

MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Shire Hall
Agincourt Square
Monmouth
NP25 3DY



Tel: 01600 715662

Email: townclerk@monmouth.gov.uk

www.monmouth.gov.uk

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 19 January 2015 at 7.00pm
The Shire Hall, Monmouth

Present: Chairman: The Mayor Cllr J Gunter

Cllr R Bradley	(RB)	Cllr J Hall	(JH)
Cllr G Bright	(GB)	Cllr C Munslow	(CM)
Cllr S Chivers	(SC)	Cllr A Owen	(AO)
Cllr T Christopher	(TJC)	Cllr G Pritchard	(GP)
Cllr S Davis	(SD)	Cllr A Were	(AW)
Cllr A Dewhurst	(AD)	Cllr S White	(SW)
Cllr Fletcher	(JF)	Cllr S J Wilson	(SJW)

In Attendance: Mrs S James Town Clerk and Mrs J Lloyd Administration Officer.

Nick Ramsey AM gave a talk on devolution of tax-raising powers to the Assembly.

The Welsh Government receives £15.3 billion from the UK Government and it is the responsibility of the Welsh Government to divide this between health care, education, local authorities and roads etc. The Welsh Government has no other form of income and no borrowing powers whereas Local Authorities receive revenue from the Welsh Government and can borrow money, which is topped up by Council tax. Smaller Councils have a precept and the ability to borrow money although rarely do.

The Silk Commission was established by the Welsh Secretary on 11 October 2011 to, in effect, tidy up and clarify legal powers. The Commission met for the first time on 4 November 2011 to consider further devolution of powers after a result from the referendum in March 2011 when 63.49% of people voted yes for more legislative powers.

The first published report on devolution of fiscal powers was published in November 2012 and the second report on devolution of legislative powers was published in March 2014.

The terms of reference were:

1. To review the case for devolution of fiscal powers to the National Assembly for Wales.
2. Recommend a package of powers to improve the financial accountability for the Welsh Assembly which are consistent with the UK's fiscal objectives
3. To review the powers of the Assembly.
4. To recommend modification to the present constitutional arrangement to enable the UK Parliament and National Assembly to better serve Welsh people.

The Welsh Government would have a Treasury department with an office which will be called The Welsh Revenue; Devolution will happen in 2018 and is a totally unchartered territory for the Assembly.

Potential devolution of taxes to Wales.

Stamp Duty Tax

- Key recommendation of the Silk Commission control is seen as vital to boost the housing market and construction industry.
- After devolution in April 2018 it will become the Welsh Land Transaction Tax.
- Conservative Party asks the Welsh Government to abolish the tax on properties valued up to £250,000 (average cost of property in Wales is £166,722)
- Scotland proposed 'progressive system of taxation' similar to the current income tax system, as opposed to the 'slab' structure of the UK stamp Duty set up in 2003.

Land Fill Tax

- Introduced in 1996 by the Conservative secretary of State for the Environment. The first environmental tax will become the Welsh Landfill Tax starting April 2018.
- It is seen as a key mechanism in enabling UK to meet its targets set out in the Landfill Directive for the landfill of biodegradable waste.
- Paid by landfill site operator.
- Once it is devolved to Wales, landfill operators will no longer be eligible for a UK Landfill tax credit.

Income tax:

- There will be a referendum to have income tax devolved to Wales.
- Westminster will legislate so that the referendum could take place after 2015 and would like to see the referendum held in 2017 with implementation in 2020.
- This has been controversial with some members cautious of the changes.

Questions from Councillors:

Cllr Were: What about the Welsh Assembly Settlement with Westminster Parliament using the Barnett formulae, is it likely to be changed?

Answer: No, it will not be addressed although probably should be, everyone agrees it does need to be adjusted.

Cllr White: Can you tell us what it will cost to set up a Welsh Treasury with Officers and Officials?

Answer: In Mr Ramsey's opinion, initial costs would be around £3 million, as further expertise will be required.

There will be a cost in terms of Inland Revenue if income tax is devolved and they will have to set up a department in HRMC dedicated to Wales which will then bill the Welsh Government.

There is pressure on the Government to keep taxes the same or, they could possibly go up.

Cllr Pritchard: If we assume income tax is not delegated to the Welsh Assembly and left with only the Stamp Duty and Landfill tax what would be the effect on the Town Council?

Answer: There was the possibility of Air Passenger taxation being devolved but this was thrown out as there was a fear it broke EU competition rules. Another tax that didn't come over was Corporation tax. If left with only stamp duty and landfill tax there would be no benefit. Business rates could go directly to the Authority. Monmouthshire would do well from this, and areas such as the Valleys wouldn't do so well and would have to be topped up.

