

Monmouth Town Council

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Held on 21st July 2008 at 7.00pm

In Market Hall Priory Street Monmouth

PRESENT: Chairman the Mayor Councillor T Christopher
Councillor R Bond, Councillor Mrs S Chivers, Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst,
Councillor Ms C Edwards, Councillor J Fletcher, Councillor N Hacket Pain, Councillor Mrs J Hall
Councillor M Jones, Councillor Mrs B Smith and Councillor Mrs A Were

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs Sarah Robson Town Clerk and Mrs Jane Lloyd Clerical Assistant

Mrs Claire Webb gave a presentation on behalf of the Monmouth Carnival/Festival. She explained that there were new challenges this year because of the move to Blestium Street car park and as a result of this one of the extra costs was the hire of containers to house the equipment. In addition two of the main sponsors have been lost. To counter the loss a difficult decision was made to bring in a hospitality company, and a commercial decision needed to be made based on who would offer the best return; unfortunately a local company could not be found. Fund raising had also taken place from other sources such as 'Battle of the Bands'.

This year it is anticipated that the cost to put on the event will be approx £38,000. The Town Council is the major Sponsor and the committee is very grateful for this and hopes it will continue into the future. This year there is a broad spectrum of entertainment which it is hoped will appeal to all.

The Police have been very supportive but there have been some frustrations with MCC which have now been resolved through discussion.

33. To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda:

None received

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

None received

35. To receive apologies for absence:

Councillor G Bright, Councillor R Hayward and Councillor Mrs S White

36. To confirm & sign the minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2008:

The minutes were confirmed and signed as correct.

Proposed: Councillor J Fletcher

For: 10

Against: 0

Seconded: Councillor Mrs A Were

Abstention: 1

37. To receive the Town clerks report:

1. There will be essential repairs taking place shortly on the retaining wall below the One Stop Shop and Museum car park. This will entail a short temporary closure of the path and the bridge to Vauxhall Field. There have been a number of issues regarding the protection of wildlife in the area and fish, bats, otters and birds are all being taken in account during this temporary work that aims to keep this whole area safe. This project will provide the Contractors an opportunity to find out a bit more about the construction of the retaining wall which at present is very unstable.

2. The Commanding Officer of the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers has written to the Mayor requesting permission for the regiment to exercise its freedom of the town on Saturday 6th September. The parade will be accompanied by the band of the Light Cavalry and will commence from the old Monnow Bridge at 11.00am and will march through the town and into the Castle grounds. The Freedom Parade will be followed by a presentation of medals for the soldiers of the regiment who have just returned from Iraq and this will be made by the Royal Honorary Colonel HRH The Duke of Gloucester.
3. The request made by members regarding the use of the meeting room in Market Hall has been followed up. A meeting was held between myself, the Mayor, and two officers from MCC, one from Estates and the other from Environmental Health. It was verbally confirmed that the size of the meeting room was adequate for holding town council meetings of approximately 22 people, however I am trying to find out what the maximum number permitted is. There were several recommendations made to change the position of the emergency lighting and to improve the signage for the emergency exits, both of these actions are in hand. I have requested that the information given regarding these health and safety issues are put in writing for the record.
4. Members will see a minor change being introduced which will affect the time that I am present in the office on Monday mornings. This will not affect the opening times in any way and Jane will continue to cover if I am not present. Jane and I will continue with the current practice of working alternate Fridays. It has been decided to introduce this to try and look at ways of improving efficiencies within the office further.
5. I will be taking annual leave for two weeks and will be out of the office from 24th July until 11th August. The office will remain open as usual with cover being provided by Jane and the Mayor.
6. Please can I remind those new members who have not provided photos for the website to let the office have these as a matter of urgency please?
7. Can I also remind members that I circulated a training needs questionnaire from One Voice Wales some time ago. I asked for replies to be back into the office last Friday. I have only received one to date. I have a number of blank forms if anyone would like another copy for completion after the meeting so that I can send back your feedback.

38. To receive correspondence that the mayor wishes to place before the Council:

A letter from the Wye Valley AONB has been received inviting two members from the Town Council to its Annual study tour day to be held on day 26th September 2008, this year it will cover the area between Ross and Monmouth. Any interested members please advise the Clerk.

39. Matters raised by members:

Nothing received in writing.

40. To consider and approve reports and minutes of the Councils committees:

a) **Planning Committee:** As per minutes

Concerns were raised that objections received by MCC to planning applications are not being passed to the Town Council in time for consideration at its meetings; recently this has resulted in the Committee having to contact MCC to change a recommendation due to information given personally to the committee by a concerned resident.

