

**Monmouthshire Muslim Community
Association
MMCA**

Business Case

Date: December 2024

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1.0 Executive Summary

This business case proposes the utilisation of the old Abergavenny Library building located at Baker Street, Abergavenny, NP7 5BD as a Muslim Community Centre and Mosque. This proposal identifies demand, need, and subsequent gap in current provision for the rapidly growing Muslim population in Monmouthshire, serving people of diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

These past few years have remained challenging as health and social care systems face significant pressures exacerbated further by the impact of cost of living, workforce shortages and funding cutbacks. Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association (MMCA) acknowledges the pivotal role that our community plays in highlighting and informing necessary service improvement and change, through educating and promoting inclusion and diversity. The huge contribution of our community not only makes an invaluable difference to the people in Monmouthshire, MMCA is also an integral part of our society and conducive to vital partners, bridging the gap between services, strategies, and policies which has a direct impact on future generations. We acknowledge that with the increased pressures on health and social care, the role of the community has become even more crucial to help address the challenges and fill the gaps.

Mosques play a fundamental role in British society and are incredible places of hope, peace and unity. The Mosque is three distinct spaces rolled into one:

1. Place of worship; where devotees can practise and develop their spirituality, religion and prayer (Appendix A).
2. Educational hub; learning for young and old and not limited to religious understanding or sciences, but also for life skills, such as ethics, morality, numeracy, ICT and social skills.
3. Social hub; a public place for meeting, social interaction, and bringing people of different faiths and backgrounds together to promote religious tolerance and understanding, along with sustaining integrated recreational activities, funerals, marriages and festivals.

In light of this, identifying a permanent centrally located mosque remains a key precedence and MMCA look forward to continuing to build and sustain productive and open relationships with community partners so that the core ethos of the mosque is apprehended.

We want to make integrated communities everyone's' business. To do this a mosque should be a PART of the local neighbourhood, not APART from it.

2.0 Purpose and aims

The proposal aims to:

- Establish a community place of worship (Mosque) with space for religious, educational, and social functions for Muslim residents and the wider community of Monmouthshire.
- Bring the Old Abergavenny library into beneficial community use by providing a community mosque that facilitates educational, social, economic and recreational value for the Muslim residents of Monmouthshire and the wider community.
- Foster integrated, cohesive communities by offering programs for education, skills development, and personal growth.
- Contribute to improving the health and well-being of all members of the local community.
- Encourage economic growth and attract new residents by making Monmouthshire a more inclusive and attractive place to live, and which will contribute to economic growth placing Monmouthshire as a preferred place to live.
- Promote interfaith dialogues to encourage greater religious and cultural tolerance and thereby eradicating Islamophobia.

The proposal ensures that:

- It meets the needs and demands of the demographic population of Monmouthshire.
- It aligns with Monmouthshire County Councils Strategic priorities and values.
- The request is appropriate and proportionate to the demand.
- The infrastructure already exists and is well placed to deliver and develop this place of worship and community facility.

3.0 Background

The first mosque in Britain was Masjid-e-Abu Hurairah, which was set up in Cardiff in 1860. Until the 1950's mosques remained a very minor part of the British landscape and tended to be residential houses converted into places of worship for the small numbers of Muslims then living in Britain at that time. That changed when large numbers of Muslim migrants, mainly male work force, were attracted by the British

Government to leave their homelands, comforts, families and familiar surroundings to help rebuild Britain and fill the labour shortage.

Muslims also gave their lives fighting for Britain as servicemen and support staff during the first and second World wars, with a number of Commonwealth War graves located in Abergavenny, and others in South Wales, which stand to remind us of the commitment, dedication and devotion of Muslims.

Many Muslims acquiesced to assist and arrived from the Indian sub-continent after the Second World War. As the Muslim community changed complexion and grew, so did the function of mosques: they began to assume a more central role, moving away from being a simple venue of prayer to being a social hub in the community with a role in helping Muslims integrate locally and build partnerships with rich, diverse communities of many cultures and backgrounds. Many of the larger cities in the UK, such as Cardiff, Swansea and Newport are prime examples of this growth in Muslim population and mosques.

