

MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 18 November 2013 at 7.00pm
Rockfield Community Centre, Cornwallis Way, Monmouth

Present: Chairman: The Mayor Cllr J Hall

Cllr R Bradley	(RB)	Cllr J Gunter	(JG)
Cllr G Bright	(GB)	Cllr R Hayward	(RH)
Cllr S Chivers	(SC)	Cllr A Owen	(AO)
Cllr T Christopher	(TC)	Cllr G Pritchard	(GP)
Cllr A Dewhurst	(AD)	Cllr B Ramsey	(BR)
Cllr J Fletcher	(JF)	Cllr A Were	(AW)
Cllr S White	(SW)	Cllr S J Wilson	(SJW)

In attendance: Mrs S James, Town Clerk, Mrs J Lloyd, Administration Officer

County Councillors Peter Fox and Phil Murphy, spoke to Members regarding Monmouthshire County Council budget ideas and challenges ahead.

Overview:

Councillors Peter Fox and Phil Murphy spoke to the Town Council Committee looking for ideas for finding savings of about £22million in the next 4 to 5 years, £9.5million of this is to be found next year. The County Council still want to preserve services or, work them more cheaply rather than cut them permanently.

The Chief Executive has spoken with MCC staff in small groups advising them of the problems and again asking for ideas. On 18 December the formal budget proposals will be put out for the setting of the budget on 28 February 2014.

Next year MCC hope to start the process of conversation with members of the public and Town and Community Councils. For the following year the County Council want to start engagement for the budget earlier.

The meeting held at the Comprehensive School on 14 October was a pilot scheme for five throughout the county. Ideas from these meetings could lead to future proposals being put in place. A newsletter was intended to be sent out to householders but due to the Post Office delivery slots and other issues this didn't materialise.

There are thirty seven high level ideas of initial thinking which will probably form into proposals but still are ideas at the moment. From the public there were 33 ideas put forward and along with an increase of Council tax this could equate to approx. £5 million, which will leave a further £3million to find, even with Council Tax rise of 3%

Finding this shortfall could include the reduction in school transport provision, cut back of the MCC depots, reduction of road sweepers, cutting back of gritting of the roads, cutting the use of sub-contractors and the turning off street lights. (The public are happy with the suggestion of turning of street lights and this has already been implemented with many people not noticing the difference.)

From the engagement of 350 citizens who have left details with MCC most agreed with sustaining services rather than cut them completely.

County Councillor Murphy asked how they (MCC) could engage with the Town Council and the people of Monmouth, asking which services we wouldn't like cut and ideas of saving them, i.e. Gilwern are taking over the building which houses the library in order to save the library.

All the suggestions below are all prior to consultation -if they should be put forward as proposals there would be further discussion and figures presented. Possibilities are:

▪ **MCC question: Shutting off of every other street light after midnight in the towns and in areas of safety, in rural areas.**

There were no objections to this as an idea, Other authorities are looking at this option.

▪ **MCC question: Cut road sweepers and street cleaners**

Requires a saving of £175,000 per annum

Answer: The members pointed out that Monmouth has 1 street cleaner. Major problems with rubbish and dog fouling in Monmouth has resulted in the setting up of a litter group. It was asked if MCC and Tidy Towns could help with this to alleviate the litter problem.

▪ **MCC question: The transfer of public conveniences to local councils.**

MCC suggested taking over the second toilets in Monmouth.

Answer: It is very difficult and unfair to ask any commitments without the full information on costs.

▪ **MCC question: Transfer of buildings.**

MCC are looking at rationalising buildings in Abergavenny

▪ **MCC question: Move of the One Stop Shop to the library**

Answer: Councillors were against this idea as the only available space is upstairs which would be unsuitable for people with disabilities.

A suggestion was put forward to move the library to the One Stop Shop building.

▪ **MCC question: Moving the Museum to Shire Hall**

(There would be problems with this option regarding temperatures for the artefacts)

Answer:

*Not allowed by law to charge entrance fees for Museums although they have to become self-sufficient by being more commercial in the future to generate income. One possibility could be by renting out artefacts.

*A suggestion of making museums similar to the National Trust, run by volunteers i.e. 'Friends of Monmouth Museum' . It was acknowledged the present staff are very loyal to the Museum.

*Move all Monmouthshire museums into one building, possibly Market Hall?

*Shire Hall would be too small to house the museum as the rooms are required to provide revenue for the upkeep of the building.

*Another possibility would be to ask for donations from visitors.

*The suggestion of a virtual walk through area was made.