Councillor Christopher has raised this issue with Peter Fox at a recent One Voice Wales meeting who said he would look into this matter further.

DC/2007/1248 Old Dixton Clinic, this was refused on the grounds of suitability of access, reduced parking, the affect on the Burgage and that it would be contrary to 'safe routes to school'. It was also noted that requests for sustainability factors to be built in have been ignored. It was noted that many objections were received directly from concerned residents. The committee has requested that the decision for the application is delayed pending receipt of the Highways report; the last report was completed during the school holidays and it is believed does not give a true view of the impact.

An extra committee meeting has been arranged due to the high volume of plans received; this is to be held on Monday 28th July 6.00pm.

b) **Environmental Affairs Committee:** As per minutes

At the meeting held on 14th July a presentation was given by Mr Grahame Thomas who spoke about the next stage of the Blue Plaque Scheme. Consideration will be given to funding another 12 and the committee has asked for recognition of this fact on the next phase. There will eventually be a new guide book to go with the plaques but in the short term another page will be added to the existing one. It was also agreed to replace the life belt on Monnow Bridge, this is the third time it has gone missing, it will be fixed onto the railings of the Bridge.

Mr Cummings from the Chamber of Commerce attended the meeting regarding the Town Guide and it was agreed to match fund this enterprise which would also be part funded by advertising which Mr Cummings will organise.

The committee agreed to replenish the bark on play area at Drybridge Park as recommended by Zurich Insurance in their inspection.

The Committee has requested MCC to replace the benches that they removed when building the pumping station near the nature reserve.

Tenders have been requested for the planting scheme and it is anticipated that the contract will run from 1st September until the end of March.

The Committee is considering a 'Policy of Use' for Dixton Field which will consider the introduction of ground rules for use of the field.

The cycle racks at the Oldway Centre are being pursued and it is hoped to replace these at the rear of the 'Attik'. Also consideration is being given at ways of signposting the racks to make people aware that they are there.

Next meeting to be held on 26th August 2008

c) **Community Affairs Committee:** As per minutes

At the meeting held on 16th June Mr David Hill gave a presentation on the NHS 'Out of Hours' service in Monmouth, the Minor Injuries Unit at Monnow Vale, the GP 'Out of Hours' service and the Duty pharmacy system.

Councillor Mrs Dewhurst made a plea for help for the Carnival on Sunday and thanked those already committed to giving their time and help.

The committee is very pleased with the initial response to the informal ward surgeries that are on going at the moment.

A letter had been received from Councillor Mrs Hacket Pain regretting her non attendance at the last meeting but was pleased to report that progress is being made with the Woodland View play area.

Cllr T Christopher reported on a meeting held on 14th July 2008 regarding concerns with the day services at Monnow Vale being reduced, and clients not being consulted to voice their feelings. Concerns were raised that no consultation had taken place with the fifteen clients involved at the centre; Councillor Christopher suggested that he would write to Social Services to find out what was happening and try to progress the matter.

A further meeting was arranged for 5.00pm on 21st July and was attended by County Councillors Wintle and Hood, who is the cabinet member for Social Services. It was suggested that the fifteen clients are re consulted with over a six month period and this was reluctantly agreed to. However the importance to ensure that an advocate or parent be there in the best interest of the client was stressed. When spoken to all fifteen clients said they did not want to leave Monnow Vale.

Next meeting to be held on 28th July 2008

d) **Finance & Policy Committee:** As per minutes:

The most recent meeting was held on 30th June and due to the perceived public interest the meeting was moved to Bridges.

There was an extensive CCTV presentation by Mr Chris Norman from MCC. It was clear that for those involved with this quite closely there was nothing new stated but Mr Norman made the point that there were improvements in the pipeline.

Mr Norman still has questions over the criteria for monitoring and will pursue this and he confirmed that as yet he still could not give any budget figures. He also confirmed that the Police will not be asked to sign up to the scheme.

If the Town Council were to rejoin they would now not be asked to make retrospective payments. It was agreed to set up a working group to look into the wide spectrum of matters relating to

CCTV. The group consists of Councillors Christopher, Jones, Hacket Pain and Hayward. The first meeting was held on 9th July and the terms of reference were agreed broadly as follows; to investigate and satisfy the Council on a number of matters including the proof that there is a tangible need for CCTV in Monmouth, and whether or not there is a discernable demand from Council Tax payers, is the system capable of delivering what MCC say it can deliver, is the project value for money and does it do what is required for this town?

