

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday 31st July 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

PRESENT: County Councillor J. Prosser (Chairman)
County Councillor B. Strong (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Batrouni, G.C. Burrows, R.F. Chapman, P.R. Clarke, J.E. Crook, D.L.S. Dovey, G.L. Down, A. Easson, D. Edwards, D.J. Evans, P.S. Farley, P.A. Fox, R. J. W. Greenland, L. Guppy, Mrs. E. J. Hackett Pain, R.G. Harris, Hickman, R.J.Higginson, G. Howard, Mrs. P. Jones, Ms. S. Jones, S.B. Jones, R.P. Jordan, P. Murphy, Mrs. M. Powell, Mrs. V.E. Smith, B. Strong, Mrs. F. Taylor, A.C. Watts, P. Watts, Mrs. A.E. Webb, Mrs S. White, K. Williams and A.M. Wintle.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr P. Matthews	Chief Executive
Mr S. Burch	Chief Officer, Social Care and Health
Mr W. Mclean	Head of Policy and Engagement.
Mrs J. Robson	Head of Finance/Section 151 Officer
Mr S. Kneafsey	21 st Century Schools Programme Manager
Mr M. Andrews	Monitoring Officer
Mrs S. King	Senior Democratic Services Officer

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs S. Lightbound	CEO Monmouthshire Citizens Advice Bureau
J. Chohan	Cadet
R. Chohan	Cadet

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors D. Blakebrough, R. Edwards, J George, S. Howarth, P. Hobson, D. Jones, and J. Marshall.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AND RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

We received and noted the Chairman's report.

There were no petitions presented.

The Chairman welcomed cadets Joshua and Ruth Chohan.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillors D. Dovey, A. Easson, D. Evans, L. Guppy and S. White, declared personal interests pursuant to the members' code of conduct, as school governors, in relation to the 21st Century School report.

County Councillor S. White declared a personal interest pursuant to the members code of conduct, in relation to the presentation from the Citizens Advice Bureau.

County Councillor D. Edwards declared a personal interest pursuant to the members' code of conduct in relation to item 11(c).

4. MINUTES

a) Council Meeting 26th June 2014

We confirmed and signed the minutes of the meeting held on 26th June 2014.

- During discussion it was requested that information from the Community Health Council, sent to the Chief Executive and Leader, was passed to all members.

b) Extraordinary Council Meeting 8th July 2014

We resolved that the content of the minutes was not appropriate as a stand-alone document. Therefore, the minutes would be deferred for consideration at the next meeting.

5. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no public forum items received.

6. COMMITTEE MINUTES

We resolved that the following minutes be received:

- (a) Internal Monitoring Board 13th June 2014

7. NOTICES OF MOTION

a) Submitted by County Councillor P. Jones

'This Council thanks and supports the Conservative, Lib Dem partnership in progressing its 21st Century Schools programme. It recognises the commitment of the Partnership in funding half of the cost of the project. The Council thanks the Welsh Government for its financial contribution. It looks forward to the commencement of building work on the Caldicot and Monmouth schools in the coming months.

This Council supports the Partnership's commitment to a new and improved swimming pool for Monmouth and urges the Administration to minimise the inevitable period of disruption until the new pool is built and commissioned.'

In moving the motion, Councillor P. Jones emphasised the commitment to a new and improved swimming pool, with minimised disruption.

During the debate, the following points were noted:

- Some concerns and disappointment were expressed that the motion was politicised, it was noted that an amendment would be raised.
- Members required commitment regarding timescales for building a new pool and that it would be built simultaneously with the school.
- It was highlighted that there was a need for the best facilities for children and young people, however, the priority should be focused on the inside of the schools, quality of teaching and learning.
- A proportion of members felt that they would be unable to support the motion.
- We recognised that the process should not be rushed and schools should be built to be sustainable for the future.
- It was noted that the Cabinet decision would be subject to funding.

