

MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 27th October 2014 at 7.00pm
The Shire Hall, Monmouth

Present: **Chairman:** The Mayor Cllr J Gunter

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

In Attendance: Mrs S James, Town Clerk

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

Cllr Christopher declared a personal interest in agenda item 13.

2. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllr G Bright

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

No questions received

**4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on
Monday 15th September 2014**

It was proposed to accept the minutes of 15th September 2014 as an accurate record and that they be signed.

Proposed: Cllr R Hayward, Seconded: Cllr C Munslow

For:14, Against:0. Abstention: 1

Proposal agreed

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

The Clerk drew members attention to items:

- Letter from Nick Ramsay AM offering to attend a meeting to talk on devolution of tax-raising powers to the National Assembly for Wales (late corres)
- 37: A Blake, Wye Valley AONB: Draft response details to Designated Landscapes Review

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

Commemoration of centenary of Battle of Coronel, Sat 1st November.

All are welcome to attend the service at 10.30am at St Mary's Priory Church. Only the Mayor and Mace Bearers will be escorted to their seats shortly before the service begins.

The MTC hosted buffet will now take place in Court Room 2 and a list of dignitaries and attendees will be distributed beforehand. Eight councillors, including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor have confirmed they will attend.

The film showing at 3pm at the Savoy Theatre is also open to all, and normal admission charges will apply.

Commemorative Walk 2nd November as per Mr Ramsey's request, assistance and support from councillors would be appreciated (especially those trained in Chapter 8)

Please note that there may need to be an **Extra short Environmental Affairs meeting** potentially to be held before Community Affairs meeting on 3rd November, to confirm costs and budget for Christmas lighting this year.

Remembrance Sunday 9th November

Further reminder to councillors of details for the day will be sent next week.

Road closures have been organised and the required meetings with Highways and police have taken place. A leaflet drop to residents/businesses reminding of road closures has been organised jointly with the Commemorative walk closures on 2nd November and Mr Ramsey is greatly assisting with this.

RSM Paul Jones has requested the date of Saturday 11th July for the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers to exercise their Freedom of the town.

The provisional date for the Civic Service is Sunday 12th July, although this is obviously at the discretion of the new mayor to be elected in May.

The date of the Civic service could be put back if necessary, or potentially remain as it is.

The RMRE preferred date remains Saturday 11th July and there is obviously a huge lead time required for organisation and VIP attendance.

It will be too late for the new Mayor in May to agree the date, and I would therefore ask members to consider and give general consensus as appropriate so I may contact the RSM as soon as possible to confirm, then confirm this decision at a further Full Council meeting.

The Chair asked members for any considerations or comment on the suggested date for the Freedom Parade.

There were no objections to this date and the Clerk advised members that the RSM would be informed the date was agreeable.

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.)

No members had submitted or asked questions.

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

a Planning Committee (SJW)

As per minutes, additionally plans for an out of town centre retail development opposite Watery Lane had been recommended for approval that evening.

b Environmental Affairs Committee (TJC)

As per minutes. A complaint from Monmouth Rugby Club to MCC had been received regarding dog fouling on Chippenham Sports ground and the obvious health hazards to the sports fields users, often young people. Cllr Christopher requested the press present report and highlight this problem, requesting people to use the 4 dog waste bins situated off paths in the area and clean up after their dogs. A £400 match funding sum had been agreed towards bollards to prevent inappropriate parking at the Sports ground-though MCC would need to seek the Sports Association approval as lease of the land.

c Community Affairs Committee (AD)

As per minutes of meeting held on 22nd September and extra meeting on 6th October for committee budget setting. Two Christmas events were planned – 7th December Community decorating of the Christmas tree outside the Oldway Centre, 2-4pm, when (Rotary) Father Christmas would pass by, and also the annual Candlelit procession on Thursday 11th December, 6pm from old Monnow Bridge, where Father Christmas would see Children in the Shire Hall also from 6pm. The second issue of the MTC newsletter will be distributed in the December issue of the Monnow Voice magazine.

d Finance & Policy Committee (RH)

As per minutes. Three very good candidates applied for the position of trainee Mace Bearer, which meant a difficult choice for the committee, and MS Caroline Bright has now been appointed. Devolution of services from MCC has been briefly discussed. It had been agreed to award Mayor's Cadet badges, and also Mr S Bees has been appointed the Internal Auditor for the council for this financial year.

e CSATS (SJW)

No meeting

f Monmouth Partnership Forum (AO)

The group met on 27th September to discuss issues around Monmouth.

