

Monmouth Town Council



ANNUAL REPORT

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Introduction

Monmouth is a fantastic town on the border of Wales. It is ideally situated to provide a broad range of sporting and social activities and a great location for families, being well-resourced with a range of state and public schools for our children. The residents number over ten thousand.



The Council has sixteen Councillors. A mayor has been elected annually from among the Councillors since 1447. The councillors are currently as follows, by ward:

Dixton with Osbaston: Anthea Dewhurst, Claudia Blair, Jane Lucas, Richard Roden_(Deputy Mayor)

Drybridge: Felicity Cotton (until Sept '18), Rachel Jupp (from Nov '18), Mat Feakins, Alice Legg

Overmonnow: Jamie Treharne, John Fletcher, Sue White, Terry Christopher (Mayor '18-19)

Town: Rob Caffel

Wyesham : Jane Gunter, Jess Stephens (until Jan '19), Emma Bryn (from Mar '19) Kelly Jackson-Graham, Ken Breeze

Shire Hall/Officers: Sue James (Responsible Finance Officer/RFO), Dee Lovering (Proper Officer), & Caitlin Williams (Administrator); Caroline Tremeer (Town Clerk) and Jane Lloyd (Administration) left in early 2019. There was an ongoing recruitment process resulting in Dee Lovering becoming Town Clerk in time for the new mayoral year '19-20.

What is the Council's Vision/Objective?

Supporting a Monmouth we all want to live in, now and in the future.

The Welsh Government's ground-breaking introduction of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 places duties on Councils to work to benefit the residents in in cohesive and planned manner.

There are 'five ways of working' and seven goals. The Five Ways of Working are:

Prevention: acting to prevent problems from developing or getting worse.

Integration: applying the Wellbeing Goals to our core activities.

Collaboration: working with other organisations or people within our community.

Involvement: incorporating people as diversely as possible in our mission.

Long term: balancing our actions around short term needs in our community, whilst safeguarding the future needs of Monmouth.

How has the Council embedded the five ways of working into its planning and working arrangements?

Long Term

The proposed pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Wye addresses a pressing need to ensure safe routes for school children, cyclists and pedestrians with the long term need for active travel connecting Wyesham with the rest of the Town. Councillors, MCC officers, and residents have worked together to move this project forward. It will take a few more years to reach fruition.

The Council is setting aside funds to support MCC's redevelopment of aspects of Agincourt Square (using the Active Travel fund from Welsh Government) to enhance the attraction of our square to residents and visitors, and to benefit local shops and pubs.



Prevention

The Council is raising public awareness of environmental issues in Monmouth, via a declaration of a Climate Emergency with the establishment of a working group, and support for a Plastic Free Monmouth. We have a very well-established litter picking group, dog waste collection and enhanced general waste collection, particularly on parkland owned by the Council. This involves Councillors, MCC Officers, residents.

Integration

Chippenham Mead Children's playground relocation and new play facility is strongly supported by the Town Council, and meets all Well Being goals, especially a Healthier Monmouth.

Collaboration

Regeneration of the area of Agincourt Square in collaboration with Councillors, MCC, Monmouth Chamber of Commerce and residents.

A grant was provided to the Wye Valley River Festival which resulted in a great event in the town, which they reciprocated by sharing expertise with the Council funded Lantern Parade.

HMS Monmouth Freedom Parade involved many groups, including the Royal Navy, the Royal Marine Band, The Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers, Royal British Legion, Gwent Police, local residents and many others.



Involvement

The Town Amenities working group involves residents alongside councillors and incorporates a wide variety of participants from Nature Isn't Neat to Transition Monmouth.

The World War 1 Commemoration involved many groups within the town. One of the most visible aspects of the event was the creation of a crocheted and knitted 'poppy wall' adorning the Shire Hall in November '18, a magnificent feat of hard work and organisation by volunteers.

Be.Community was a major event where grant awarding bodies voluntary organisations were able to present their offerings to the general public and each other. This was the first community event at the new Monmouth Comprehensive School building. The Council asked for feedback on the Council itself and also on toilet provision.

The seven Wellbeing goals are:

A globally responsible Monmouth: thinking globally, acting locally

Prosperous Monmouth: developing skilled workforce and employment

Resilient Monmouth: respecting nature's ecosystems and encouraging people to be adaptable.

Healthier Monmouth: promoting residents' current and future health.

More equal Monmouth: fulfilling potential regardless of background or circumstance.

Cohesive communities: attractive, viable, safe and well connected neighbourhoods

Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language: protecting heritage and promoting the arts, sports and language.

What approach has the Council taken to embed the seven national well-being goals into its plans?

Many Councillors have had training to raise their awareness of the Goals. Strategic goals are listed in a table format and are applied to various identified opportunities. However, an overarching Strategic Plan is lacking at present, although work is being undertaken to develop one.

Meeting Overarching Well-being Objectives set by the Public Service Board

Give Children and Young People the Best Start in Life

Summer Holiday Enrichment Program (SHEP)

SHEP provides good food and activities for children during school holidays. A reasonable proportion of these children receive free school meals during the school terms. We have also agreed to fund SHEP during the school summer holidays 2019 via a substantial grant.