County Councillor R.G. Harris proposed an amendment to the motion, which was duly seconded, this became the substantive motion:

This Council supports the 21st century schools programme. It recognises the commitment of the partnership in funding half of the cost of the project. Thanks the Welsh government for initiating the project and committing nearly £1.4bn to deliver it, despite capital cuts from the Coalition government in Westminster.

This Council supports and is committed to a new and improved swimming pool for Monmouth and urges the partnership to build a new pool simultaneously with the new school, ensuring the pool is up and running as quickly as possible. It looks forward to the commencement of building work on the Caldicot and Monmouth schools in the coming months.

During debate the following points were noted:

- Members highlighted the importance of achieving high quality teaching and learning for young people.
- As whole, we noted that the Council supported 21st century school.
- We noted that the feasibility study was ongoing and further progress would be made once results were received.
- There was a requirement for a pool on the site as soon as possible.

Upon being put to the vote, the substantive motion was defeated.

County Councillor F. Taylor proposed an amendment to the original motion, which was duly seconded, this became the substantive motion:

'This Council thanks and supports the Conservative, Lib Dem partnership in progressing its 21st Century Schools programme. It recognises the commitment of the Partnership in funding half of the cost of the project. The Council thanks the Welsh Government for its financial contribution. It looks forward to the commencement of building work on the Caldicot and Monmouth schools in the coming months.

This Council is committed to the delivery of the pool at the same time as the school is built.

Members discussed substantive motion and the following points were noted:

- It was noted that the pool would be vitally important to people of Monmouthshire and the commitment had been made by Cabinet.
- Members requested that an additional report was submitted to full Council, detailing finances for the pool.
- We highlighted the importance of timescales being included within the project.

It was requested that a recorded vote was taken.

Votes were recorded as follows:

FOR: County Councillors Batrouni, Chapman, Crook, Easson, Evans, Farley, Harris, Higginson, Smith, Taylor, A. Watts, P. Watts, Williams and Wintle

AGAINST: County Councillors Burrows, Clarke, Dovey, D. Edwards, Fox, Greenland, Guppy, Hacket Pain, Howard, P. Jones, S. Jones, B. Jones, Jordan, Murphy, Powell, Prosser, Strong, Webb and White.

The substantive motion was defeated.

Members discussed the original motion and the following points were noted:

- Members were reminded that the executive had committed to the report and the preferred option must be viable to go forward.
- There was a need to reduce to absolute minimum period of closure for Monmouth, to ensure minimum disruption.
- It was reiterated, that there was a requirement for a report at the next Council meeting, which will identify the budget for pool and how it will be delivered.

Votes were recorded as follows:

FOR: County Councillors Burrows, Clarke, D. Edwards, Fox, Greenland, Guppy, Hacket Pain, Hickman, Howard, P. Jones, S. Jones, B. Jones, Jordan, Murphy, Powell, Prosser, Strong, Webb and White

AGAINST: County Councillors Chapman and Dovey.

ABSTAINED: County Councillors Batrouni, Down, Easson, Evans, Farley, Harris, Higginson, Smith, Taylor, A. Watts, P. Watts, Williams and Wintle.

b) Submitted by County Councillor K. Williams

“This coalition is committed to working together with opposition parties to achieve the best possible outcomes for residents throughout the county of Monmouthshire regardless of their political beliefs and voting preferences. In achieving this, council will send the decision by officers to turn street lighting off at midnight until 5am back to scrutiny via Strong Communities to further explore other, more suitable option to helping to achieve the savings proposed”.

Councillor G. Down left the meeting at 3.30pm.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- It was noted that some areas should be reconsidered, to gain further knowledge of streets and appropriateness of lighting.
- It was noted that significant engagement had been undertaken and further work would be done. It was recognised that some areas required lighting to remain.
- The Leader of the Council sympathised with the motion, however, the decision had been agreed as part of budget efficiencies.
- It was suggested that savings could be achieved through reducing consultant fees.
- A member noted that the equality impact assessment that accompanied the report was not sufficient.