Islamic society has assumed a multifunctional role for many centuries. The main role of the mosque is not only to provide a place for praying but also to serve as a centre of peace and tranquillity, where worshippers gather to strengthen a sense of community and solidarity. Although often known as places of worship, mosques also have significant educational and social extents in the development of society in strengthening community's educational, social, and spiritual dimensions, promoting interreligious dialogue and intercultural cooperation, supporting interfaith dialogue and reducing religious conflict by promoting tolerance and peace in diverse societies. Mosques also provide spiritual containment, support the purpose of living, nourishing mental health and wellbeing, a place that promotes care for one another, humbleness and gratitude.

The Muslim population is increasingly growing, and Monmouthshire has benefitted from the skills, value and resources this population brings. In 2021 the South Wales Argus and Monmouthshire County Council hailed the provision of a Friday prayer facility as a success.



Muslim community able to perform prayer at Abergavenny venue | South Wales Argus
New facility in Abergavenny welcomes Muslim community to practice faith in
significant milestone for residents - Monmouthshire

Although it is recognised that there is need to support communities, the gap in the provision for equal access to a sustained and permanent place of worship that caters for all the mandatory daily prayers still remains unmet.

There is currently no mosque in Monmouthshire County. This proposal will address the gap and be momentous in establishing the first mosque in the history of Monmouthshire.

In 2023, the council held their first Iftar event during Ramadan to celebrate the traditional community breaking of the fast practised in the Muslim faith. Members of the MMCA, MCC council members, leaders and officers, as well as guests from various faiths and backgrounds came together to understand and learn more about the Muslims of Monmouthshire.

It was here that the council were challenged publicly on its provision of services for the population in which it serves and asked to pledge and commit to cater for its growing Muslim population. This was declared as a priority commitment by the council leader and cabinet member leader. The Iftar event was also repeated for Ramadan 2024. Once again, the leaders and cabinet members were held to account on their action to progress with their commitment of 2023. The noble commitment was reaffirmed.



Monmouthshire councils' self-assessment covering the period 2022-23 stressed that their "absolute priorities are to tackle inequality" with:

- A fair place to live where *"Nobody should be left behind in Monmouthshire and we are working to help those who need support to live the life they want"*.
- A connected place where people care and Monmouthshire will be a place where people's contributions are valued, and feel part of a community and connected to others.
- A hub-based approach helping people connect with one another within their local community and which reduces the need to rely solely on formal services.

Key frameworks and documents which link to and influence the support for this proposal include:

- Monmouthshire County Councils' strategic equality objectives 2024-2028: *"Creating cohesive communities"*
- Monmouthshire's' Community and Corporate Plan that sets out a commitment to work with and alongside communities, empowering people to support each other and come up with long-term solutions.
- Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015;
- Population Needs Assessments;
- Gwent Area plan;
- Welsh Government's long-term plan for health and social care "A Healthier Wales";
- Welsh Government Carers Strategy for Unpaid Carers 2021 and
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

4.0 Local Context

There is a strong sense of community spirit in Monmouthshire, which is an important factor in people's well-being. Faith and religion also play an important role in mental health and well-being, and people benefit from feeling a sense of belonging.

On 21 March 2021, the size of the usual resident population in Wales was 3,107,500; this was the largest population ever recorded through a census in Wales and showed that the population of Wales has grown by 44,000 (1.4%) since the last census in 2011, when it was 3,063,456. Monmouthshire's population grew to 93,000. The table below shows the total population in the Gwent area.

LA name	Usual resident population, 2011	Usual resident population, 2021	Percentage change
Caerphilly	178,806	175,900	-1.6
Blaenau Gwent	69,814	66,900	-4.2
Torfaen	91,075	92,300	1.3
Monmouthshire	91,323	93,000	1.8
Newport	145,736	159,600	9.5

(Source: Office of National Statistics Census 2021)

The Abergavenny area is also the most diverse in terms of ethnicity; although those of white ethnicity make up vast majority of the population, proportions of mixed race and Asian ethnicities are the highest in Monmouthshire (0.8% and 1.4%). 62.1% of the population in the area declare themselves as Christian.

