



CHEPSTOW TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Extraordinary Meeting** of Chepstow Town Council held via Zoom on Thursday, 10th March 2022 at 7pm

Present:

Chair: Cllr T Kirton

Councillors: H Beach, M Brady, J Becker, J Brews (left 7.37pm), C Duchet, A Horne, A Redhead, D Rooke, A Watts (7.10pm)

Apologies: A Braund, Y Havard

In Attendance: Mrs L Allen (Town Clerk)
Mrs A Sandiford (Deputy Town Clerk)
Peter Davies (PD), Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Monmouthshire County Council (MCC)
Richard Davies (RD), Head of Torfaen and Monmouthshire Revenues and Benefits
Mike Moran (MM), Community Infrastructure Coordinator
Mal Edgson (ME), Chief Executive Officer, Monmouthshire Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

184. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda

None

185. To Suspend Standing Orders

a) Cost of Living Crisis

Standing Orders were suspended to allow Members to discuss the escalation of Chepstow's food and fuel poverty crisis with Richard Davies, Peter Davies, Mike Moran and Mal Edgson.

See Appendix A below

Normal proceedings resumed

186. Date of Next Meeting

Confirmed that the next Ordinary Meeting will be held on Wednesday 23rd March 2022 at 7.00pm via Zoom remote meetings.

CLOSE: This completed the business of the meeting 8.50pm

SIGNED CHAIRPERSON _____ **DATE:** _____

Appendix A

Members discussed the escalation of Chepstow's food and fuel poverty crisis with Richard Davies, Peter Davies, Mike Moran and Mal Edgson Introductions were carried out.

The following items were discussed:

- Welsh Government (WG) support schemes provided around the pandemic.
- Partnership working between Chepstow Town Council (CTC) and MCC to support a variety of initiatives
- MCC is working with data analyst teams looking at inequality in Monmouthshire.
- Pre-election period will impact but there is expectation to bring forward proposed interventions to sit aside elements of support from UK Government and Welsh Government (WG)
- WG is looking to introduce a main scheme element for a cost of living support package of £152 million across 22 Local Authorities (LAs) in Wales plus a discretionary fund of £25m across Wales, to be administered by LAs on WG behalf.
- WG not looking to instigate a claw back mechanism on the £152m.
- Unclaimed funds (from £152m) will be added to the £25m for discretionary use.
- Council tax bands A-D, and those in support of Council tax reduction entitlement will receive a £150 payment.
- A disappointing take-up of approximately 40% in Monmouthshire for the Winter Fuel Support scheme which closed on 28.2.22, however Council will entertain late applications due to applicants' vulnerability. Works are ongoing to identify those who are eligible.
- Schemes to be devised that can be suitably targeted to those most impacted by the cost of living crisis.
- Division of funding was clarified.
- January/February 2022 had the highest demand and most number of issue raised with CAB in Chepstow area over past 5 years.
- Agencies need to work more together to make sure people are claiming what they are entitled to. A lot of people are unfamiliar with the benefit system and are making errors in the way they are navigating it.
- Covid-19 pandemic depleted CAB advice volunteers. Chepstow CAB only open 2 days/week as not enough advice volunteers for longer period.
- 'Holiday hunger'.
- WG is looking to further extend level of support through Easter and summer holidays – free school meal payments to eligible families will continue and WG is looking to make free school meals universal for primary school children.
- School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) is being replaced by Food and Fun School Holiday Enrichment Programme. Originally intended to provide free breakfast and lunch for those attending the SHEP scheme
- £25,000 funding for play provision to include food in half term sessions.
- 14,400 free meals provided across Monmouthshire during the last summer period (4 weeks).
- CTC very supportive of play provision in Chepstow.
- Food becoming more recognised in play world.
- WG funding for Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing not available in new financial year resulting in the loss of £300,000.

- It was requested if MCC could cover the extra staffing costs for breakfast clubs – *PD to take query away and respond to Clerk.*
- Carers – WG is looking to provide further support for carers in recognition of the challenges of retention and recruitment in that environment.
- WG has provided significant funding to housing options/housing teams to work with those potentially affected by eviction.
- Going forward more strategic planning across Monmouthshire is needed.
- Housing issue and workforce needs to be addressed.
- Challenges of affordable housing, homelessness and sufficiency of temporary accommodation. MCC is working closely with WG and Registered Social Landlords (RSL) to be creative and innovative to acquire or retrofit properties to make fit for purpose – lot of work to be done.
- MCC is working on a leaflet to be distributed to all homes signposting help and assistance during cost of living crisis.
- CTC has funded £5,000 towards signposting support services.
- CTC to assist in the signposting of support services and available resources on its website as they arise.