- Problems encountered by the Monmouth Links Project were raised following the departure of a key officer and information from MCC- regarding cycle rack provision especially.
- The planning permission in force to provide a cycle route over the Beaufort Bridge off the Redbrook Road would lapse in 2016
- Lack of local burial sites (nearest is now Natural burials at Usk)
- Condition of the footpath along the River Wye
- Meeting took place at County Hall highlighting difficulties faced by disabled and visually impaired people in negotiating street furniture in the town
- Monmouth Festival update
- New Monmouth Comprehensive School update
- Next meeting (AGM) 12th November

g Vision Monmouth(SW)

As per minutes – which were distributed to all members

h Central Monmouthshire Area Committee (JH)

No meeting

i Others

- Walkers are Welcome (JH)

Details of upcoming Commemoration walk (2nd Nov) of route of soldiers leaving Monmouth from Castle Hill to the site of the old Troy Station.

There will also be an inventory made of any memorabilia members of the public have in connection, at The Castle

- Monmouth Civic Society (JH)
Meeting held 24th September. Development at Dixon Road site discussed. Successful Open Doors Project on 6-7th September with 2642 visits made. Funding request for lighting and possible footpath kerb in underpass near Rowing Club considered.
- Monmouth Chamber of Trade and Commerce (JH)
Meeting held 22nd September. Held at Monmouth School sports pavilion with guest speaker James Swift of Trealy Farm Charcuterie a successful local business. A board charges, car park charges and ongoing issues over hotel provision at Portal Road were discussed. Lack of help from MCC on graffiti concerns and ongoing concerns over development at Dixon roundabout site considered.

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

The record of members attendance had been previously circulated.

It was proposed to accept the attendance summary as accurate

Proposed: Cllr S White, Seconded: Cllr J Hall

Proposal agreed unanimously

10. To consider draft, and agree Police leaflet for vehicles (deferred from Community Affairs committee 11/8/14) (Deferred from last meeting)

A draft copy of the proposed police produced leaflet (to be amended for Monmouth use rather than Usk) had been received from the police, and circulated to all prior to the meeting.

Cllr Dewhurst explained that the local police were looking for permission to include the Monmouth Town Council logo on the leaflet and for Council support.

The leaflet is to be used to place on cars warning the owners that they are parked illegally or inconsiderately such as occurs in the vicinity of the old Monnow Bridge and in Priory Street. Some members felt that police should enforce parking violations and issue fixed penalties.

Cllr Dewhurst also reported that she and Cllr Christopher would be attending a meeting with the Police Commissioner and express the MTC view that the police should be expected to carry out duties as requested on enforcement.

It was proposed to approve the draft leaflet with Monmouth adaptations, and to allow use of the Town Council logo.

Proposed: Cllr A Dewhurst, Seconded: Cllr S White

For:14, Against: 1

Proposal agreed

11. To discuss holding regular monthly Councillor surgeries at Monmouth Priory Saturday Coffee Shop (brought forward from Community Committee meeting 22.09.14)

Cllr Christopher reported that the September Saturday public meetings had been well received, and were especially well attended at Monmouth Priory where regular Saturday coffee mornings are held by various groups. Surgeries previously held at the Orange Shop had been poorly attended, and it was suggested this was due to day and times chosen and available.

It was suggested that surgeries could be held for a trial period of 6 months, but on a rota system so individual councillors would only have to attend 2 or 3 times a year. This also meant that a variety of groups holding their coffee mornings at the Priory would be supported.

It was agreed that this should be referred back to the Finance and Policy Committee for consideration.

12. To discuss and consider Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill (Bulletin July 14) (brought forward from Community Committee meeting of 22.09.14)

Cllr Were confirmed that this item was not a consultation, but in effect a Bill essentially considering future generations and the impact that decisions by the Welsh Government will have upon them. It is all part of the "Wales We Want" national discussions and it is possible for an event to take place in Monmouth for the National Assembly of Wales to consult with the public. There is much detailed information available on the (WG) website.