Votes were recorded as follows:

FOR: County Councillors Batrouni, Chapman, Crook, Easson, Evans, Farley, Harris, Higginson, Smith, Taylor, A. Watts, P. Watts, Williams and Wintle.

AGAINST: County Councillors Burrows, Clarke, Dovey, D. Edwards, Fox, Greenland, Guppy, Hackett Pain, Hickman, Howard, P. Jones, S. Jones, B. Jones, Jordan, Murphy, Powell, Prosser, Strong, Webb and White

The motion was defeated.

(c) Submitted by County Councillor K. Williams

“This council is shocked and horrified to hear of the poisoning of family pets within the county using Anti-Freeze recently highlighted in The Abergavenny Chronicle in the Llanwenarth Ultra ward. It will commit to writing to both Welsh Government and UK Government departments to legislate for a bittering agent to mandatory in Anti-

freeze in the UK in order that family pets will not be tempted to consume poisoned food”.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Significant concern was expressed by all members that this product was being used.
- It was believed that active ingredient in anti-freeze was sweet and attractive to animals.
- We agreed that a letter would be sent to Welsh Government and Westminster asking that bitterants were added to anti-freeze to stop animals being poisoned.

Upon being put to the vote the motion was unanimously carried.

Councillor Clarke left the meeting at 4.20pm.

8. PRESENTATION CEO MONMOUTHSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

We welcomed Mrs S. Lightbound, CEO , Monmouthshire Citizens Advice Bureau, we were presented with information regarding the service and the following points were noted:

- Abergavenny, Caldicot and Chepstow Offices were merged on 30th September 2013. Gone through commissioning process and revamped and restructured. Paired down to lean structure, all part time 5 officers and service in county is part time. Monmouth Bureau is stand alone and subcontracted.
- As countywide service, maintained office in Abergavenny, Chepstow and Caldicot. One change is that service is now available 5 days a week. Also part of wales wide advice line service, any advice available 9am -4.30pm and recorded outside that time.
- Clients come with 6500 issues and number of contacts 5700, figures broken down give an increase of nearly 7% in last quarter. Debt is major area of concern. 227 clients seen by one caseworker and dealt with over £1million of debt, funding had been lost for the caseworker post, trying to replace with a combination of volunteers and part time staff.
- Use facilities and refer to housing association due to stretch on housing service, trying hard to make service countywide. Instead of 3 or 4 separate offices, have an advice service to all citizens of Monmouthshire outreach and doctor surgery.
- Significant recruitment programme, officer has huge training plan to deliver service that is desired. Nearly 60 volunteers are in place, however, twice the number would be sufficient.

- Aim to spread the word and increase awareness. Working collaboratively to ensure that citizens of Monmouthshire receive advice they need when they are at the most vulnerable.

During discussion we noted the following points:

- We thanked the officer for attending and presenting the information.
- The Cabinet Member provided thanks and commended the team for facilitating merged bureau and commissioning process. Monmouthshire Council were pleased to be able to continue to support the service. Members were urged to support the entity.
- The importance of the service was recognised and concerns were expressed that funding had been cut.
- It was suggested that members could assist in lobbying and any support, written representations of knowledge of areas of deprivation would be useful. Problems identified in Monmouthshire, because of areas of relative affluence the areas of deprivation get over ruled. Need help in identifying them and supporting.
- The service received cross party support and members understood the difficulties and challenges that were faced.
- The Cabinet Member advised that there should be a way to help the community look after themselves. Community coordinators were in post and could assist in mapping out people who are out there and contact details would be provided to the CAB in relation to assistance from volunteers.
- Members discussed the possibility of support from other avenues e.g. community councils. We were informed that this avenue was being explored across the county.
- Debt issues and loans were recognised as a significant problem. It was disappointing that the money advice service funding had been removed and members would work with colleagues to coordinate response and lobby.
- Housing issues were intrinsic and there were problems across the board. Funding was providing but only for advice. The aim was to recruit housing support officer, however, further funding was needed.
- Challenges for community, figures are staggering. Debt is horrible thing. Physical effect and horrible, want to work together and want relationships in place and strengthened. Not specific questions, but thanks for time and service and to share we'll do whatever possible to lobby for support needed.

