

CTC 32

Ymgynghoriad ar rôl, llywodraethiant ac atebolwydd y sector cyngorau tref a chymuned

Consultation on the role, governance and accountability of the community and town council sector

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Tref Trefaldwyn

Response from: Montgomery Town Council

Inquiry into the role, governance and accountability of the community and town council sector

The terms of reference for the inquiry are to examine:

- *The role and value of community and town councils in Wales;*
- *Whether the sector is fit for purpose in an evolving local government landscape;*
- *Governance and scrutiny arrangements and its impact on accountability and transparency;*
- *Scope of digital and new technology to improve decision-making, service provision and participation in local democratic processes;*
- *How new powers and responsibilities for this tier of government are utilised to support communities.*

The Town Council was unable to meet as a body ahead of the 18th October completion date. The comments below were written by Cllrs J Lock and C Weston, incorporating comments from Cllrs O Lewis, R Harper and W Beaven.

We have read and appreciated the 2017-18 review

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/independent-review-panel-on-community-and-town-councils-in-wales-final-report.pdf> We note that what it describes and concludes and recommends reflects well our experience and thoughts overall.

We will add a few comments from our specific context.

We also attach our community survey document to assist in illustrating the context in which Montgomery Town Council works.

Montgomery Town Council exists to support the community of Montgomery, Hendomen and Caerhowel. It's important that Councillors are from that community and understand its needs, for all generations. A local layer of government with local knowledge and known faces is important and unique. We feel that Town and Community Councils should be supported.

The position of a Town Council such as Montgomery varies from the smaller community councils and Town Council status should not be devalued.

Through our County Councillor we have a constant link with the County Council to aid working together, and models such as the Vale of Montgomery Rural Cluster of Councils (VMRC) facilitate working together and sharing of experience.

We note that each Town and Community Council is very different, as is its context and demographic. It's is important to note that one model doesn't fit all, especially thinking of the very different socioeconomic conditions across Wales.

Within the VMRC, for example, when each Council reports to the others on its recent activities, the differences between Councils are notable even within a small geographical area.

Montgomery Town Council looks after amenities (place based services) such as playgrounds, bins and benches. However, Montgomery Town Council also provides a broader social and wellbeing function in facilitating events and thinking about tourism appeal, visitor numbers, sustaining businesses etc. It is important to be able to respond to the specific needs and context of the town and community flexibly.

Having 11 Councillors in Montgomery gives access to a range of skills and capacity.

We understand the need for periodic review and for consideration of boundaries. While some aggregation of Councils may make sense, this should not go too far and there are likely to be unintended consequences.

A smaller number of councillors may make decision-making faster and help avoid vacancies, where it can be difficult to fill all seats, in smaller councils in particular. The recent experience of Montgomery Town Council is that the number of Councillors we have is really needed, to carry out the work and duties, and as its roles and responsibilities expand. There is a lot to be done in terms of committee and working party tasks such as responding to planning applications and queries; taking on and organising things such as the Christmas lights and surrounding events for the town; etc.

We have recently found it challenging to carry out all the work required of the Council between us. The part time Clerk's paid hours are limited and often over full. The demands on the Clerk's time and mental energy are great, and form an uneven and unpredictable pattern of demand. The volunteer Councillors have limited capacity. Reducing the number of Councillors would put more work onto each individual and we would reach the point where really only, for example, those who are retired can take on the role, excluding a large demographic who would otherwise be able to participate and represent the community. Support and training is also vital so that all Councillors, and people from different roles and backgrounds, can confidently participate in and contribute to the Council.

Montgomery Town Council is not against some amalgamation and working together. But would be very concerned if the numbers of either Councils or Councillors was reduced substantially.

Streamlining doesn't necessarily mean losing Councils or Councillors. It can involve finding different models of working together and delivering services. E.g. VMRC model; or combining some "back office" things such as payroll, etc.; and getting support with law and process; training etc.

Within Montgomery there are a large number of active community groups and events and activities.

We note that the context regarding technology such as social media and hybrid meetings has changed since the 2017-18 report, partly in response to the covid situation, both in Montgomery and generally.

Montgomery involves and informs the local community through various media including a bi-monthly newsletter, social media, noticeboards, (almost) weekly coffee mornings and word of mouth. Each of these mechanisms potentially reaches a different section of the community and it is important to continue to cover all of those. For example coffee mornings are a vital route for keeping older members of the community well informed, as well as a vital communication and social interaction opportunity.

