

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2009- MAY 2010

During the year the Community Affairs Committee has been consolidating on-going commitments and also initiating some interesting new ones.

Attik, the C.A.B. and the Festival are all financially supported by the Town Council and this contribution is monitored by the Committee. All three invaluable organisations are working extremely hard to meet the challenges of reduced funding from elsewhere.

The Summer Play Activities run by MCC were reduced at Monmouth Leisure Centre, partly due to the Committee's reduced support. However after inviting the relevant County officers and Cabinet members to a frank discussion in the autumn, we felt that we could reasonably justify restoring the Town Council's financial contribution for summer 2010. This year it has been increased to £5,000

Some very original entries processed cheerfully down Monnow Street in the Summer Carnival, unperturbed by the torrential rain. The event flourishes due to the linking of Festival and Carnival funding and the commitment of a small, determined group. The Christmas Candelight event was also very successful, the result, as ever, of a huge number of volunteers. Choirs from both Kymin View and Whitchurch Primary schools performed beautifully. The Orange community shop kindly hosted Father Christmas's grotto.

Community Grants of up to £750 were awarded to twelve local voluntary groups at an enjoyable evening at the Priory where each could give a brief description of their work and took the opportunity to network.

We continue to play an active part in the Users' Focus Group of Monnow Vale. Things are settling after the major changes within the new Aneurin Bevan Health Board.

Progress continues to be made by the Day Services Remodelling Group, after the major review of facilities for Service Users at the Day Centre. This is the result of last year's hard-won campaign by the users, with the Committee's support.

Work to restore some kind of presence in Monmouth in place of the Jobcentre has also continued. Our petition in 'Support of the Unemployed in Monmouth' has been heard four times by the National Assembly's Petition Committee. By using the first-hand evidence we send them, the Assembly has challenged Jobcentreplus management, in Cardiff and the Minister for Work and Pensions in Westminster, as it is not a devolved responsibility. Evidence from local people and Monmouthshire Libraries has been greatly strengthened by more from Monmouth CAB, who week by week has to cope with the consequences of the Jobcentre's closure and who volunteered its support. One of the Assembly's Petition Committee likened this frustrating campaign to 'pushing an elephant up hill', but they continue to make investigations on Monmouth's behalf. MCC and the One Stop Shop staff are constant in their support. They demonstrated the daily problems caused by the Jobcentre telephone to a member of the management from Cardiff HQ. We were also heartened by the MCC Chief Executive's promise, when he undertook to work for a 'presence' for Jobseekers here.

Two new initiatives have been much quicker to realise. Firstly Cllr's Munslow and Bond represented Monmouth in Landerneau, Brittany, this month. There they joined representatives of other European towns with inhabited bridges. Ours seems to be the oldest! They did an excellent P.R. job, taking photos, music, souvenirs and samples of locally produced wine and cider. The Committee is grateful to both councillors, who went at their own expense and gave a lively presentation on their return.

The second project, called 'A Day in the Life' is now underway. During the week 26th June-2nd July a snapshot record of everyday life in Monmouth, will be made by delegated local photographers. School, businesses, group and street life will be photographed, annotated and then, with help from the Museum, a selection will be made. We hope that this will make an intriguing and amusing record for future generations.

The Committee's ability to communicate the idea and encourage wide participation is proving a useful test for our year-round communication. We rely on the Monmouthshire Beacon, the generic Free Press, Mon TV and Monnow Voice. We thank them for their help and continue to search for more.