Chippenham Playground

Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) were aware of the views of local Councillors desire to develop a new site and following a visit approved a move to a less polluted area.

Address the Challenges of Demographic Change

The award-winning Memory Café at Nelson Museum aided people suffering memory loss particularly Alzheimer's disease.

The Council supported the setting up of the Otto Maciag exhibition at the Nelson Museum, a distinguished artist whom many of the residents knew.

Ross and Monmouth Naval Cadets were supported with a grant for On Board Training.

A grant was provided for the Bridges Car Scheme which enabled car owners to help people with mobility issues get out and about such as taking them for hospital appointments.

Communities and Businesses to be part of an economically thriving and well connected county

The Town Council formally complained to MCC about the unjustifiably large increases in business rates levied on the shopkeepers and businesses of Monmouth. MCC lobbied Welsh Government along with other councils and a rate support scheme was introduced.

The Council is a member of the Monmouth Chamber of Commerce, and supports the Shop Local scheme.

Rockfield Community Centre received a grant to replace a worn out kitchen, which enables refreshments to be provided to the many groups that use the centre, including a Welsh Language playgroup.

The Carnival, a much loved aspect of Monmouth life, was given a grant to help fund this years event. The Savoy Theatre was in receipt of a grant to improve the toilet facilities, to be officially opened by Griff Rhys-Jones in Nov '19.

The Council campaigned for no charges for A Boards. The Council owns and runs one toilet block in the Town, and runs a second next to the market. The Council has recently taken over the planting and maintenance of more flower beds from MCC. The Council paid a substantial sum to enhance the provision of Christmas lights

Protect & Enhance our Natural Environment and Minimise the Impact of Climate Change

The Council manages the Town Field for benefit of residents. Many activities take place including the Rotary Club of Monmouth raft race start and annual bonfire.

A grant was made for improved access to the Monmouth allotments.

We, as a Council, are extremely concerned about the human impact on the environment. The Council supported the Plastic Free Monmouth group with a grant. The group's aim is to reduce the use of single use plastics in daily use in Monmouth.

The initial costs for the Wye Pedestrian Cycle Bridge market research were funded by the Council which led to a WeITAG 2 grant being approved by WG/MCC of £75,000.

The Council has a well established and award winning litter picking group, plus we have enhanced the street cleaning and increased number of dog waste bins by funding extra services.

In terms of the Welsh Wellbeing Goals, the Council:

- a. reduced the amount of single use plastic in the offices, and encouraged the local traders and schools to do the same.

- b. The Council works with Nature isn't Neat to support projects which protect and improve local biodiversity.
- c. The Active Travel group will continue to encourage the development of suitable routes for cyclists and walkers, with a particular emphasis at present on delivering a new Wye Bridge Cycle and Pedestrian crossing located close to the Monmouth Rowing club.



Other Contribution to the Well-being Goals

Other activities that the Town Council is undertaking that contributes to the National Well-being Goals

Community grants were made to fourteen local voluntary organisations in support of local community projects. A major grant of £10,000 was made to the Citizens Advice Bureau to help fund their activities in Monmouth.

We hold regular surgeries at Ty Price and The Priory to provide an opportunity for residents to air their views.

Implementing the Well Being of Future Generations Act

A further opportunity to reflect on how things are proceeding not covered previously.

When considering opportunities residents have brought to the Council on occasion, we have supported several including Plastic Free Monmouth (which obtained Surfers Against Sewage accreditation for the Town), Climate Emergency (Working group established), and Public Place Drinking Fountains (implementing with Rotary Community Champions).

The Council has encountered some barriers and actions have been taken to mitigate them. For example, MCC temporarily withdrew funding for the Agincourt Square redevelopment.



The Town Council continues to set aside funds to support the redevelopment, and pressurises MCC to reach a decision on whether to proceed or not.

A second example was we felt that grant funding was insufficient so we increased the Precept to enable more grants to be provided for disbursement in the community.

Finances

The services and activities provided by the Town Council are paid for by the residents of Monmouth. This amount which is known as a Precept, is added to your Council Tax bill each year, and is collected on our behalf by Monmouthshire County Council.

Each year the Council decides on the level of service it can provide and calculates how much it needs to raise to support the provision. There is increasing pressure for Town Councils to take on more public services to preserve those under threat from budget cuts at a National and County level. Despite this pressure, Monmouth Town Council limited the rise in Precept for year 2018/19 to 4.9%. This also covers the increasing demand for more robust and current governance at local council level.

These are the areas Monmouth Town Council budgeted for in 2017/18

Management and staff costs	£96,500
Building lease/equipment	£40,800
CCTV for Town security	£13,560
Civic Expenses	£24,900
Community services including Christmas event	£14,600
Grants for local community organisations	£37,500
Public Toilets	£38,000
Manual Street cleansing	£26,266
Town maintenance	£28,520
Street decorations	£22,000
Dog waste collection	£8,000
Total Expenditure	£350,146

The Town Council welcomes comments on how we serve the community we represent.

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