A small number of members of the community has joined Council meetings using the online option. (It is unknown whether those people would have attend in person if that option were not available.) Members of the community also attend meetings in person, usually in relation to an agenda item of specific interest to them.

The Montgomery Wales Facebook page bio reads "A page run by a team of Montgomery volunteers to give information for others in Montgomery, visitors and friends. Above all, to enjoy our town together." <https://www.facebook.com/montgomerypowys/> This aim matches up well with the Council's.

Attached: Montgomery Community Survey phase 2 (2023) (pdf) [Please choose "fit to width scrolling"]

MONTGOMERY ACTION PLAN SURVEY PHASE TWO

2023

SECTION 1: HOUSING

The majority of residents (87%) feel there will be enough housing in Montgomery for the next 10 years following the development of the Forden Road site. Concerns regarding Montgomery becoming a dormitory town / losing its identity and sense of place and heritage. New housing should be in small clusters and not a large development. Siting should be appropriate to the existing town as should materials and build. Infrastructure in Montgomery cannot take many additional houses – particularly highways and medical facilities. The overwhelming view is that the majority of new build should be affordable / local needs / rent to own. Insufficient employment for large new build.

DESIRED ACTIONS / POLICIES	ACTION NEEDED	BY WHOM	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Feed community views in at policy / consultation level	Take comments forward for the revised LDP regarding small clusters of houses. Continue to press for the overriding Montgomery need of a mix of affordable homes; rent to own schemes and houses with space to work from home (including workshops and smallholdings).	MTC	
	Encourage residents to respond to consultations on Candidate Sites and RLDP.	MTC	Community organisations
	Reflect the identified needs when responding to planning applications for new build or change of status (agricultural / local needs) or change of use from employment.	MTC	
Encourage employment opportunities	Promote existing local businesses for high visibility and networking opportunities. Look for partnership opportunities and Growth Zone funding to develop employment site and bring this back into economic use.	Tourism / Business Development Officer	Montgomery Partnership
Identify how the community would see Montgomery developing	Draw up a spatial plan for the town as part of a wider Place Plan	MTC Community	Planning Aid Wales

SECTION 2: TOURISM

Overall, residents clearly recognise the economic benefits that our many visitors bring to the town and also the increased events and activities for everyone to enjoy. There is support for developing a Town for All Seasons with events across the year rather than a short tourism season and promoting high value repeat tourism. There is also support for the on-going development of walking and cycling tourism. Concerns expressed at the limited facilities for eating and drinking and that the town should not be overwhelmed with visitor accommodation or more retail / residential premises lost to accommodation.

DESIRED ACTIONS / POLICIES	ACTION NEEDED	BY WHOM	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Establish closer links between tourism and local producers / accommodation providers and other businesses in the town for promotional and event opportunities.	Establish Montgomery Partnership and good communication with tourism providers, producers and other businesses.	Tourism Destination Montgomery Taste Montgomery MTC	
Improve cycling and walking routes	Promote existing local businesses for high visibility and networking opportunities. Look for partnership opportunities and Growth Zone funding to develop employment site and bring this back into economic use.	MTC Powys Active Travel	Bike recycle scheme and other community organisations
Avoid further development of town houses as holiday accommodation	Respond to policy consultations. Consider change of use applications carefully and in principle oppose loss of permanent residential accommodation or retail / hospitality	MTC	
Increase knowledge of what there is to see and do in Montgomery	Work with Institute and library volunteers on establishing a staffed TIC point. Use digital technology to promote. Ensure Montgomery What's On is a regular publication and widely available with information on main events. Identify and promote facilities for visitors that organisations can provide e.g. use of tennis courts, activities for children. Establish a designated p/t contract to assist with promotional work.	Tourism Institute News-Events Team Tourism / Business Development Officer COS e.g. sports clubs, Friends of Playpark, etc. MTC	
More places to eat and drink.	In principle, oppose change of use from hospitality. Work with local businesses to ensure they are aware of opportunities and engage with large local events and provide additional facilities. Work with mobile food vendors for supporting events. Explore possibilities for pop-up / summer cafes.	MTC Tourism Committee	Montgomery Partnership Community organisations

SECTION 3: PARKING

General view that there is a need for more parking or means of ameliorating parking in town although overall residents agree they can always find a place to park. A variety of possible measures have been proposed and this has provoked lively discussion. There will be future opportunities for a modest expansion of parking.

