

# **Monmouth Town Council**

## **Shaping Our Future II**

**A 3 Year Council plan 2009-2012**

# Monmouth Town Council

## Shaping our Future

### Foreword by Councillor Terry Christopher

In May 2008 following an election a new Town Council came into being. Of the 16 members elected to the council, there were 6 new members.

The new council maintained its structure of committees namely; Community Affairs, Environmental Affairs, Planning and Finance and Policy. These committees reviewed and reinforced the previous council's aims and objectives set out in the document 'Shaping our Future' published in 2005.

The aims and objectives of the Town Council demonstrate that it will commit to work in an accountable, efficient and effective way for the benefit of the community of the town.

The council through its Environmental Affairs committee will endeavour to work with others to maintain and improve the cleanliness of the town and its open spaces and to try and make Monmouth a green and environmentally friendly place to live and work. To show its commitment to this the Town Council during the past year confirmed its support of Transition Monmouth and its aims to make Monmouth a more sustainable town.

The Community Affairs committee is also committed to encouraging and fostering positive working relationships between the council and other organisations and individuals working and living in the community. As a council we are committed to recognising the value of voluntary work within the community and will continue to provide community grants to groups and organisations who meet the required criteria.

We are also conscious of the town's unique character and history, and will seek to protect its heritage, whilst encouraging sympathetic development that will enhance the environment and the prosperity of the town.

The members of the council who are all volunteers have committed themselves to achieving the aims and objectives set out in this document.

There are many challenges, but I am sure that the members will meet and resolve these challenges for the benefit of Monmouth over the next three years in their aim to serve the town to the best of their ability.

## **What we want for Monmouth**

“By 2015 Monmouth will be regarded as the county town of Monmouthshire. It will be a desirable place to live work and visit and will have real and accessible transport links, the best schools in Wales, decent housing provision for all, excellent employment and business opportunities and a vibrant community life. It will be clean, green, safe, active and prosperous and a place to be proud of.”

## **Our role as a town council**

“As the elected Council for the town we must work with others and our communities to achieve this plan for Monmouth.

We will use our resources to deliver improvements wherever possible, and we will help shape policy and influence other policy makers. When necessary we will campaign for the changes and improvements that will make a positive difference in the social, economic and environmental well being of the town.

We will respect each other and value differences that exist between us and within our communities. We will seek to represent the needs, interests and aspirations of the town and its many communities and develop our role as genuine community leaders. We will be the voice of Monmouth.

In our work we will cherish the unique heritage of our town and protect it from unnecessary development and harm. We will embrace positive changes in an increasingly fast changing world and seize the opportunities they present. We will shape the future for our town.

We will be a council of which the people of the town can be proud”.

## **Our key objectives**

- To ensure that the organisation and finances of the Town Council are efficient, effective, open, transparent and accountable to the Council and the wider public.
- To ensure that planning matters are exercised in accordance with the legislative and policy requirement of the Council with due regard for the individuals and communities affected, the economic effects and environmental impacts.
- To ensure the Council plays its full role in promoting the cleanliness and safety of the town and its open spaces.
- To support and strengthen community activities, participation and events.

## Setting our priorities - Our 3 year plan

The Council will adopt this plan to guide its work for the life of the present Council. The plan highlights the issues that are facing the town and the tasks that we need to undertake to resolve them and make a positive difference.

The Council has set 6 priorities for its work to achieve our objectives and its activities will be geared toward tackling these priorities.

- **To seek ways of devolving influence and control over Monmouth based facilities and decisions to local organisations including the Town Council**

We will audit current levels of activity of local authority functions and propose a series of measures designed to achieve our objectives. This may include local management of public space to naming our own streets.

- **To promote cultural, earning and learning opportunities for the people of Monmouth**

We will support and encourage the projects laid out in 'Vision Monmouth' that seek to consolidate and build upon the improving performance and prosperity of the town.