Between the last two censuses (held in 2011 and 2021), the population of Monmouthshire increased by 1.8%, from around 91,300 in 2011 to around 93,000 in 2021. This means Monmouthshire's population increased by a greater percentage than the overall population of Wales. The population of Wales increased by 1.4%, from 3,063,000 to 3,107,000.

In 2021, 48.7% of people in Monmouthshire described themselves as Christian (down from 62.5%), while 6.2% did not state their religion (down from 7.7% the decade before). There are many factors that may be contributing to the changing ethnic composition of England and Wales, such as differing patterns of ageing, fertility, mortality, and migration. Changes may also be caused by differences in the way individuals chose to self-identify between censuses. Also religious affiliation is the religion with which someone connects or identifies, rather than their beliefs or religious practice and the religion question in the census is a voluntary rather than mandatory one.

The 2021 census showed, 1.2% of Monmouthshire residents identified their ethnic group within the "Mixed or Multiple" category, up from 0.7% in 2011. The 0.5 percentage-point change was the largest increase among high-level ethnic groups in this area. Across Wales, the percentage of people from "Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups" increased from 1.0% to 1.6%.

96.9% of people in Monmouthshire identified their ethnic group within the "White" category (compared with 98.0% in 2011), while 1.3% identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category (compared with 1.0% the previous decade). The percentage of people who identified their ethnic group within the "Other" category ("Arab" or "Any other ethnic group") increased from 0.1% in 2011 to 0.3% in 2021.

In catering for the Muslim population, the nearest Mosque to Abergavenny is Berea Masjid located in Blaina - Blaenau Gwent.

Currently St. Michael's Community Centre located next to the Roman Catholic Church, Abergavenny is being hired for the weekly Friday prayer.

In addition, MMCA must locate other hiring facilities such as Llanfoist Village Hall for Ramadan weekly Iftars and evening prayers, Llanatilio Pertholy Hall for Eid prayers, and Wellafield Hall for other social gatherings; at times this is challenging as the need cannot be met at the dates and times required.

There is an overwhelming need for a mosque in Monmouthshire due to the growing Muslim population. This will be enjoyed by the whole community for many years to come but is also of historical significance.

5.0 Management and Implementation structure

Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association (MMCA) is a community organisation run by dedicated volunteering individuals that provide centralised essential support services to Monmouthshire in response to the demand and need that caters for the growing Muslim population. It was formally constitutionalised on 8th October 2021 (Appendix B).

The organisation is well established with multi-agency partnerships working across Health, social care and the third sector to deliver support and services to its community. With a robust implementation structure that ensures the monitoring, progress and delivery against agreed milestones and annual reports are prepared to reflect progress and achievements to date (Appendix C).

Its leadership underpins strategic decision making at a local level where the citizens voice is key to the planning and delivery of services and aligned to wider strategic and policy agendas.

MMCA committee meet on a regular basis and comprises of the following structure (Appendix D)

Honorary Chair – Mr. Mohammad Habboub

Hon Vice Chair – Dr. Waleed Akeel

Hon Treasurer – Mr. Adil Gatrad

Hon Vice Treasurer – Dr. Atif Nada

Hon Secretary – Mrs. Maddie Saraireh

Hon Volunteers – Dr. Mohammad Ghazi, Mrs. Nermin Zawi, Mrs. Duaa Zawi, Mr. Abdul Naser

MMCA has organised numerous activities and services aimed at creating a sense of belonging, fostering community spirit, and supporting vulnerable groups including refugees, asylum seekers and new immigrants.

Some key initiatives and activities include:

- **Weekly Friday Sermon & Prayers (Jumu'ah):** Our weekly obligatory gathering for Friday prayers has grown significantly, with over 50 male and female attendees on a regular basis. We have been holding these gatherings with the help of a local Roman Catholic church, but the increasing number of attendees means the space is becoming too small and require a permanent venue.