DESIRED ACTIONS / POLICIES	ACTION NEEDED	BY WHOM	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Understand how people use Broad Street parking.	Carry out a baseline survey of how / why people use Broad street (rather than the car park); length of time etc.	MTC	Businesses
Consider possible ways of limiting parking on Broad Street.	Consult on possible solutions.	MTC	Businesses and residents
Increase overall parking capacity	Extend Tan y Mur car park when play facility becomes redundant. Better configuration of the car park when only cardboard recycling remains. Re-site cardboard bins to provide more space and open up entrance to Whitegates/ Lymore and make this more attractive and welcoming.	MTC Powys Waste and Recycling	MTC / PCC Walkers are Welcome
Improve congestion	Move bus stop to car park taking buses out of the town centre and serving residential areas better.	MTC with PCC and bus companies	
Ensure people know the location of the car park	Improve signage to the Tan y Mur car park. Temporary signage to Activity Centre / School / Well Street when agreed out of hours parking.	MTC with PCC Highways	Activity Centre / School
Look at future provision of E/V charging points	Consider whether installation will be practicable at extended car park when the Tan y Mur playground is decommissioned	MTC MEG Powys Highways	

SECTION 4: COMMUNITY LIFE

Residents recognise and value the strong sense of community and the many opportunities over 50 organisations afford in such a small town. There is a good breadth of provision but over recent years there has been a decline in youth provision (YFC / scouts/cubs and Church Youth Group having all closed). The central focus of the Town Hall and Broad Street is instrumental in this sense of community providing a meeting point and focus for activities. The Arthur Street Garden is becoming increasingly used and it is important that this is in town ownership to secure in perpetuity. The importance of the regular calendar of Montgomery events is evident with much support for the Street Fair; Show; Open Gardens; Christmas activities etc. May fair is enjoyed but a feeling it has lost its way and needs to provide more activities across the range of ages at a reasonable price, food stalls. Need to ensure the Activity Centre, Institute and Town Hall are well used community hubs and maintained to a good standard.

DESIRED ACTIONS / POLICIES	ACTION NEEDED	BY WHOM	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Strong community partnerships to enhance events and community life.	Promote partnership working particularly with the Town Council to support important events.	MTC with other organisations	
Increase community use of the Institute.	Implement a community / warm space with a range of activities and opportunity to work / relax / chat/ have a lunch/ use IT facilities Explore possibility of small office space to rent. Town Clerk presence at the Institute to provide interface with MTC.	Community organisations e.g. TLC; Trefoil Guild; Games Club etc.	MTC Institute Trustees
Promote knowledge of the breadth of organisations available to increase uptake and recruitment of volunteers.	List of organisations and contacts in the Crier. Dynamic promotion of events and activities via the digital screen in the TH (with possibility of extending to the Institute). Community noticeboards at Hendomen and Caerhewel to advertise events and activities.	MTC with community organisations and local residents	Crier Web team Institute
Facilitate sharing of equipment.	Compile a list of what is available for hire / loan and make this available on the website.	MTC to circulate to all COs and compile list.	Community organisations
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Increase provision for young people (particularly boys)	Identify where there are gaps in provision and support recruitment of appropriate leaders and establishment of groups. Ensure playpark caters for all ages.	Community organisations	
Promote services to support older people and enable them to stay in their homes.	Explore what is required: care and repair type services; meals on wheels; community warm hub; access to transport.	Community organisations	MTC PAVO Local businesses

SECTION 5: HERITAGE

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DESIRED ACTIONS / POLICIES	ACTION NEEDED	BY WHOM	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Develop links with Shropshire.	Potential to promote more via Shropshire website and individual f/b Pages such as Bishops Castle.	Tourism Committee Civic Society	local businesses / accommodation providers and producers
Investigate potential for longer opening at castle.	Explore possibilities for joint events e.g. heritage weekends visiting a number of cross border sites with experts. Heritage and Food Trails.	MTC with CADW and castle custodians	
Celebrate major events.	Reinstate bi-annual meetings with MTC / CADW and Powys Estates. Make known public concern at closing times. Potential for pedestrian gate to remain open if car park closed. Explore potential for joint CADW publicity via web links. Request and Moult give their ratable value for 'to the public' implementation. Reiterate need for maintenance on permissive paths to Castle. Install advisory signage at Arthur Street.	Civic Society with MTC	Community businesses and School / Pre-school
Improve castle access.	Plan for 2023, 800 years with local businesses and 2027 the conferring of these events. Explore potential for castle to build on Play at Castle / Hungarian day events.	MTC with CADW, Powys Estates.	
Make it easier to Listed Buildings.	Remedial work on permissive paths. Look at how this can be implemented and possibility of volunteers assisting under Montgomery Castle group.	MTC with CADW, Powys Estates.	Community services Footpath volunteers
Increase community use of Old Bell Museum.	Presumption in MTC for solar panels in Conservation Area / Listed Buildings. If response to solar panels on alternative heating / energy efficiency in older buildings. Consider if church can be floodlit again using LEDs.	MTC Montgomery Energy Group	Dissemination of information to organisations Friends of Church
Improve speed of delivery and public amenity.	TC to work more closely with OBM promoting events and joint support. Support school use of museum via school governors. Integrate OBM into other events and activities.	Tourism Committee Civic Society School governors	Community organisations Monty Lit Fest Street Fair Christmas Festival etc.

