

DRAFT MINUTES FOR 13th March 2023

Minutes of the Council meeting held at Village Hall on Monday 13th March 2023 from 19:00 hrs

1. Councillors Present -:

- a. Mathern: - Cllrs. Matt Sidwell, Jayne Harris
- b. County Councillor: - Louise Brown,
- c. Mounton: - Chair - Cllr Carolyn Ovenden.
- d. Pwllmeyric: - Cllr James Anderson, Cllr S Stevens
- e. Clerk: - Mrs. Jane Kelley

2. Councillors Apologies:-

- a. Mathern: - Cllr. David Harris
- b. Mounton: - None
- c. Pwllmeyric: Cllr Gareth Page

3. Members of the Public: -

- a. None

4. Public Representative: -

- a. None

5. Police Representative

- a) None

71/22 PROCEDURAL ITEMS

1. Public Comment: -

An email has been received regarding concern for speeding cars through Mathern village especially around the Nursery area and village park.

It was suggested that a speed camera be installed.

Clerk advised to contact Shirenewton C C who have a link for villagers to complete any concerns about speeding vehicles direct to Go Safe. They will, if felt needed, arrange for speed checks to be carried out.

Public can email

www.gosafe.org

with any concerns and they will investigate.

2. Received Monthly Police Report: -

15/2/2023 – Report of a fenced off compound at the rear of the Millers Arms broken into and a van parked near also broken into sometime between 3/2/2023 and 14/2/2023. 6 x 20 litres of cooking oil, soft drinks amongst other items taken from the locked compound and several tools etc taken from the van. The lock was broken off the compound to gain entry.

17/2/2023 – Report of a 2 vehicle RTC (road traffic collision) on the lane between Moun-ton and Shirenewton. Minor injuries to the vehicles and one female went to hospital to be checked out.

26/2/2023 – Report of a moored yacht at St Pierre Pill boarded and items including a socket set taken overnight.

Jane, I have added the paperwork as requested for the Safer Neighbourhood letter and leaflet. All you need to know is explained and who to contact if you would like to have an input from our We Don't Buy Crime colleagues.

We will try our best to attend at the coffee morning on Saturday the 1st of April so hopefully will see some of you there.

3. Apologies: -

Councillor D Harris and Councillor G Page

4. Declarations of Personal or Pecuniary Interest: -

Councillor Jayne Harris re. Agenda no. 76/22

Item **DM/2023/00316** The Old Builders Yard – Conversion and extension of an uninsulated outbuilding to form ancillary accommodation to serve the main dwelling.

Cllr Harris left the room whilst this was discussed

5. Minutes of the previous meeting: -

- a. **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting 13th February 2023 as true and accurate records. These were signed by Cllr C Ovenden.

72/22 Finance

- a. **To consider approval of payments as per below. All approved.**
- b. **Monthly Bank Reconciliation authorisation (February 2023).** Cllr M Sidwell authorised.
- c. **2021/22 External Audit by the Wales Audit Office**

Still not received. Email sent – Clerk has telephoned to chase. No return calls

Clerk to email One Voice Wales (OVW) to see if they can assist getting this finalised.

Receipts February 2023 None

<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Value £</i>
28 02 2023	<i>Inland Revenue</i>	208.75
28 02 2023	<i>J Kelley</i>	599.04
28 02 2023	<i>Viking (ink cartridge)</i>	74.10
10 03 2023	<i>Telephone /Internet</i>	55.99
20 03 2023	<i>Planning Aid Wales (Training) Cllr G Page</i>	40.00
20 03 2023	<i>First Stop (printing What's On leaflet)</i>	85.50

73/22 PROGRESS REPORT ON ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

Responses to queries raised at previous meetings

a. Any update from MCC re Palace Farm activities

Teams meeting took place on 6th March, 2023. Further investigation was agreed. A follow up Teams meeting arranged for 17th April, 2023

b. Update Welsh Water Meeting re Mounon Meadows

Teams meeting took place on 6th March 2023.
Further lining work needed to be carried out on the sewer pipe and a further meeting agreed for 05 06 2023.

c. Actions re introduction of a Community Plan

Matter to be discussed at the coffee morning.

d. Mathern Directory progress

Councillor J Harris is working on this as a paper leaflet to be distributed to all houses in our community. The leaflet was circulated for Cllrs to check details.

It was then agreed that the leaflet would be printed locally on coloured card at a cost of approximately £90.00

e. County Council Budget Meeting MCC 9th March – any future consultations.

Councillor M Sidwell represented the Community Council at the Budget meeting and his question was:

Question for Monmouthshire County Council in relation to proposed budget cuts for School Transport.