- **Ramadan Community Events:** During the holy month of Ramadan, we host weekly iftars (breaking of the fast) dinners, which are open to the local community. These events are not only an opportunity for Muslims to come together but also serve as a bridge to the wider Monmouthshire community. We have regularly invited council members, local church, faith and non-faith representatives, and other community group leaders and key dignitaries to join us for these meals since 2023.
- **Tarawih Prayers:** This was offered for the last 10 days during the month of Ramadan 2023, and MMCA were able to successfully organise daily congregational Tarawih prayers (evening prayer) during Ramadan 2024, a key religious activity for Muslims during the holy month.
- **Monthly Gatherings:** MMCA hold monthly gatherings that include religious lectures, community dinners, and youth-focused activities.
- **Youth Activities for Ethnic minorities:** in collaboration with the Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) a weekly youth club runs to provide a positive environment for young people to engage in social, educational, and recreational activities. By holding interfaith and community events, mosques also allow for meaningful relationships to be built between people of all faiths and non-religious people, in a way that otherwise would not be possible
- **Educational Classes and Fitness Initiatives:** Our community offers Arabic language and Quran classes for children, as well as Zumba and fitness classes for women to promote health and well-being.
- **Support for Refugees and Asylum Seekers:** MMCA regularly assists new families and individuals arriving in Monmouthshire, particularly refugees and unaccompanied asylum seekers, by offering financial support, advice, guidance, help with integration, and connecting them to essential services.

6.0 Challenges

The lack of provision of a permanent location has meant the community is faced with many challenges. For instance, Muslims have 5 mandatory prayers a day, currently MMCA can only cater for 1 out of the 35 weekly prayers. The stability and continuity is at risk with the existing arrangement, as it does not allow for increasing number of attendees, along with facing a challenge in finding temporary venues for our prayers, religious festivities and events.

A need for a permanent space is becoming essential, to fulfil the Muslim community teachings and understandings, we require a dedicated place to consistently provide and build trust, reassurance, life skills, morals and etiquette for all ages and genders of the community.

There are limitations on the ability to fully serve the community. Establishing a permanent Muslim Community Centre would enable us to reaffirm and enhance our activities, provide greater support to families, and strengthen relationships with the wider community in Monmouthshire.

The following highlights some of the challenges MMCA currently face:

Community Growing Demand:

- The present temporary facility is inadequate for the growing number of attendees.
- This situation adversely affects the communal ability to carry out its religious duties and provide regular religious development and learning opportunities.

Community Programs:

Without a permanent space, the community is unable to fully offer:

- Trust-building and interfaith events.
- Development of life and social skills for all ages and genders.
- Lessons in morals and etiquettes.
- Develop and maintain relations within the wider community of Monmouthshire.

Risks to Stability and Continuity:

- Inability to continue relying on temporary locations to conduct prayers, festivals, and events.
- The instability of temporary locations limits the community in planning consistent and sustainable programs.

Need for a Permanent Solution:

Having a permanent space for the Muslim community would achieve the following:

- Provide stability for daily prayers and religious events.
- Allow consistent educational, social, and outreach programs.
- Develop stronger links between the Muslim community and the wider population in Monmouthshire.

7.0 Service delivery

MMCA 5-year plan outlines some of the key milestones, strategies, and outcomes in delivering essential services and support to the Monmouthshire Muslim community. In addition, it highlights integrating digital communication strategies to enhance engagement with the Muslim community and the wider population while addressing spiritual, social, and economic needs, some of these are:

- Provide a Mosque (Masjid) for the 35 weekly prayers (5 prayers per day), Friday Sermon & prayers, Ramadan iftar and Taraweh prayers and Eid prayers.
- A permanent Imam, who will play a pivotal role in leading the prayers and guiding the sound teachings of Islam and provide support to the local Muslim community.
- Provide Quran lessons and religious halakat (lessons/ guidance) for both youth and adults.
- Halal shop.
- Activities within the local community to promote diversity and integration.
- Sustained funding for various community projects.
- Cater for the needs of the Muslim community in Abergavenny and surrounding areas.
- Provide support to Muslim refugees and unaccompanied asylum seekers.