SECTION 6: SHOPPING AND RETAIL

Generally, people would like to shop local but in reality it is more convenient to go to a Welsh supermarket. Some concern at higher prices and limited stock availability, and with long opening hours across the year.

Concerns and contention lack of Broad Street / Highgate Street issues such as blockades drains, clearing of straw, detri road markings and environmental deterioration, was

DESIRED ACTIONS / POLICIES	ACTION NEEDED	BY WHOM	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Promote #localised.	Improve the shopping environment - less cars, congestion, safe for Pedestrians.	VMRC reps	
Ensure good publicity.	Encourage good publicity.	Tourism/Business Development Officer	
Supplied... market traders - high quality goods currently not available.	Supplied... market traders - high quality goods currently not available.	Businesses	
Promote the Montgomery offer with the Vale of Montgomery Cluster.	Promote the Montgomery offer with the Vale of Montgomery Cluster.	Businesses	
Increased variety of shops and facilities.	Promote a shop and source local with residents and community organisations to retain existing and encourage new ventures. Explore possibility of loyalty schemes. Promote local produce outlets.	MTC to lead by example News-events team	Montgomery Partnership Market traders
Promote via articles in Crier / Facebook and County Times.	Promote via articles in Crier / Facebook and County Times.		

SECTION 7: LIVING ENVIRONMENT AND FACILITIES

A few more appreciate in the high public living environment a valued of Montgomery and recognise the facilities those available. Few requests for additional facilities to maintain the need for

and with long opening hours across the year.

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DESIRED ACTIONS / POLICIES	ACTION NEEDED	BY WHOM	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Drains regularly cleared.	Work with Highways to try and agree a regular schedule and communication to MTC on dates to advise residents.	MTC Powys CC Highways	Town Tidy Team
Identify funding and areas suitable for new seating.	Discuss schedules with Town Tidy Team and where they can.		
Improve speed of delivery and public amenity.	Clear that TCC will have less resource over the coming few years and will expect T & C to be funded on more responsibility – need clarification		
Improve public amenity.	Identify budget for maintenance.	MTC	Community
Improve public amenity.	Promote approach to developing new playpark at recreation ground.	MTC with CADW and castle custodians	Community organisations –
Improve public amenity.	Use of playpark for themed events for children.		
Improve public amenity.	Removal of old play area at Tan y Mur and repurposing (dragon tyres to be retained).		
Improve public amenity.	Programme of upgrading end of life equipment at Old Gaol Road.		
Improve public amenity.	Look for opportunities for sponsorship / grants / funding for sports etc.		
Improve public amenity.	Work with sports clubs / school on improvement of area for junior sports with schools / clubs / youth groups.		
Improve public amenity.	Provision for on-line reporting to Town Clerk and action log.		
Improve public amenity.	Apply for community asset transfer from Powys CC and continue to sensitive planting.	MTC	MWT
Improve public amenity.	Automate locking facility to assist opening 7 days a week.	MTC	
Improve public amenity.	Continue to employ Town Operative and monitor cleanliness, install Radar lock 24/7 for disabled users.	MTC	
Improve public amenity.	Source grant funding wherever possible to support.	MTC	
Improve public amenity.	Land all sign for implementation (T20 mph zones post September 2023).	MTC	Speed Watch Team
Improve public amenity.	Lobby with Authorities on how this will be policed appropriately.		PCC
Improve public amenity.	Lobby for use of speed monitor signs.		
Protect the environs of Montgomery as a resource for future generations.	Respond to consultations on local development Plan considering carefully the impact of any proposed developments such as the impact this will have on residents and the town and its attractiveness to visitors.	MTC	Community businesses
Establish biodiverse and maintenance friendly grounds.	Support local farmers adopting nature friendly farming and low impact diversification projects.		

This document will be reviewed annually in September for progress.

For more information, please contact: town.tidy@montgomery.wales.uk
www.montgomery.wales.uk

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