Cllr Bright: As a Welshman he is totally against Devolution as he can see Wales being separated. The question is what is your opinion on 'Fracking'?

Answer: Many people would agree with you about devolution but it has to be accepted and has been with us for fifteen years, but devolution shows no plans of going anywhere in Scotland. All parties are more or less agreed on taxation devolution. Regarding fracking, a possible site is in Glamorgan but taxation from fracking would not be devolved.

Cllr Pritchard: If Stamp and Landfill tax is devolved and the Barnett formulae is used, what will end up in Monmouthshire. If we get a poor settlement in Monmouthshire the Town Council will be increasingly be expected to take over services from County Council.

Answer: Confusion here as they are two different things, the Barnett Formulae is money to the Welsh Government on the basis of the population, the other is the Local Government formulae which is a separate formulae used by the Welsh Government. This is given to the Welsh government Minister who uses the local government revenues (RSG'S), with the RSG needing reform.

Cllr Pritchard: Is either Monmouthshire or the Town Council is going to be better off?

Answer: There is no direct benefit to the Town Council re Devolving taxation. In fact you might say the real direct benefit will go to the UK Treasury as gradually over time they could give less money to the Welsh Government making the Assembly raise money themselves.

In its current form as far as tax devolution is concerned there is no benefit to the tax payer, half of the Welsh population within 25 miles of the border would move over the border and Wales would lose the tax plus stamp duty.

Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of the public to speak.

Proposed: Cllr White

Seconded: Cllr Dewhurst

Motion carried

Mr Roy Nicholas: If these changes were to come about would it be necessary to double the amount of Assembly members?

Answer: No. In terms of the tax powers it is the amount of Officers that would be required increased, and their expertise.

Mr Roy Nicholas: He agrees entirely with what Cllr Bright said it is the last thing he wanted.

Standing Orders were re instated.

Proposed: Cllr Hall Seconded: Cllr Pritchard

Motion carried

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

Cllr T Christopher agenda item 10

2. To receive apologies for absence.

Cllr R Hayward.

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

None received.

4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 8th December 2014.

The minutes were confirmed as a true record and signed.

Proposed: Cllr Hall Seconded: Cllr Pritchard

Motion carried

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

The Town Clerk brought letter number 19 to the attention of the members:

The Children's/Adult Eisteddfod Treasurer 2015: Meeting dates with request for funding for the event on Saturday 20 June 2015. It was suggested that the request could be referred to the surplus money from the Environment budget or a grant application from the Community Committee Larger Grants scheme.

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

Electoral register requests.

Request proforma have been sent to all members. Members should ensure that these are returned if they wish to receive a copy (and updates) of the electoral roll for their ward. A new proforma must be completed each time the register of electors is published.

Summons to meetings/Agendas

A reminder to members that the legal requirement is that agendas, when sent out by post, are sent 3 clear days before the meeting. If the agenda is not received, or delayed in the post, the legal requirement has still been met. If members have not received agendas or information they are expecting, the office should be informed and contacted for information or further copies as required.

Post Office located in Monnow Street will be closed for refurbishment from 4/2/15 re-opening 4/215.

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

- Cllr Wilson reported that there will be a Drop In meeting at Staunton Village Hall on Tuesday 20 January 7.00pm - 9.00pm and again on Saturday 24 January 2015 10.00am – 12.00noon for County assessment for the different areas which will be based on full planning, when applying for planning it will then be assessed against this criteria. It is at the initial stages being put out for consultation. Although this doesn't affect MTC, Staunton being the nearest English parish if any Councillor wants to see or comment on this the report it will be available for the two mentioned days.
- The application for Gibraltar House Care Home to convert accommodation to housing was approved.
- Presentation given this evening by Whitbread for proposed application for 60 bed Premier Inn on the Portal Road, the application should be submitted by the end of the month.
- The Supplementary Planning Guidance (part of the LDP) the deadline is due on the 22 January 5.00pm. Councillors to make their own individual applications.