- **MCC question: Tourist Information Service**, Would it be possible to place all services together in one building such as Museums/One Stop Shops /tourist Information Services.
- **MCC question: Leisure Services -is there was any duplication in the town?**
Answer: There are facilities at Monmouth School but the Monmouth Leisure Centre should be for all and not just for the Comprehensive School.
- **MCC question: Provision for the elderly, is there any duplication in the town?**
Answer: Bridges Community Centre -has been successful in obtaining grants for the elderly in rural areas.
MCC support has been withdrawn for the day care services and Bridges will now have to apply for funding for this.
Use of volunteers
The main priority of the MCC is to take care of the elderly and vulnerable people and to fund employment.
- **MCC question: Reduction in school transport provision.**
MTC question: Many students travel into Monmouth from Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, similar English cuts in transport provision could cause problems.
MCC answer: Monmouthshire export more students than import, this is a stable situation at the moment re-funding resources.

Monmouthshire will probably look at post 16 year student's transportation as this group do not have to be subsidised although are at present.

- **MCC question Pest Control, removal of subsidy?**

MCC: It was hope that with the improvements of waste control waste would become an asset in the future- hopefully making it cost neutral losing landfill costs. It was thought that approximately 64% of waste was being recycled.

MTC: It is very difficult to make proposals when our budgets have to be set by January and unfair to ask any commitments without full information being available.

MCC answer: The Chief Executive has asked the question, if by putting the budget setting dates back then hopefully in future years MCC will be earlier with approaching Councils and the public for engagement, this hopefully would evolve into more working together.

MTC question: When did executives and Officers last have pay increases?

MCC answer: No increases for three years and 1% this year. MCC is not renowned for paying well but hope to increase lower paid workers rates to the living wage.

MTC question: With the parking review coming up is there room to charge more for parking?

MCC answer: MCC are not allowed to include car parking charges in their proposals, they can only be used to maintain car parks.

MTC question: Serious problem with the lack of overnight lorry parking, the car park that used to be used now has a barrier pushing lorries out of the town.

It is hoped that the County Councillors will visit the Town Council next year for this same discussion as Cllr Murphy does the rounds each year.

MTC Question: Do you find the cuts fair across Wales?

MCC Answer: The thoughts are that the Barnet formulae is unfair and needs reassessing. Assessments are to be made before Christmas to see what public services look like in Wales and highly likely that there will be reorganisation of local authorities and Monmouthshire being a smaller authority it is highly likely it will merge with another.

The Chair proposed agenda item 10 be brought forward:

Proposed: Cllr Hall Seconded: Cllr Wilson Unanimous in favour

10. To discuss ideas and consider Town Council challenges and contributions following presentation from County Councillors.

Further discussion took place although no commitments or formal views could be made without specific details and figures.

1. To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda

None received

2. To receive apologies for absence

Cllr S Davis

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

A member of the public, new to the area, highlighted a lack of information for the general public, especially regarding who was responsible for which services eg. MTC/MCC

4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 7th October 2013

The minutes were confirmed as a true record and signed.

Proposed: Cllr Hall Seconded: Cllr Pritchard Unanimous in favour

5. To receive correspondence that the Mayor wishes to place before the Council

The Town Clerk highlighted letters for attention.

MCC A Howard regarding World War II (Now being dealt with on the Environment Committee)
HMS Monmouth regarding the cancellation of the affiliate's day
One Voice Wales regarding Double Taxation

6. To receive the Town Clerk's report (for information only).

The Christmas trees at The Shire Hall and in Monnow Street outside the Oldway Centre to be delivered and installed from 9am Sunday, 24th November. Thanks are due, as always, to the help that is given by individuals and businesses voluntarily to do this.

The Christmas lights in the town on by 1st December. As normal, there will be no official switching on, as the lights are on many different timers and connections, but the main Christmas event, the Christmas Candlelit procession, is to take place starting at 6pm at the old Monnow Bridge, on Thursday 12th December. Further details on this will be advertised in the coming weeks.

A reminder that the office opening hours will be from 10 to 12noon, Monday to Friday, from the 2nd December, and will be closed over Christmas from 23rd December to 1st January, as is the whole Shire Hall building.

7. To answer questions from Councillors

(Standing Orders 9: A member may ask the Mayor, the chairmen of Council Committees or the Clerk any question concerning the business of the Council, provided notice is submitted to The Clerk in writing two working days prior to the meeting, and the response will be printed within the minutes of the meeting.

Every question shall be put and answered without discussion. Answers to verbal questions put to the Mayor, Chairmen of committees or the Town Clerk may be deferred until no later than the next meeting No supplementary questions will be allowed.)

None received

8. To receive and consider reports and minutes of the council's committees and outside bodies.

a Planning Committee: As per minutes.

Items discussed include LDP, Monmouth 106 monies and updates to the MTC website regarding planning procedure of Committee, New permitted development.

b Environmental Affairs Committee: As per minutes.

Items discussed were the replacement of bollards at the Allotment Road, Permission for the bench and lifebuoy on Town Field, Budget agreed to be the same as last year and the Litter Group is in discussion the Monmouth Comprehensive School to involve students regarding why so much litter in the Town.

c Community Affairs Committee: As per minutes.