- **To work with partner organisations to ensure the Shire Hall is returned to its status as the premier civic/historical building in the county town of Monmouth and as a community and economic asset**
- **To improve community facilities, involvement and events**

We will lobby to ensure that local services and access to them are improved and made fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will promote the use of new technology and new ways of communicating like social networking sites, texting and local TV, where appropriate.

- **To improve the cleanliness and safety of town and its open spaces**

We will review our approach to local community safety and seek to bring all interested organisations together to agree how we keep the town safe over the next three years.

- **To improve transport and traffic movement to and within the town**

We will work with the County Council and bus operators to finally link local train services with the town.

We will consider the Shared Space concept as the approach to improving the use and sense of place of our town centre.

## **Better services, Better value - Our budget strategy**

The budget is the responsibility of the Council as a whole with delegated responsibility to each of the committees to recommend their budgets.

The Finance and Policy committee will be charged with the task of empowering our committees and staff to manage and spend the budgets, at the same time ensuring proper control and accountability. The Clerk, as the Council's Responsible Finance Officer will be charged with developing adequate controls and overseeing expenditure on a day to day basis.

The key themes of our budget strategy over the life of this Council will be

- Investing in our economy and environment
- Investing in our communities
- Investing in our organisation and maximising its effectiveness
- Keeping taxes low!

The Headlines of the budget are

### **Improve the economy and environment by**

- Contributing funds for the Festival and Carnival
- Develop a bigger better Christmas event
- Investing in more Christmas lighting
- Continuing to develop the sustainable planting scheme in and around town
- Increasing funding for town improvement schemes
- Continued financial support for the Shire Hall

### **Invest in our communities by**

- Developing the Community Grant Scheme to support community projects and initiatives

### **Investing in our effectiveness by**

- Investing in training and using smarter ways of working.

### **Keeping taxes low**

- Minimal tax rises.

The Full Council retains its overall responsibility for setting the strategic direction of our work and overseeing the work of the committees. The terms of reference for our committees are summarised over.

## **Finance and Policy Committee**

The chairs of the other 3 standing committees have automatic inclusion onto this committee. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor have ex officio membership. The committee meets at least six weekly or more often as required. If the chairperson is unavailable the Deputy Chairperson will chair the meeting. Standing Committees may send a member of the committee to represent them if their Chairperson is unavailable.

### **Aim**

To ensure that the organisation and finances of the Town Council are efficient, effective, open and transparent and accountable to the council and the wider public. To allocate business that arises to the relevant committees and also to monitor the finances of the committees.

Its priority tasks will be to;

- Develop good communications channels for the council.
- Develop staffing policies and procedures
- Develop protocols for relationships with MCC and the role of the town councillor in dealing with issues and individual caseloads.
- Help develop councillors skills and knowledge
- Develop the review of the work plan and publish an annual report.

### **Objectives**

- Develop the budget and propose the annual budget and precept to the Full Council
- Set the policy framework for our work across all areas.
- Manage standing orders.
- Manage budgetary and financial affairs.
- Allocate spending authority to the councils' committees and its officers and agents.
- Develop procedures and protocols for the smooth running of the council
- Act as the body to resolve grievance and disciplinary matters of staff.
- Resolve disputes between councillors and complaints about conduct of council affairs.
- Develop and oversee relationships with outside organisations and partnerships.
- Maximise funding from elsewhere for the Council's projects, by obtaining match funding or income from other sources.
- Secure the most suitable accommodation in order for the Council to be able to conduct its business

The Chairperson will chair the 'chairs' meetings that will precede the Finance & Policy meetings to review the agenda of full council meetings and consider housekeeping matters. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor will also be included in these meetings. It is the chair of each committee's responsibility to ensure that the relevant points at this meeting are fed back to the committee.

## **Planning Committee**

### **Aim:**

To ensure that planning matters are exercised in accordance with the legislative and policy requirements of the council with due regard for the individuals and communities affected, the economic effects and environmental impacts.

