor Robson asked if these two large applications would have agreements for S106 monies. The Clerk was asked to write and make enquiries. The next meeting to be held on 7 January 2008.

b. Environmental Affairs Committee: As per minutes
At the meeting on 19th November members considered the cost of repairs and replacements to the Christmas lights; the additional expenditure of £3,840 was approved. Quotes had been obtained from Border Nurseries, Millbrook Garden Centre, Genus of Gloucester, Raglan Garden Centre, South West Nurseries, Acton Beauchamp and David Austin for the planting project. These were considered and members decided that the roses be sourced from Acton Beauchamp and as long as a discount was obtained, the remaining plants should be sourced from Millbrook.

The amended contract with Mr Parkinson which reflects the undertaking of the planting (which involves considerable ground preparation as well as provision of stakes, rabbit guards etc) was also approved; the additional cost is about £1,500. The next meeting to be held on 17 December.

c. Community Affairs Committee: As per minutes
During the last meeting the precept was discussed and a decision made to place more money towards the Summer playsceme which it is hoped will have backing from private firms. An increase to the Community Grant Scheme was also recommended for next year. There had been concerns raised following a presentation from Gareth Holyfield from the Local Health Board, that runs the pharmacy and medicines service. It has been suggested that a trial to stop the Sunday and Bank Holiday rota of the local pharmacies should be conducted. Members were informed that the number of people using this service had decreased over the years especially in Monmouth and Chepstow. It was agreed after a further meeting that Councillor Mrs Dewhurst would write to him expressing the concerns of the committee. The next meeting to be held on 7 January 2008.

d. Finance & Policy Committee: As per minutes
Members were advised that the council's own internal audit review had been conducted satisfactorily. Staff appraisals and salary reviews had also been carried out and the salary award recommended for approval to Full Council. It had been proposed to consider recruiting a Deputy Macebearer which would be discussed again at the next Full Council meeting. The selection process would consist of interviews by a panel of three members of the Council. The next meeting to be held on 14 January 2008.

Proposed by: Councillor Mrs Chivers
For: 1

Against: 0

Seconded by: Councillor Mrs Dewhurst
Abstentions: 1

e. Shire Hall Renovation Project: As per minutes.
Members were advised that stage two of the application for Heritage Lottery Funding has been completed and the outcome should be known at the beginning of March.

Councillor Mrs Pearce left the meeting at 8.15 pm

f. Monmouth Partnership Forum: As per minutes.

The last meeting held on 28 November started with members visiting the reverse vending machine at Monmouth Comprehensive, which provides the facility for recycling plastic bottles and aluminium cans. This was followed by a presentation by Carole Anderson (Head) and Andy Williams (Deputy Head) describing the aims and aspirations of the school. The Monmouth Links Group has been busy promoting the Connect2 bid for £50 million of lottery money; the result will be known on Wednesday. Axis 3 bids have been successful in reaching Stage II, the Green Light Group will be showing the film 'Power of the Community' in February; this describes what happened in Cuba when the country's oil supplies were cut off and shows how it is possible to operate without oil. There was a public meeting to consider the County Council's waste management and recycling policy. The Traffic & Transport Sub-Group presented their proposals for Monnow Street, and there was also a presentation by Treenergy; the company plans to construct a wood-fired power station on Hadnock Road.

g. Others:

None

The Mayor Councillor Christopher advised members that a meeting has been arranged in The Shire Hall for 11 December with the committee chairs to discuss with other organisations ways and means to improve communication.

99. To Receive recommendations from F&P Committee regarding 2008/2009 budget and agree precept demand:

Councillor Stevens confirmed that the proposed budget would see a total net reduction within the Administration budget of £2,620, Community Affairs a net gain of £250.00, Environment a net gain of £13,655. If this was accepted then the total would cause an approximate 9% rise in the precept demand. The item for CCTV cameras after some discussion was removed and this would reduce the total budget to a recommended increase of 5%. Members were asked to consider that removal of provision for CCTV from the budget was desirable and that any future plans to opt back in could be funded from reserves. The Finance & Policy committee recommendation of a 5% increase on last year's precept would mean a rise of £6,404. Last years precept was £128,098.00 and with a proposed 5% rise this would mean a precept demand of £134,503.00 against a budget of £141445.00.

Councillor Hacket Pain advised members that he had made some enquiries about the decision to turn of the CCTV cameras in Monmouth. The decision had been taken by officers at County Hall, and not the cabinet. Councillor Eric Saxon is investigating this matter further but has confirmed that there was no intention of turning the CCTV cameras off. Councillor Saxon is willing to come to a Town Council meeting to re start negotiation regarding this situation.

It was noted that the issue of CCTV has been on-going for a long time when the decision to withdraw was taken in November last year. MCC have been invited back to address the issues but the invitation have not been taken up to negotiate with the Council.

It was proposed that the recommendation of the F&P Committee be accepted and that a precept demand of £134503.00 be made.

Proposed by: Councillor Hacket Pain
Unanimous

Seconded by: Councillor Mrs White

100. To consider failure by members to attend committee meetings without prior apologies:
Councillor Robson said that he had no excuse for not giving apologies however he explained that as he has a fulltime job and other commitments and he doesn't feel it necessary to apologise for not attending meetings, he feels that his record speaks for itself. He stated that if the Council want people who have full time jobs to volunteer then this was not the way to go about it.
Councillor Buckland said that in his opinion this is a ridiculous policy and asked for it to be reviewed.
Councillor Mrs Chivers added that she is not sure how this issue can be resolved and was disappointed when meetings had had to be cancelled due to there not being enough members present to form a quorum.
Councillor Robson's comments were accepted and it was agreed that the standing orders would be reviewed at a forthcoming Finance & Policy meeting.

Councillor Buckland left the meeting at 8.36pm

101. Any other business:
The Clerk apologised for not raising this matter under correspondence and informed members of the following:
An invitation from the Senior Operations Officer from MCC Highways to a workshop due to be held on 12 February 2008 at 6.00pm County Hall.
An invitation from Councillor Chris Woodhouse Chairman of MCC to attend a conference for 'Connecting the Spheres' on Thursday 10th January in County Hall at 6.00pm.
An invitation to attend a CCTV draft strategy review meeting on 15th January time and venue to be confirmed.

Councillor Christopher reminded members that Sunshine Radio is to be launched on Friday 14 December.

Also an invitation for all members to join in with the Christmas procession and the lighting of the tree Thursday 13 December meeting at the old bridge to start at 6.00pm.

The next Town Council Meeting will be 4 February 2008

102. To Agree meeting dates:
Agreed.

With no further business the meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Signature: _____

Date: _____