Christmas event to be held on Thursday 12 December with a request for help on the evening.

d Finance & Policy Committee: As per minutes.

Items discussed were the change of hours to the office due to Shire Hall opening times, the purchase of Braille software for existing machine and training.

e CSATS:

Cllr White reported that items discussed at the meeting were, parking issues, signs on Monnow Bridge, (signs in place but very small. The police will not speak to MCC regarding byelaws -that is up to the Town Council.)

Parking on pavements, the police commented that if there is room to pass they will not take action. If no room then this should be reported to the Police via 101 and they will go out and assess the situation.

Cllr Wilson reported from the minutes that there is money to provide an extra camera in Monmouth which will be placed in Priory Street or Glendower car park.

Cllr Hall reported that graffiti removal will no longer come under the Youth Offenders remit but will be paid for by the relevant CSATS budget, they will however ask commercial businesses if they can contribute if it affects their land or property.

f Monmouth Partnership Forum: As per minutes

The AGM, followed by normal meeting was held on Wednesday 9 October with MCC Colin Phillips updating the Forum on the Gateway project and Mark Lloyd gave a presentation on the Interpretation Plan.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 20 November with a talk regarding Monmouth Foodbank

g Vision Monmouth: No meeting, next meeting to be held on Wednesday 4 December

h Central Monmouthshire Area Committee:

Accident at the Leisure Centre: Still in the hands of the solicitors.

A boards: Work on the review policy and enforcement started a few months ago research undertaken into the policies of other authorities

Traffic signals A40/ A466 plan for third traffic lane on the A40 southbound extending back to the boat house under pass. If implemented the scheme will improve congestion and delays. It is a joint Welsh Assembly and MCC task, and meetings to identify funding are to take place.

Gatehouse: The Landlord has been spoken to regarding the obstruction of A Boards but given permission for the benches - Ongoing

i Others: None received

9. To review the Member's attendance summary of committee meetings

Members	Plannin g	Full Council	Communit y	Planning	F&P	Extra Communit y	Planning	Environmen t
2012/2013	7.10.13	7.10.13	14.10.13	21.10.13	21.10.13	24.10.13	04.11.13	11.11.13
Cllr R Bradley	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Apology
Cllr G Bright		1	1		1	1		1
Cllr S Chivers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cllr T Christopher		1	Apology		1	1		1
Mr S Davis	1	1		1			Apology	Apology
Cllr A Dewhurst	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cllr J Fletcher	1	1	1	1	1	Apology	1	1
Cllr J Gunter	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cllr J Hall	1	1		1	1		1	
Cllr R Hayward	1	1		1	1		1	1
Cllr A Owen		1						1
Cllr G Pritchard	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Cllr B Ramsey		1	Apology	1		Apology		
Cllrs A Were		1	1		1			1
Cllr S White		Apology	Apology			Apology		1
Cllr S Wilson	1	1	Apology	1	1	1	1	1
Total In Attendance	9+1	15	8	10+1	13	8	9	11
Members on Committee	10	16	12	10	13	12	10	13

KEY

	Non Committee Member
	Non Committee Member attendance
	Absent

To be noted: Cllr Were Community meeting 24.October: Absence due to being locked out of Shire Hall.

Proposed: Cllr Hayward Seconded: Cllr Wilson

Unanimous in favour

10. To discuss ideas and consider Town Council challenges and contributions following presentation from County Councillors.

This item discussed earlier in the meeting.

11. To confirm recommendation of Finance and Policy Committee that MTC continue membership of the CCTV partnership with MCC until at least 31st March 2015.

After discussion at the Finance and Policy Committee meeting it was agreed to continue with the scheme and review in one year.

Proposed: Cllr Hayward Seconded: Cllr Ramsey
For: 13 Against: 1 Abstention: 1

Motion carried

12. To consider the production of a Monmouth Town Council newsletter.

Cllr Pritchard had previously distributed a Ross TC newsletter as an example. Costs and methods of distribution were discussed, as well as methods of communication with the public already utilised. It was suggested that interested Councillors prepare costs and different methods of production and present to the next Full Council meeting on 6 January 2014 for a decision.

13. To appoint a member as Deputy (replacing Cllr J Hall) to Cllr Wilson as MTC representative for CSATs (meetings usually Monday afternoons)

It was agreed for Cllr Ramsey to replace Cllr Hall.

14. To confirm resignation of Cllr T Christopher from the Community Affairs and Environmental Affairs Committees.

Confirmed.

15. To consider correspondence and discussion from Mr Andrew Tuggey DL and events for 2015 further to meeting with councillors of 15th November.

This meeting had to be cancelled and a new provisional date of 6th December is still to be confirmed.

16. Items for discussion for future meetings

- Newsletter
- Meeting with Mr Andrew Tuggey

17. To confirm meeting dates

Next meeting (budget setting) is to be held on Monday 6th January 2014
7.00pm, at Shire Hall, Monmouth.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.30pm