Expecting children as young as 4 to walk for an hour each way from Mathern to their school, along a busy trunk road where the footpath width doesn't allow 2 people to walk side by side for safety, and without safe crossing points on the A48 seems both dangerous and impractical.

Barriers to school transport could result in an additional 25 vehicles each journey on Pwllmeyric Hill and Larkfield roundabout, 2 already heavily congested pinch points for Chepstow, resulting in significantly increased congestion and pollution for a town already crippled by such problems.

How do MCC intend to manage their Health & Safety obligations, environmental impact guidelines and protect families already struggling with the current cost of living crisis and rising bills?

Meeting comments to this:

- For the distance to be amended to the statutory level a full consultation would be required. This would take place in October 2023.
- Monmouthshire C C would ensure that local residents are made aware of this consultation.

74/22 HIGHWAYS/FOOTPATHS

- a. *Footpath Issues: - None*
- b. *Any other issues to be report to highways*
 - *Large pot holes – Mathern Lane*
 - *Large potholes – Mounton village*
 - *Mud on Road - Chapel Lane*
 - *Large pot hole – Mathern Village past pumping station coming into the village just past second lamppost.*

75/22 COUNCILLORS REPORTS/CLERK REPORTS

- a. *OVW – Awaiting details of next meeting*
- b. *Defibrillators - monthly checks all completed and working*
- c. *County Councillors Report*

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT MARCH 2023

County Councillor Brown advised:

Budget 2023/24

Cabinet on the 1st of March 2023

In terms of changes on the budget as a result of the consultation the current changes in the final proposals are set out in paragraph 3.32 of the Cabinet report.

- a) *Cabinet is fully aware and acknowledging of the risks regarding deliverability of savings within adult social care, and in the face of demographic challenge and the ongoing ripple effects of the pandemic and pressures within health. To that end and consistent with concerns raised by residents and member scrutiny, £1m of savings will now be delayed into 2024/25 and subsequently reassessed.*
- b) *To now limit the increase in before school clubs from £1 to £2 per day to only the first child, thus ensuring that families with more than one child are not disproportionately impacted.*
- c) *To remove the proposed increase in the concessionary fee for home to school transport.*
- d) *To remove the proposal for an annual subscription of £30 for users of the Grass Roots bus service, and in light of recent funding announcements causing uncertainty on what type of bus services can be sustainably delivered in Monmouthshire.*
- e) *To remove a proposed increase in the licence fees for pavement cafés and to ensure that businesses are supported to flourish in our town centres and across Monmouthshire.*
- f) *To remove a proposed reduction in opening hours in leisure centres during the summer months, leaving it*

to the service to undertake ongoing review and to ensure that services are responding to customer demands.

- g) To confirm that opening hours at community hubs will now no longer be reduced, albeit community hubs will still be operated with reduced staffing levels as planned.
- h) The removal of a proposed saving to delete a post in the internal audit team resulting from feedback received from the Governance & Audit Committee and concern that the level of audit coverage will fall below acceptable levels.
- i) Further investment is made in the capital programme, and that will result in additional investment in our highways infrastructure and specifically £500k in 2023/24 and each of the subsequent three years of the capital MTFP for pothole repair.
- j) Capital investment of £50,000 to allow for surveys and assessments to be undertaken of bridges across the Council's public rights of way network, and to ensure that a risk-based approach is being taken to maintain assets and keep the network safe.

The proposals currently include a 5.95% rise in Council Tax.

The following is the link to the Cabinet report of the 1st of March 2023:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=144&MId=4986>

The end of the meeting discussed ECO4 and ECO4 Flex energy efficiency and the eligibility for low-income households to ask for help.

Home to School Transport Savings Proposals

Current Policy

As per the Learner Travel Measure and Monmouthshire's Transport Policy free home to school transport is now only provided to pupils who attend their catchment or nearest school and live more than 1.5 miles from their Primary School and more than 2 miles from their Secondary School. These distances relate to the shortest available walking route between home and school, accompanied by an adult if necessary.

Proposed Savings Policy

The above proposals for school transport changes means limiting free home to school transport down to the statutory distances. It would then apply to children who live more than 2 miles from their Primary school and more than 3 miles from their Secondary school.

Impact in the Shirenewton Ward

Restriction to Statutory Distance with Walking Route Available

This first change which may impact 131 pupils across Monmouthshire of which 3 pupils are currently in the Shirenewton Ward, 2 at Pwllmeyric and 1 at Mounton for the primary school.

Proposed Restriction to Statutory Distance with no available walking route- 24/25

In the second phase of school bus cuts, which may impact 197 pupils across Monmouthshire of which 18 are currently in the Shirenewton Ward, 9 in Mathern for the Secondary school, 2 in Pwllmeyric and 1 in Mounton for the primary school and 1 in Shirenewton and 5 in Earlswood for the primary school.