We have been keen to deliver our services and priorities in proactive meaningful ways and our 5 year plan reflects this (Appendix E).

7.1 Value Based approach

The Mosque is more than a place of worship and has a critical and instrumental role in the cultural and political life of Muslims, with immediate social influences. Mosques are the hub of communities and the operational base for community development and capacity building. It is where Muslims can cooperate and support young and old people to build healthier lives and multi-faith societies. Mosques bring social value and act as a vehicle for social change with a real sense of community:

1. **A Sense of Belonging:** For many Muslims, particularly those who are refugees or new to the area, having a stable and supportive environment is essential for settling into a new community. The mosque would provide a familiar, friendly space where people from various backgrounds and cultures, with different

language and ethnicity can feel a sense of belonging and support. This creates strong social networks and a sense of community.

2. **Integration Into the Wider Community:** Over the years, MMCA has made significant strides in building relationships with the wider community. Events like open iftars during Ramadan and collaboration with local churches for Friday prayers have allowed people of different faiths to come together. The centre would serve as a venue for further interfaith activities and cultural exchanges, promoting greater understanding and cooperation. It would also create a strong culture of volunteering.
3. **Provision of youth centred service:** Engaging more young people, our future generations, involved in governing, managing and contributing to mosques helps them balance their faith with the pressure of modern life, provide more activities for them to get involved, and play a wider role in community life and engagement.
4. **Conflict Resolution:** Mosques play a role in dealing with conflicts and differences within communities. When there is disagreement or tension, mosques can be a place for dialogue, deliberation, and finding solutions that advance the community's common interests. This is part of the mosque's role in nurturing social solidarity and nurturing positive relationships between diverse individuals.
5. **Educational Centres:** Teaching the values of tolerance, inclusivity and dialogue contribute to educating the community and youth, along with supporting local schools in RVE curriculum.
6. **Environmental:** Mosques allow for a better understanding and change of behaviour in adopting environmental practices and educating on issues such as green spaces, air and water quality and pollution, energy efficiency, climate change, waste and recycling. community grow initiatives that grow herbs familiar to cooking dishes from particular countries e.g. chillies, coriander etc.
7. **Social Value:** They create social solidarity and a deep sense of social responsibility.
8. **Support Mental health and wellbeing:** Mosques help tackle loneliness and social isolation which can impact physical and mental health. The lack of identity and belonging can place individuals at greater risk that can exacerbate the social isolation of older residents, leading to poor health, loss of independence and lower quality of life.
9. **Health:** Some MMCA members are consultants and the current facilities for Friday prayer are used by many health professionals from Nevill Hall hospital. MMCA are therefore well placed to organise health campaigns, such as vaccinations or free health checks as well as work with partners such as Muslim Doctors Cymru to address high risk health factors and comorbidities for communities.