The Council must satisfy itself that this large investment would be appropriate for the end user namely the Police, to determine whether or not they have the ability to make sufficient and proper use in regard to rapid response.

Secondly it was agreed to review a number of matters, whether as a Council rejoining the Strategy Group run by MCC was an option, also to review the experience from other towns that have CCTV working. Also to consider exploring alternative systems and methods and to look at an established integrated system based upon existing and proposed shop systems.

It was recognised that it was important to seek the views of traders on a number of issues.

The group would also take into consideration whether the Police effectively require CCTV due to the lack of police presence on the street.

The group expressed concerns with the structure of the whole current CCTV scheme and recognised that there is no accountability within the system which includes MCC, Caerphilly Monitoring Centre and the Police. There is a real danger that the Council could be handing over a large amount of money each year but if one of the parties does not do its job there is no redress.

The next step is to write to a number of interested parties including large chains, independent shop keepers, and the police at a corporate and local level. It is anticipated that a series of meetings will take place including with Mr Chris Norman and Councillor Brian Jones who is the cabinet member for Community Safety, also to talk to various surveillance experts to get another view on how surveillance works as all the facts and figures that have ever been given have come from the same source and there will be a wish to make comparisons. There will also be a request made to the Home Office for information as to the level of CCTV installation throughout England and Wales and how much is funded by the Police. Further meetings of the working group will follow with full reports made back to the Finance & Policy Committee.

Proposed: Councillor Mrs S Chivers

Seconded: Councillor Mrs B Smith

Unanimous

e) **Shire Hall Renovation Project:**

It is understood that work on the project would start in September and should be complete by Christmas 2009, however these dates have not been confirmed. The Town Council has asked for a meeting of the project board as on a pro rata basis it is the largest contributor to this project but is the last to be told what is happening. The letter to MCC requested details about the terms of the contract, a schedule of works and a programme of finances detailing when payment will be made. MCC are demanding from the Council full payment by the end of this financial year which is nine months before work is due to be completed, the Council consider this unfair and it is suggested that payment should be made in proportion to when the Contractor is paid.

Councillor Hacket Pain explained the financial implication to the Council and reminded members that in the beginning the Town Council initially committed £100,000, with a further £25,000 guaranteed later. Then eighteen months ago the Shire Hall Stewards came to the Council to request a guarantee up to a maximum of £28,000 in the event that their contribution had not been raised in full at this time. This would leave £20,000 in the general reserves which is insufficient to run the Council, and it is recommended that a minimum of £30,000 would be prudent. Members were reminded that once the project is completed and the Council is back in the Shire Hall there are still further monies to be paid in service charges to the amount of £80,000 over ten years on a sliding scale.

f) **Monmouth Partnership Forum:**

At the meeting held on 7th July, the constitution was changed to bring it in line for applying for grants.

Shirley Hughes from Royal Community Action reported that there would soon be monies available for application in a fund called 'Tidy Town initiative'.

There are two new Monmouth shopping bags available for purchase, a Fairtrade one and a 'Monmouth Shopper' produced by the Green Light Group.

The Cemetery Group has received a grant of £150,000 to restore the chapel and turn it into a Genealogy Centre. There has been a recent successful environmental project with Monmouth Comprehensive School, this covered many items such as looking at headstones, family trees, burials and bio diversity, students took photos, sketches and rubbings.

The Millennium Field Group was paid a visit from Julian Belston of Gwent Wildlife who identified new plants since the work was started and also the Scouts have been doing voluntary work on the millennium field and there has also been an application for grants for more benches and a kissing gate.

Monmouth Links Group have been refused its Axis 3 bid for funding and there were also problems when it met with the Connect2 Sustrans group who were funding a project with £250,000. This included money to re-instate Beaufort Bridge and other projects but the agreement cannot now be signed due to undertakings and the funding will be lost.

The Sustainable Travel Group has arranged a Green Travel Day for 18th September with a number of initiatives including some bus companies offering free travel for the day.

There will be a Subway Group meeting on September 25th for the public to bring along photographs of views/people of Monmouth to use for panels inside the subway.

- g) **Others:** One Voice Wales hosted a meeting to discuss the views of Community and Town Councils regarding ways of improving communication with the unitary authorities. The main areas of concern relate to planning and highways issues.