### **Objectives**

- Develop design statement for the town centre
- Identify development opportunities for brown field land
- Develop 'statement' protecting heritage of town and its communities
- Develop greening of the town environmental policies with regard to development
- Organise training for council members
- Take due notice of the hazard of rising water levels due to climate change
- Be aware of development of land which would normally absorb run off
- Give due consideration to the importance of archaeology in sensitive areas
- Restrict development on green field sites

## **Environmental Affairs Committee**

**Aim:** To ensure the Town Council plays its full role in promoting the cleanliness, safety and development of the town and its open spaces

### **Objectives:**

- Develop and support appropriate Tourism projects
- Ensure full involvement and representation in Community Safety Partnerships
- Encourage liaison with the Police regarding licensing in the town
- Lead a Monmouth based solution for parking in and around town
- Oversee the implementation and development of floral and street decorations arrangements
- Work closely with Monmouth Partnership Forum on the 'shared space' plan for town
- Support Monmouth Links cycle and walking project

## **Community Affairs Committee**

### **Aim**

To support and strengthen community participation, activities and events and to help develop a sustainable, welcoming community.

### **Objectives**

- Oversee development of the social inclusion policies of the Council with particular regard to young people, the elderly, those with disabilities, the unemployed and other minority groups
- Work to maintain community services and facilities crucial to the town
- Oversee funding for community events such as the Festival and Carnival and Christmas events
- Oversee funding arrangements for CAB and Attik with a complete annual review
- Maintain a Community Grant Scheme that supports and encourages community activities and events
- Help develop communications to strengthen relationships and mutual understanding within the community
- Help develop community opportunities and access in the wards that involve health, play, information, music and entertainment
- Encourage young people's initiatives
- Organise a Christmas event and liaise with the appropriate committees to help facilitate a successful Carnival and Festival
- Review how best to recognise achievement and innovation in voluntary community activities

### **Conclusion**

This policy builds on the Town Council's previous work plan and sets out its vision, aims and objectives for the life of this Council.

We are committed to delivering better results and value for money and we will deliver this through the way we work with openness and accountability.

We believe that this document sets out realistic, achievable and desirable targets for us for our town. We will be judged by the results of the plan but are committed to making a positive difference to the quality of life in Monmouth and taking action to ensure that difference. We will play a lead role in 'Shaping Our Future'

**Working parties**

Each committee shall be empowered to establish whatever working parties it thinks necessary to carry out its tasks. The working parties will be subsidiary to the main committee and will work on a task and finish basis. They will work within strict terms of reference to be agreed by the members of the working group.

**Joint committees**

If joint committees are established this shall be on a task and finish basis and shall not be standing committees of the Council. In the event of such committees being established there shall be one vote per member with the chair having a casting vote only.

## **Selection of committees**

Committees will be elected at the Annual Meeting, Councillors will submit a list of the standing committees on which they wish to be nominated.

## **Outcomes**

- To ensure that every Councillor serves at least one committee.
  - To ensure that Councillors have a good opportunity to be chair or deputy chair of any committee.
  - To ensure that the Finance and Policy committee contains the chairs of each committee.
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1. All committees will be subordinate to the Full council and will act within clear terms of reference and delegated authority and budgets set by council and incorporated into the council's standing orders.
  2. The democratic scrutiny and overall responsibility rests with the Full Council notwithstanding the legal obligations of the Town Clerk/ Responsible Financial Officer.
  3. Full council acts as the scrutiny committee and chairs of committees will be expected to submit full minutes with clearly outlined recommendations and resolutions for review at full council.
  4. Committees will be elected at the Annual Council meeting. Chairs and deputies will be elected at the first meeting of the particular committee immediately following Annual Council.
  5. No councillor can be chair of more than 1 committee. The chairperson of all the other committees will automatically be voted on the Finance and Policy Committee.