It was agreed that Cllr Were would make further investigations into bringing an event to Monmouth, and would report back to Full Council on progress.

13. To consider request for improvement of access all weather surface – jointly with Rowing Club and Rotary (email 14/9/14 –forwarded TC) (Mr Paul Sherrington, Monmouth Rotary, will be in attendance to provide further information as required)

It was proposed that Standing Orders be suspended in order to allow Mr Paul Sherrington of Monmouth Rotary to speak.

Proposed: Cllr S White, Seconded: Cllr A Were

Proposal agreed unanimously

The initial request (corres. No.4) was read aloud to members and Mr Sherrington expanded on the increasing popularity of especially the Raft Race in Monmouth, and subsequent need for an all weather surface for access provision to be maintained in poor weather conditions without severe ground damage. The importance of successful expanding and successful events on the Town Field area was stressed bringing much trade and tourism to the town as well as charity fundraising.

The suggestion was for a strengthened hard running surface to be provided (not a road), and that this could be considered jointly with the Town Council by other interested parties – Monmouth Rotary, Monmouth Rowing Club, and possibly MCC for provision of materials. It was suggested that setting up a working group to consult with different bodies may be the first step.

It was proposed to reinstate Standing Orders

Proposed: Cllr J Hall, Seconded: Cllr G Pritchard

Unanimously agreed

It was proposed that a working group be formed to consult with Monmouth Rotary, Monmouth Rowing Club, MCC and any other interested parties as a fact finding and possible impact exercise.

Proposed: Cllr S Wilson, Seconded: Cllr T Christopher

For: 12, Against:3

Proposal agreed.

It was noted that agreement to set up a working group has been established to investigate the request, but no actual permission or agreement to the request has yet been considered or agreed. The working group will return and report back to Full Council.

The MTC members of the working group were confirmed as JH, SJW, RH, CM, TJC, SW. Initial Chair is to be Cllr White to arrange first meeting.

14. To discuss and respond to OVW Welsh language commissioner's draft enforcement policy (open to 10/11/14)

Cllr Owen reported that he had looked at the document and suggested a way forward may be for members to respond individually if they wish. Cllr Were confirmed that the document was not about statutory requirements already in place, but how those requirements could be enforced against non-compliance. It was confirmed that MTC had received minimal requests for Welsh language responses, but these had all been complied with.

It was proposed that the Council make no official response, but that members may do as individuals if they so wish.

Proposed: Cllr A Owen, Seconded: Cllr R Hayward

Proposal agreed unanimously

15. To consider and agree to contact MCC regarding charges at Waitrose car park (SC)

Mr Stephen Clarke had previously requested permission from the Chair to talk on this item

It was proposed to suspend Standing Orders to allow Mr Clarke to talk

Proposed: Cllr R Hayward, Seconded: Cllr G Pritchard

Unanimously agreed

Mr Clarke spoke about how he had presented at the Planning Inquiry of January 1993 when Waitrose applied to extinguish public footpaths across the car park. He believed it was agreed that car parking would be free for 2 hours, and 8 free parking spaces would be provided for users of the Chippenham doctors Surgery, and furthermore that there was no reference to the possibility of charging if MCC introduced charges in other car parks. Mr Clarke still has access to documents from the enquiry of the time and suggested that MCC had lost theirs. Cllr Munslow believed that his recollection of the 1993 enquiry was correct in that 2 hours of free parking and 8 free spaces for the surgery should remain with the loss of the footpaths. Mr Clarke suggested that Waitrose should give the cash generated to local charities, and that other local shops such as the Co-op still manage to retain free parking. He was corrected by members that Waitrose do contribute to local charities through the green token scheme in store.

Cllr Wilson expressed his anger at this agenda item in that Waitrose had obtained planning permission to charge for use of the car park, and these arguments were not raised at the Planning Committee then. He stated that Waitrose provided a good supermarket and jobs for the town, with many supermarkets charging for parking today. People had been taking advantage of the free parking offered, and the Town Council should be supporting businesses such as this in the town. If a proposal and vote be taken, he requested it be a named vote. Cllr Chivers retaliated that Waitrose got planning permission under false pretences and the parking charges equalled a form of discrimination against those who could not afford to shop there adding an extra £2.50 "levy". She hoped to ask MCC to initiate talks with Waitrose, but now felt this would be a waste of time. Cllr Chivers also claimed that 13 or 15 local family businesses had been forced to leave their premises as they couldn't compete with Waitrose. Cllr Pritchard suspected that Monmouth Waitrose turnover had decreased as a result of the new parking charges and suggested a "wait and see" approach.