The aim would be to take active travel measures to make such routes available walking routes by

highways measures.

Concessionary places on school buses may be available when statutory places are allocated at a current cost of £440 per annum per pupil.

The Final Budget proposals are to be considered by a full council meeting on the 9th of March 2022, so potentially subject to change.

When I raised concerns at the meeting on the 2nd of March about cuts in school transport, the response from the administration was that it is in line with other Local Authorities on restricting to statutory distances.

Despite the proposals being in the budget there will be a consultation later in the year on these proposals prior to any implementation when residents can make representations.

Changes to the Budget on the 9th of March 2023

The revisions to savings and pressures are summarised as follows as a result of negotiation with the main opposition group, with the council tax increase remaining at 5.95%:

- To remove the £70k saving that had been proposed for an additional charge for before school clubs on reflection of impact upon working families who rely on the service.
- To remove the £81k saving in relation to the Education Psychology Service, and the £30k saving in Additional Learning Needs (ALN) administration in order to maintain the level of support for our most vulnerable pupils.
- A reduction in the proposed saving in relation to the Gwent Music Service subsidy of £39k that will allow Schools to maintain projects and creative classroom activities. This enables whole class tuition in all disciplines across Monmouthshire Schools effectively free of charge. This will include pupils eligible through benefits for free school meals and refugees.
- To reduce Neighbourhood Services savings by £40k in order to maintain the services provided by the Community Improvement team and to work with Town and Community Councils to continue to develop the valuable grounds maintenance, street cleansing and clearance services across the County and with a wide range of projects across Monmouthshire.
- A commitment to undertake an operational review of littering and dog fouling with up to £25k earmarked for implementing a range of proposals for tackling verge side and town centre littering, along with enhanced monitoring and enforcement measures such as cameras at known litter and fly tipping hotspots being considered.

Performance and Overview Committee on the 27th of February 2023

Empty and Second Homes

Pre-decision scrutiny of the Council Tax Premiums Consultation: Long Term Empty Properties and Second

Homes - To consider the findings of the public consultation exercise on introducing council tax premiums from 1st April 2024.

This committee considered a report on empty and second homes with the recommendations:

- That the Council use its discretionary powers to introduce a council tax premium for long term empty properties on a sliding scale from 100% to 300% effective from 1st April 2024. With a 100% premium applying to properties empty for 1 year, a 200% premium to properties empty

for 2 years and a 300% premium to properties empty for 3 years or more.

- *That the Council use its discretionary powers to introduce a council tax premium for second homes of 100% from 1st April 2024 and will give further consideration to the impact on the local economy before utilising that power.*

The premium would be in addition to the full council tax, the idea of which is to get properties available for occupation. There are 400 empty properties and 190 second homes in Monmouthshire. There will continue to be the following exceptions:

- *Class 1 - dwellings being marketed for sale - this exception is time-limited for one year.*
- *Class 2 - dwellings being marketed for let - this exception is time-limited for one year.*
- *Class 3 - annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling.*
- *Class 4 - dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation.*
- *Class 5 - occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings (second homes only).*
- *Class 6 - seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited (second homes only).*
- *Class 7 - job-related dwellings (second homes only).*

The Committee discussion was centred upon the Council using its discretion in addition to the above general exceptions and any appeals process for example where progress on the property was delayed by planning. The Committee considered this report as part of pre-decision scrutiny.

The following is the link to the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=305&MIId=5645>

County Council on the 9th of March 2023

The County Council on the 9th of March considered the above report and the minority administration approved the above recommendations on the council tax premiums for empty and second homes, taking account of the feedback from the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee. The following is the link to the County Council meeting on the 9th of March 2023.

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=143&MIId=5014>

Welsh Government Proposals for a council tax revaluation

David Davies, MP has set up a Senedd petition calling on the Welsh Government to reject their proposals for a council tax revaluation. This consultation shows that nearly 4 out of 10 homeowners in Monmouthshire will move up a band and face paying £100s more each year in council tax, while less than 1 out of 10 would pay less by moving down a band. You have until the 19th of April to sign this petition should you wish to do so. An upward change in banding and/ or revaluation is likely to mean more council tax on top of the yearly increases. Residents already face an unfair council tax burden because it is the lowest funded local authority area in Wales. The shortfall between what is received from the Welsh Labour Government and what the council spends is made up by council tax. The Welsh Government contributed £1300 per head of population to Monmouthshire County Council 23/24, compared to an average sum of £1756 over the 22 Local Authorities in Wales.