10. **Engagement:** Celebrations of Islamic holidays, charity events, and social activities such as fundraising for humanitarian causes are pertinent to mosques.
11. **Economy:** Muslims represent a wealth of skills, ideas, energy and business acumen. The mosque can help with work skills empowerment of individuals and communities assisting individuals to become active members of society and contribute positively. This includes areas such as CV-writing workshops to help individuals build livelihoods and reduce unemployment. MMCA volunteers are role models that include successful businesspeople, teachers, young parents, IT experts and accountants, health consultants and architect. All have skill sets that can be employed in the community mosque facility. This crucial role in the economic empowerment of communities helps increase people's economic independence and allows them to achieve financial stability.
12. **Agents of social change:** The mosque is well placed to organise education programmes on various social issues, including family education, reproductive health, women's rights, mental health, drugs, or domestic violence tackling anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, cybercrime, knife crime etc, which can shape the behaviours and attitudes of Muslims and others and tackle social, political, and cultural issues.
13. **Promoting Equality and Diversity:** Mosques are prime movers in promoting equality, human rights, and peace. MMCA believes strongly in the values of equality and diversity. Our mosque would be a welcoming space for people of all backgrounds, and we are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity.
14. **Skill Development.** Mosques can develop skills and behaviours such as communication, leadership, character development ethics, morality, tolerance, integrity, honest, caring towards others and social responsibility with the act or worship even representing this. By inclusive congregating five times daily, standing together positioned shoulder to shoulder in a row without any differences, divisions, distinctions of status and invoking to one God creates discipline, compassion, unity, equity, brotherhood and mercy. A believer sees prayer as a privilege to learn and develop a deeper connection to his creator.
15. **Emergencies and humanitarian crises:** The mosque is a central point for a rapid and effective humanitarian response. This was seen during the pandemic where mosques in Gwent were the first in the UK to introduce on site Covid vaccination programmes. Mosques provide support for refugees, asylum seekers and communities affected by natural disasters or conflicts. It creates a haven for those needing immediate protection and provides humanitarian assistance help reduce poverty and inequality in society e.g. food programmes, warm hubs food and clothing distribution.
16. **Support for Vulnerable Families:** With the mosque acting as a base, we would be better positioned to provide ongoing support in meaningful ways to families in need, especially refugees who require financial, emotional, mental health and social assistance.

- 17. Vacancy risk minimisation:** The turnaround time for occupation of the building would be minimal, if not immediate therefore mitigating risks associated with empty properties

8.0 Suitability of the Old Abergavenny Library Building

The identification of the old Abergavenny Library building as a location for the community mosque facility is a suitable location which addresses the needs, demands and gaps outlined in this proposal; further endorsed by a recent site visit on September 19, 2024.(Appendix F)

The key advantages of the site include:

1. **Location:** The building is located in the heart of Abergavenny, making it easily accessible to the vast majority of the Muslim community. Its central location also makes it convenient for the wider Monmouthshire population to attend events and activities held at the centre; it also falls in close proximity to public transport routes.
2. **Qibla Wall:** The building has a south-east wall which is oriented towards Mecca called the qibla wall, which faces the Kaaba, the sacred structure at the centre of Islam's holiest site.
3. **Layout:** The building's first-floor rooms are suitable for administrative purposes and small-group educational classes. There is also a small kitchen facility with hot water, which is sufficient for catering needs during community gatherings. Additionally, the ground floor is carpeted, making it suitable for prayer without the need for further renovations. It also meets the requirements in Islam for the segregation of prayer space for both male and female worshippers.
4. **Accessible Facilities:** The building includes ground-floor toilet facilities, which, with minor modifications, can be adapted to serve as ablution areas (wudu) for males and females. This facility is welcomed as cleanliness and washing is a requirement before prayer can be conducted. Additionally, the building has multiple access points, including a ramp for disabled individuals.
5. **Proximity to Parking:** There are several nearby paid and free car parks, which can accommodate the needs of attendees without causing any inconvenience to the surrounding area.

8.1 Minor Modifications

While the old Abergavenny Library building is a Grade II listed building, it is largely suitable. In observing the limitations there are a few minor adjustments that would be

required to ensure the building meets the specific requirements of a Muslim Community Centre:

1. **Bathroom Facilities:** Slight modifications to the existing toilets would be needed to create separate ablution area for men and women, allowing them to perform wudu before praying.
2. **Privacy:** The addition of curtains or partitions (which could be stand-alone) would be necessary to ensure privacy for women during prayers and certain community activities, such as fitness classes or religious gatherings.
3. **Prayer carpets:** The existing carpets may need to be replaced with new carpets that indicate Quibla/ prayer directions (The position towards Mecca in which all Muslims across the world face for prayers) along with showing the rows one would stand in to perform prayer as a group.

These modifications are minimal, and the building is already well-suited for the purpose intended, no major structural changes would be required, which makes this a cost-effective and practical solution for establishing a permanent Muslim Community Centre.