We expressed thanks to the CEO and team. Citizens Advice was a valued service that people could use, however, members were frustrated that the service was not always recognised.

9. 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

We received the Cabinet report and log dated 16th July 2014, the purpose of which was:

1. To include the 21st Century Schools development programme in the Councils Capital Programme.
2. To establish the best option in the development of Monmouth Comprehensive School.
3. To re-allocation of the funds associated with the Welsh Medium Secondary Provision from 2015-2016 to 2018-2019 (within the agreed Band A funding period)
4. To extend the current secondment arrangements for two employees currently seconded to the 21st century schools project.

The Chief Executive clarified that Council were asked to include the 21st Century Schools programme in the capital programme. Officers would need to undertake work by September, for a viable way forward.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the purpose of the report was to move the budget for 21st Century Schools to the capital programme. This would be a significant building project for schools and the 21st Century Team were thanked for the work that had been involved and engagement undertaken.

During discussion we noted the following points:

- Some members felt that information should have been available sooner.
- Discussions were held regarding the options included within the report and some members felt that the information should have been provided at an earlier date.
- We were advised that three options had been considered and Option 2 was the preferred option for development.
- It was recognised that significant work and engagement had been involved in the project and officers were commended.

We resolved to endorse the report and agreed that the appropriate elements would be included in the capital project.

10. STANDING ORDERS RELATING TO STAFF

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 ("the Regulations") came into force on 1 July. They require the council to revise its existing standing orders in so far as is necessary to conform with the amendments made by the Regulations by no later than 9 September 2014. The Regulations amend earlier (2006) regulations relating to the process for appointing, dismissing and conducting disciplinary investigations of certain officers.

We noted that there was currently only one chief officer who had been appointed at an annual remuneration of £100,000 or more.

We resolved to agree the recommendation, that the Monitoring Officer is authorised to make such changes to the Council's Constitution as will give effect to the regulations.

County Councillors Jordan, Webb and White left 17.05pm

11. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

(a) From County Councillor A. Easson to County Councillor B. Jones

"Would Cllr Jones provide me with details of contacts and consultation made between the Highways Department and Network Rail ,with regard to the Electrification of the South Wales railway line from Paddington to Swansea. In particular discussions regarding any work required on bridges on the Monmouthshire Section of the line. How many meetings have taken place and to what depth does any written correspondence relate to projected time frames for any works. Furthermore who, if any, Senior Officers have met with Network Rail in any formal or informal capacity regarding this matter."

In response we noted:

- The Cabinet Member advised that the responsible officer was on leave and a response would be provided on his return.

(b) From County Councillor A. Easson to County Councillor B. Jones

"Would Cllr Jones provide me with details of the time-scale for a programme of works in my Ward, committed to by Highways in relation to road safety, to which I am still awaiting details of completion . The first four are issues directly linked to the safety of children attending Dewstow School ,and have not been addressed to the satisfaction of parents..

- 1) 20 mph zoning of Birbeck Road, and Beech Road.
- 2) 20 mph zoning of New Road, Fernleigh Road , The Close and Woodland View.
- 3) Active physical restrictions to prevent disregard for the one-way system on Woodland View.
- 4) A programme of works , timescale and funding for a pedestrian crossing adjacent to Cherry Trees on the B4245. (this is not in my Ward ,but directly affects residents of my Ward, who cannot cross the B4245 road with confidence). The B4245 carries in the region of 4.00 million traffic movements every year, far higher than some other A roads in Monmouthshire that have crossing facilities and with far less traffic movements.
- 5) The completion of residents parking bays in Herbert Road, which was agreed and costed in collaboration with MHA.

I have waited far too long for resolution of these matters ,I would seek positive assurances from yourself regarding their completion."