- There will be a special meeting (Date to be advised) for the Dixton Roundabout application. The Applicant will be invited if they wish to come, to the question and answers meeting and the Committee will make their recommendations.
- b Environmental Affairs Committee:** As per minutes.
- Cllr Christopher reported that the Committee had agreed to purchase a defibrillator to be placed in the Telephone box outside Shire Hall, the cost being £2,500 which will include training. The Heartbeat Trust will give a presentation at the next Environment meeting.
 - Cllr Christopher is in the process of arranging a meeting with MCC and the 'Friends of Monmouth Cemetery Group' regarding the situation of no Cemetery in the Town.
- c Community Affairs Committee:**
- Cllr Dewhurst reported that a meeting has been arranged for Thursday 29 January with MCC Mr Paul Keeble and from the Police Sergeant Dave Seymour to discuss parking problems in Monmouth at Monnow Street and Priory Street.
 - The second newsletter has been distributed by 'The Monnow Voice' magazine.
 - Two members of from the Committee replied to the Local Transport Plan, no response received to date.
 - Cllr Dewhurst asked members for feedback from the Christmas event so all comments can be collated for next Monday's meeting.
- d Finance & Policy Committee:**
No meeting, next meeting to be held on Monday 2nd February 2015.
- e CSATS:**
- Cllr Wilson reported that the December meeting was dominated by the recent burglaries in Monmouth. If ringing the 101 number it was advised to quote 227 then the operator can pull up all details regarding the burglaries.
 - It has been agreed to move 2 CSAT cameras to Osbaston talked about buying in a additional CCTV's and a number recognition camera, the Police will ask MCC Roger Hoggins to keep street lights on over the Christmas period to make people feel safer.
 - There have been arrests thought to be linked to the burglaries and extra resources brought in.
- (Councillor Dewhurst added that after speaking with the Police yesterday they advised any suspicious behaviour be reported on 999.)
- f Monmouth Partnership Forum:**
No meeting. Next meeting to be held on Wednesday 21 January when the way forward for the Partnership Forum will be discussed.
- g Vision Monmouth:**
No meeting. Next meeting to be held in February 2015
- h Central Monmouthshire Area Committee:**
No meeting.
- i Chamber of Trade and Commerce:**
No meeting. Next meeting to be held on Wednesday 21 January 2015.
- j Monmouth Civic society:**
No meeting.
- k Public Consultation Group (MTC):**
Next meeting hoping to be held on Saturday 28 February 2015 in conjunction with the Mayor's Coffee morning.

Other: MCC Consultation meeting re Budget 2015/2016:

Cllr Pritchard reported from the meeting he attended two weeks ago

There is a predicted increase the rates by 4.95% as there is a shortfall of 5.8 million, he reported that four years ago the Welsh Government gave 65% to the budget but it is now 53%. The final decision will be made in February.

Some of the suggested cut backs are:

- Price increase at the Leisure Centre reduction of £400,000.
- Youth Services cut by £200,000 but increase to income by increasing courses for course leaders and working with other agencies to reach the target.
- Saving of £300,000 by making better use of buildings in Monmouthshire. In Monmouth the One Stop Shop and the Library will be amalgamated in either Market Hall or the existing Library.
- £200,000 saving to be made by not providing grey bags to the public.
- A reduction of half a million pounds from the Highways maintenance budget.

In total there are about 25 to 30 items being discussed.

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

Members	Full Council	Planning	Community	Planning	F&P	Planning	Environment
2014/2015	08.12.14	08.2.14	15.12.14	22.12.14	Cancelled	05.01.15	13.01.15
Cllr R Bradley	1	1	Apology	Apology			Apology
Cllr G Bright	1		1				1
Cllr S Chivers	1	1	1	1		1	1
Cllr T Christopher	1		1				1
Mr S Davis	Apology	Apology		Apology			
Cllr A Dewhurst	1	1	1	1		1	1
Cllr J Fletcher	Apology	Apology	1	1		1	1
Cllr J Gunter	1	1	1	1		1	1
Cllr J Hall	1	1		1		1	
Cllr R Hayward	1	1		Apology		Apology	Apology
Cllr C Munslow	1	1	1	1		1	1
Cllr A Owen	1						1
Cllr G Pritchard	1		1				
Cllrs A Were	1		1				
Cllr S White	1		1				Apology
Cllr S Wilson	1	1	1	1		1	1
Total In Attendance	14	8	11	7		7	9
Members on Committee	16	10	12	10	11	10	12

KEY

	Non Committee Member
	Non Committee Member attendance
	Absent

Proposed: Cllr Hall

Seconded: Cllr Fletcher

Motion carried

- 10. To consider progress on formulating a plan including costings and specific details for an all- weather surface for the Town Field to enable Full Council to consider and make an informed decision on the project.**

The Rotary Club and the Rowing Club are formulating specific proposals which will be brought back to the next Full Council meeting for discussion and a decision.

It was proposed to defer this item to the next meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Gunter

Seconded: Cllr Pritchard

Motion carried

- 11. To approve the accounts for payment between 3rd December 2014 and 13th January 2015.**

This item was on the agenda due to the cancelation of the Finance & Policy meeting of the 5th January 2015.

The list of payments was previously distributed to members.

It was proposed to approve the accounts.

Proposed: Cllr Hall

Seconded: Cllr Fletcher

Motion carried

- 12. Items for discussion for future meetings.**

None received.

- 13. To confirm meeting dates.**

Next meeting to be held on Monday 2nd March 2015 at 7.00pm Shire Hall, Monmouth.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20.06