41. To resolve to purchase new uniform for Deputy Mace Bearer:

The Clerk reported to members that there is not a uniform available to purchase which will match the current ones that are presently in use. There is a company that offers a service of producing a uniform that will match the existing ones and the cost would be approx £1,300, it would take five to six weeks to make. Members were advised that there is no provision in the current budget for this so if agreed the money would have to come from general reserves. It was agreed that the Clerk should make immediate arrangements to go ahead with the order of a new uniform for the Deputy Mace Bearer.

Proposed: Councillor Mrs S Chivers **Seconded:** Councillor J Fletcher **Unanimous**

42. To resolve to purchase two storage boxes for Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's regalia

Members were advised that due to the age and the wear and tear of the storage case of the Mayor's chain it has now become insecure and the lock is no longer usable. It was therefore recommended that a new box is required for the Mayor's chain and also the purchase of a new one for the new Deputy Mayor's chain. The boxes would need to be custom made and have a secure lock and handle. The approx cost would be £200 per box and again members were advised that there is no provision in the current budget for these items and so if agreed the money will have to come from general reserves. It was agreed to purchase two bespoke storage cases for the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's chains.

Proposed: Councillor Mrs J Hall **Seconded:** Councillor Mrs S Chivers **Unanimous**

43. To resolve to consider Registration of Title Deeds of Dixton Field

The Clerk outlined that the registration of this land is strongly recommended as soon as possible as under the New Land Registration Act 2002 the owner of a registered property will be better protected against losing parts of the property through claims of adverse possession it also provides a proof of ownership which would simplify future conveyancing and avoid delay and increased legal fees. The Clerk advised that three quotes had been received from local firms of Solicitors and it was agreed that Charles Blacklock who provided the lowest quote should be asked to conduct the business of registering the land with the Land Registry. It was agreed to register the deeds and that the payment should be made from general reserves.

Proposed: Councillor Mrs S Chivers **Seconded:** Councillor Mrs B Smith **Unanimous**

Proposal to ask Charles Blacklock Solicitors to conduct the registration

Proposed: Councillor R Bond

Seconded: Councillor Ms C Edwards

Unanimous

8.15 pm Councillor Ms C Edwards left the meeting

44. To resolve to adopt 2007/2008 Annual Report for publication

The members agreed that the Annual Report should be circulated on the Website, One Stop Shop and the Library. The Town Clerk asked if there were any discrepancies would Councillors please let her know as soon as possible. It was resolved unanimously to adopt the report.

Proposed: Councillor Mrs A Dewhurst

Seconded: Councillor J Fletcher

Unanimous

45. To confirm changes to committee membership

An amended list had previously been circulated to members to reflect that Councillor M Jones has now joined the Finance & Policy committee. This was agreed and confirmed unanimously.

Proposed: Councillor N Hacket Pain

Seconded: Councillor Mrs B Smith

Unanimous

46. Any Other Business:

Councillor Mrs S Chivers wanted to make it known that the Police station is now to only open between 12.00 noon – 4.00 pm and expressed serious concerns that Monmouth is losing too many of its services i.e. the Courts, the Job Centre, the proposals from Social Services to remove some facilities from Monnow Vale. She reminded members that people now have to travel to Abergavenny on meagre allowances to 'sign on' for benefits at the Job Centre. She asked why it was not possible for staff from the Job Centre in Abergavenny to come to Monmouth once a week. It was suggested that a room at the One Stop Shop could be made available for people to sign on. It was agreed to put this item back on an agenda for a future meeting. Councillor Mrs Dewhurst suggested this matter be discussed at the next meeting of the Community Affairs to be held next Monday 28th July 2008

Councillor T Christopher reminded the Council of the requirement of sending apologies to the Town Clerk or the Chairman of the Committee, if apologies are not received for two consecutive committee meetings then at the next Full Town Council meeting an explanation will be required as to the non attendance. The Chairman requested that the Clerk send out a memo as a reminder to members of the importance of this.

The Clerk reminded members that the Code of Conduct training will take place on Wednesday 27th August in the Rockfield Estate Community Centre at 7.00pm

47. To Agree meeting dates:

The Mayor asked with the approval of the Council that the next two meetings should be held at outside venues, the first on 1st September at St James Community Hall Wyesham and the second on the 13th October at the Osbaston Church of Wales School, The Mayor confirmed that he has tried to arrange the November meeting at the St Thomas's Church Hall but the venue is not available on a Monday evening. It was agreed that he would try the Overmonnow Learning Centre or Bridges as this is the border of the Overmonnow and Drybridge wards.

The Town Clerk reminded the Council that the date for the next Finance and Policy meeting has been changed from 11th to 18th August 2008

Signature: _____

Date: _____