Cllr Chivers, Cllr Owen and Cllr Dewhurst all commented that the previous barrier and booth system seemed to have worked well and was much fairer. Car drivers who had not shopped in Waitrose were still charged after a period, but it was much easier and convenient to use, especially by mothers with pushchairs, or disabled people for instance.

Cllr Chivers also pointed out that Waitrose staff were believed to use Chippenham Sports ground to park in, and were causing problems elsewhere.

Cllr White stated that she supported the scheme in that it enabled Waitrose customers in cars to now be able to park and find a space without long queues and waiting. She also believed that Waitrose had in many ways saved Monmouth and improved the town.

Cllr Hayward suggested that it was not appropriate for the Town Council to interfere with the way that Waitrose chose to operate. It did appear that the consensus was, that half hour parking was not long enough, but if there was evidence that people were expressing dissatisfaction by staying away, it was up to Waitrose to resolve. In general, most people expect to pay for parking if staying for a long time.

It was proposed to reinstate Standing Orders

Proposed: Cllr T Christopher, Seconded: Cllr R Hayward

Proposal unanimously agreed

Cllr Chivers withdrew her original agenda item proposal

16. To further discuss and consider potential devolution of services from MCC

Cllr Pritchard reported on a further meeting with MCC officers at County Hall attended by himself, Cllr Hayward and the Clerk on 20th October. It was similar to, and an update on the meeting Mr Hoggins and other MCC officers had held with MTC on 6th October regarding possible devolution of services from MCC to Town Councils.

He summarised that the MCC budget for next year is to be cut by 4.2%, with the aim to save £14million over the next 5 years. It is hoped to save at least £100,000 next year by devolving services to Town Councils, with an additional £100,000 saved this way over each of the next 4 years.

This £100,000 saving is envisaged to happen through Town Councils contributing in cash towards existing services, or by taking them over completely. The MCC preferred option is obviously payment contribution towards services which MCC would continue to line manage and take responsibility for training, payroll, insurance etc and be able to keep on existing staff and expertise available. Further detailed breakdowns for expenditure and costs in Monmouth have been promised to MTC and are awaited.

Cllr Pritchard reported that MCC intended to look at all avenues of reducing costs, not just through Town Council devolvement, but in approaching other organisations- for example Sports Associations, where MCC currently maintain bowling greens, tennis courts, sports pitches, and looking at transferring and reducing MCC maintenance costs involved.

Cllr Pritchard drew members attention to fact that the MTC precept is only a small part of the total Council Tax bill to residents.

Cllr Hayward confirmed that the Town Council had been approached by MCC last year too late to make any significant budgetary changes and take on devolved services from MCC. Next year will be the first that the MCC budget will be actively cut in real terms, and realistically, services will have to be cut.

He reported that the MCC Council Tax increase was planned at 3.95% which he believed to be politically motivated to keep under 4%, and would be more appropriate at 4.06%.

It was noted that Council tax payers are not generally concerned about the proportion of the bill that goes to different organisations, but only about the overall amount and increase they

are asked to pay. There appeared to be a certain amount of game playing as only, say a £10 increase in the MTC precept would make a headline figure of 6-7% increase, whereas the 3.95% increase in the MCC portion of the bill would be a much larger monetary value.

Members discussed that it was difficult at this stage to determine whether a service would be withdrawn without MTC funding or support agreed. It was suggested that the taking over of similar services in towns within the county should be considered in a more overall controlled manner, on a similar basis for each town. MCC appeared to be looking at the different possibilities as necessary for towns to implement individually by preference as an immediate aid to budgetary cuts necessary.

Cllr Pritchard confirmed, following discussion, that if current MCC services were contributed to, there should be specific controls and strings attached to safeguard the town council for audit purposes and to clearly identify that the funding provided is spent within Monmouth.

17. Items for discussion for future meetings

No further items raised.

18. To confirm meeting dates

Next meeting to be held on Monday 8th December 2014 at 7.00pm Shire Hall, Monmouth

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.40pm