The link for the petition can be found here: <https://petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/245288>

d. Update of policies/ Policies currently under review

Draft Biodiversity Statement – IT Policy – Stress Management Policy - Complaints Policy.
(completed).

Email received from OVW on 27th February 2023 Re bio diversity statement – Councillor S Stevens to check and clerk to agenda for next meeting

Complaints Policy updated with Chairman's details

e. Updating of Statutory Policies

IT Policy nearing completion, together with Stress Management.

f. Finance and Governance toolkit for Community Councils
Draft vision Statement

- *To act as the grass roots of local democracy in an open manner, accessible to all.*
- *To work with and liaise with other agencies for the benefit of the community.*
- *To work with and liaise with community groups in the area for the benefit of all.*
- *To be a voice of the local needs to Government units.*
- *To preserve, develop and enhance the identity and environment of the area.*
- *To be proactive in providing new services as well as reactive in resolving community concerns.*

It was resolved to agree this as our Vision Statement.

g. H R – Clerks DSE Risk Assessment completed.

Clerk to arrange an eye test for DSE use. This to be written into our policy as a statutory duty with cost to the Community Council for new glasses if required agreed by all councillors.

76/22 PLANNING APPLICATIONS – Plus any applications received after Agenda is issued.

- a. *New applications – DM/2023/00316 The Old Builders Yard – Conversion and extension of an uninsulated outbuilding to form ancillary accommodation to serve the main dwelling.*

No Comments

- b. *Decisions and Appeals – None*

- c. *Enforcement - None*

77/22 CORRESPONDENCE AND FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Coffee Morning 1st April 2023

14 02 2023 Draft Vision Statement Cllr M Sidwell – resolved 13 03 2023
14 02 2023 Rhewll and 2 requests for update on grants given – response sent
14 02 2023 Request for old school records from a public member – Cllr J Anderson happy to create a copy for any residents who wish to have this.
15 02 2023 Details needed re budget meeting re school transport
16 02 2023 Copy of response to villager re draft budget changes
16 02 2023 Planning Aid Wales – Planning event – invitation 23 02 2023 – Cllr G Page to attend.
16 02 2023 Ty Hyfon grant request - No grant agreed
17 02 2023 MCC response to Clerk H Pearson re speaking at budget meetings 2nd and 9th March -
17 02 2023 Vacancy Clerk at Wentwood C C
19 02 2023 Response – Governor of Dell School re draft budget cuts
20 02 2023 Section 6 Report update from OVW – re bio diversity policy. Ongoing. To be agendaed for April
20 02 2023 OVW training list for March
21 02 2023 Open Spaces Protection Order - dog controls in Monmouthshire
23 02 2023 Agreed Clerk's timesheet - Cllr C Ovenden and Clerk

Coffee Morning 1st April 2023

Topics to be agreed. Suggested:

Coronation Orchard – Litter picking – Community Plan (speaker). Effect of budget changes and any future consultations.

Agreed: Local Police to attend, Community Plan to be discussed to check feasibility of completing this with local groups.

Coronation Orchard/Charity of Charles Pratt details to be circulated.

Clerk to check with OVW re. completing a local litter pick whilst loaning equipment re. CC's responsibility for public safety.

Suggestion: if we are unable to complete our own litter picks that we contact Transco Wales who complete regular litter picks in Chepstow.

78/22 OTHER MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

Development flooding and coastal erosion (TAN 15) consultation to be completed 17 04 2023.

Clerk has asked Cllr G Page to complete this

Community Resilience - Climate Emergency–

Ongoing. Agenda for next meeting – all to look at Monmouthshire Council template.

Councillor Allowance Forms – All returned

Outdoor education –

Cllr J Harris attended a Zoom presentation on this. Welsh Government are proposing a one week Outdoor Residential experience for all school aged pupils – matter to be further discussed in November 2023.

Items for Website

Update of policies to be included when agreed – Vision Statement to be uploaded. Also updated – Complaints Policy with Cllr D Harris details.

79/22 PROJECTS AWAITING COMPLETION

1. Installation of new defibrillator at Village Hall.

Electricity due to be installed Friday 17th March then clerk to advise to arrange delivery of defibrillator

2. Installation of community litter picking equipment

This was discussed. Councillors now feel that this would be better as an arranged and agreed event. Clerk to check with OVW/ CC insurance policy re CC liability should a resident have an accident.

3. Coffee Morning 1st April

Items:

- Litter picking
- Community plan
- Budget changes and possible implications
- Coronation Orchard
- Charity of Charles Pratt Details to be circulated.
- Local Police representation.

80/22 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Next meeting: 17th April 2023 Mathern Village Hall at 7 pm

Signed: _____

Dated: _____