In response we noted:

- The Cabinet Member advised that in relation to 1 and 2, were put on hold due to 20mph draft order, subject to statutory consultation it was anticipated that it would soon be delivered.

- In relation to 3, Woodland View enforcement were matters for Gwent Police and would soon be implemented.
- In relation to 4, Recent on site discussions had been held in relation to a pedestrian crossing at Cherry Tree. The local members were considering options for funding.
- Further information would be requested from Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA) in relation to 5.

(c) From County Councillor A. Easson to County Councillor P. Hobson

“At full Council on January 16th 2014, the decision to sanction Health and Safety works at Park Street School, prior to handing the property over to ACT was confirmed after an earlier call-in. The decision included the apportionment of £56,000 to the total cost of these works.

Would Cllr Hobson provide a detailed update to Council, on works so far completed, works outstanding ,with timescale for their , the cost expended to date on these works. Does he expect there to be any overrun on costs, if so where will the funding come from.

Furthermore, in anticipation of a successful conclusion to these works by Mon CC to make the building safe for hand-over, is he aware of any external grants providers that have given firm promises to further the ambitions of ACT.”

We resolved that the question would be deferred as the Cabinet member was not present.

The meeting ended at 5.20 p.m.

ACTION LIST
MEETING OF MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
31st JULY 2014

MINUTE NUMBER AND SUBJECT	ACTION TO BE TAKEN	TO BE ACTIONED BY	PROGRESS
4a. MINUTES 26TH JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions held regarding Community Health Council. Information passed to Chief Executive and Leader, to be forwarded to all members. 	Chief Executive and Leader Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing progress required
4b. MINUTES EXTRAORDINARY MEETING 8TH JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members felt the minutes were inappropriate as a stand-alone document. • Minutes to be re-written and approved at September Council 	Democratic Services / Monitoring Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed (minutes on agenda).
7. NOTICE OF MOTION <i>'This Council thanks and supports the Conservative, Lib Dem partnership in progressing its 21st Century Schools programme. It recognises the commitment of the Partnership in funding half of the cost of the project. The Council thanks the Welsh Government for its financial contribution. It looks forward to the commencement of building work on the Caldicot and Monmouth schools in the coming months.</i> <i>This Council supports the Partnership's commitment to a new and improved swimming pool for Monmouth and urges the</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional report required regarding financial implications and timescales for the new pool • Report to be presented to September Council 	21 st Century Schools Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed (report on agenda).

<p><i>Administration to minimise the inevitable period of disruption until the new pool is built and commissioned.'</i></p>			
<p>7. NOTICE OF MOTION <i>"This council is shocked and horrified to hear of the poisoning of family pets within the county using Anti-Freeze recently highlighted in The Abergavenny Chronicle in the Llanwenarth Ultra ward. It will commit to writing to both Welsh Government and UK Government departments to legislate for a bittering agent to mandatory in Anti-freeze in the UK in order that family pets will not be tempted to consume poisoned food".</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members were appalled to learn that some household pets had been poisoned using anti-freeze. It was believed that the main agent was sweet and attractive to animals. • Letter to be sent to Welsh Government and Westminster encouraging manufacturers to use a bitter agent in the product 	<p>Democratic Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed
<p>11(c). MEMBERS' QUESTIONS <i>"At full Council on January 16th 2014, the decision to sanction Health and Safety works at Park Street School, prior to handing the property over to ACT was confirmed after an earlier call-in. The decision included the apportionment of £56,000 to the total cost of these works.</i> <i>Would Cllr Hobson provide a detailed update to Council, on works so far completed, works outstanding ,with timescale for their , the cost expended to date on these works. Does he expect there to be any overrun on costs, if so where will the funding come from.</i> <i>Furthermore, in anticipation of a successful conclusion to these works by Mon CC to make the building safe for hand-over, is he aware of any external grants providers that have given firm promises to further the ambitions of ACT."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Councillor Easson to Councillor Hobson • To be deferred to September 	<p>Democratic Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed (included on agenda)