9.0 Monitoring

Processes through outputs will be regularly reviewed and analysed (Appendix G). Outcomes will be measured using both qualitative and quantitative factors and include

- Attendance at mosque male /female
- Participation in events
- Involvement in planning and developing services
- Community stories
- Identifying, developing or sourcing workshops /presentations / training
- Human factor outcome such as improved wellbeing, confidence etc
- Funding applications
- Innovation ideas using suggestion box
- Surveys
- Equal opportunities monitoring
- Partnership development

10.0 Marketing

Muslims in Monmouthshire already have connections with MMCA as this is the only place for direct support for this community. Wider than this the management have direct links with Muslim Doctors Cymru and a platform on Newport Community Muslim group (a group with more than 1000 members) and all the mosques in South Wales where announcements and marketing can be made, Muslim Council of Wales, Islamic Relief, and other charities.

MMCA currently uses WhatsApp groups to communicate, however when a permanent venue is found, MMCA will work on setting up a website, pages on social media platforms and a more sustained email service.

We intend to continue and build on these when we have secured a premises.

11.0 Governance

Mosques are owned by their community. They are genuine civic organisations where the local people who attend the mosque also finance its upkeep and running.

An establishment of a mosque would enable membership of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB) that is representative of over 600 mosques in the UK. It is an independent self-regulatory body aspiring to build capacity in mosques, help deliver standards and ensure mosque personnel have a better understanding of British Muslims' needs so that it can address any concerns more effectively. It works with and represents all Muslim traditions and schools of thought and to apply principles of good governance. It also promotes best practice in British mosques.

MMCA also has its own governance in place through its constitution and annual reporting.

12.0 Partnership Working

Partnership working is critical to the success of implementing cohesive communities through a mosque facility. The public sector, third sector organisations and citizens are key in helping to embed a range of information, advice, support and services to align with 'what matters'. MMCA already has good working relationships with a wide range of people and communities and continues to develop and maintain links. This includes other mosques, Monmouthshire County Council, Gwent police, Health Board, Muslim Doctors Cymru, EYST, GAVO, local businesses, local schools, Abergavenny Town of Sanctuary, Hay, Brecon and Talgarth Sanctuary of Refugees and other charities.

13.0 Funding Implications

Mosques are generally funded in a variety of ways. Funding through Zakat, aims and other donations. Each individual donates when attending Friday prayers as a norm at an amount they are able to reasonably afford.

The financial position for MMCA is provided (Appendix H).

Most mosques have very limited resources and therefore if their vision for more improved facilities and capacity is to be realised, more resources would be needed. Therefore, the proposal is designed with a view to identify, apply for, secure and manage local government grants or bursaries or gifting to support activities and development in establishing and sustaining the community mosque facility.

Currently, MMCA has a bank account through which limited funds are received, primarily from community members and small businesses. Registering as a charity, will provide opportunities to secure a wide range of funding, both nationally and internationally and ensure the sustainability of the centre and expand outreach. However, registering as a charity to receive more funds and support the charity ideally would require a permanent place.

14.0 Way Forward

Mosques are not only places of worship but also cultural, education and spiritual centres that play a crucial role in shaping the understanding of religious, social, and cultural identity.

The establishment of a permanent centre would allow the MMCA to significantly expand its services and activities. The goal is for MMCA to register as a charity and enable

- Muslims in Monmouthshire to have an equal opportunity to the right of worship to perform their five daily mandatory prayers.
- 30 days of Fasting during Ramadan to be observed in congregation, the same as billions of Muslims across the world.
- Build and strengthen trust, community cohesion and integration.
- Enrich the cultural landscape of Monmouthshire and promote the values of equality, diversity, and inclusivity.
- Bring a range of value (point 7.1).
- Allow Monmouthshire to address the gap in equity and access of provision of services for the population it serves.
- Encourage Muslims, particularly those of skilled professions to choose Monmouthshire as their preferred place of residence.
- MMCA recognises that innovation and flexibility is required in striving towards supporting the Muslim population in Monmouthshire with a mosque facility and are well placed to ensure that this brings economic, cultural, social and public value to individuals, groups, organisations and communities at large.