

Whitecastle Community Council

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Minutes of the Council Meeting 14 May 2026 7.00pm at the Hogs Head, Treadam

Present: Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons (Chair), Cllr. R. Metters, Cllr. C. Duncan, Cllr. J. Biggs, Cllr. C. Lewis, Cllr. N. Graham

In attendance : L. Taylor (Clerk), M. Parry

Public Speaking

The council invited Margaret Parry, Treasurer to St Teilo's Church, Llantilio Crossenny to speak. *"Thank you for the opportunity to address the Community Council. I am Margaret Parry, Treasurer to St Teilos Church, Llantilio Crossenny. The War Memorial in the form of a Preaching Cross in Llantilio Crossenny churchyard and listed on the Imperial war Museum's web site, is now in need of repair.*

Some twenty years ago an individual took it upon himself to remove the stone cross which topped the structure, as he considered it to be in a dangerous condition. After the event and when challenged by the vicar, it was stated that the structure was in the care of the Community Council, not a church matter. An oak cross was then put in place.

The Clerk of the previous Community Council has been unable to find any documentation in the minutes of the event but we have never considered the cross to belong to the church, but rather belonging to the community.

I wonder if any long serving councillor has any recollection of this, and now, whether the community council can exercise its powers to help with the restoration. A structural surveyor who is carrying out other work in the churchyard advises that the top four shaped, but crumbling coping stones need replacing together with a steel plate to support the cross. The existing cement pointing also needs attention but when we apply for a faculty permission, I think it might be a condition that all cement pointing is removed and replaced with lime mortar, This might be the opportunity to carry out a major restoration that would see the structure in a stable condition for many years. The total costs would be over £3000, to replace just the four stones has been quoted at £1450.

I am appealing for your financial help and also if a councillor has a particular interest and would like to take the lead on this, the church committee will willingly support the project. Thank you for your time."

Members of the council asked for further information and informed Mrs Parry that the matter would be discussed as part of agenda item 8.

1. To accept apologies for absence.

County Councillor Ian Chandler

2. To disclose personal and pecuniary interests in items listed below.

It was agreed to allow members to disclose interests as they arise.

3. Matters arising from the previous meetings.

The Clerk reported that most matters arising from the previous meeting had been followed up and are to be discussed as part of the agenda. The following items are still open:

- to meet with Cllr. Duncan to discuss community engagement.

- to follow up the request for an extra 30mph sign in Tal-y-Coed.

4 To consider correspondence.

Members of the council have been updated on a number of items since the last meeting.

- Plans for the Community Task Day
- A report on the condition of the churchyards.
- One Voice Wales National Conference & Awards Ceremony 2026
- Launch of the One Voice Wales Civility and Respect Pledge
- Finance And Governance Self-Assessment Toolkit
- Highways update and service request update
- Restoration of telephone boxes and memorials
- One Voice Wales Newsletter

5. Councillor ward matters

- Cllr. Graham reported he had been working with Cllr. Metters to provide planters for two locations in Tal-y-Coed.
- Cllr. Graham reported that road markings in Newcastle have not been completed and the planters are ready to be put in place.
- Cllr. Metters is seeking funding for a project to plant daffodils in road-side locations in the area. Vending machines, which are part of Pubtopia's village shop project, will be in place soon.

6. County Councillor's report

Cllr. Chandler contacted the council on a number of matters since the last meeting. No further updates were received for the meeting.

7. Clerk's report

- The Clerk reported on an online session cybersecurity training session on 11 May. The session was very useful and confirmed that the council's actions to introduce a .gov.uk domain name, controlling access to systems, regular backups and malware protection are in line with government advice.
- The County Council has supplied a number of dog bag carriers for distribution in the community. The plan is to make them available in places open to the public including churchyards. Their purpose is to deter people from throwing full bags of dog mess in hedges etc. so people can carry their bags hands free. The loop can attach to a bag/rucksack or belt loop.

8. Community Groups

Village Life Community Project

- Cllr, Graham attended a meeting of the Village Life Community Project on 2 April. The minutes of the meeting have been circulated. The group has decided to no longer support the use of bleed kits in the community and have returned funding provided by the Community Green Energy Advisory Group.
The group has been in consultation with residents of Penrhos Farm to provide a power supply to the existing defibrillator box. The proposed solution is to move the box and fix it to a garden wall which is adjacent to the highway and close to an existing power supply. This may need Listed Building consent and the Clerk has been asked to find out if consent is needed.

Community Task Day

- The Community Council and MonLife (MCC) have organised a Community Task Day on 4 June (rescheduled from the previous week). The event has been widely promoted within the community and will focus on improving footpaths in Llantilio Crossenny and Penrhos. It also aims to establish a volunteer group that will continue carrying out footpath maintenance under the guidance and support of MonLife.

Llantilio Crossenny and Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern church committees

- For some time, the Community Council has been trying to encourage the County Council to provide funding to support for public toilets in Llantilio Crossenny and Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern churches. The Community Council has managed to put the toilets on the Wales Public Toilet map, which will hopefully support applications for assistance from external funding streams to maintain and improve toilet facilities.

Community Green Energy Advisory Group

- The Community Green Energy Advisory Group has announced that applications for funding for 2026 are now open and a notice has been put on the council website.

Llantilio Crossenny Church Committee

- The council discussed the request from Mrs Margaret Parry (Llantilio Crossenny Church Committee) for funding and support with the restoration of the war memorial. The Community Council understands that it has the power to maintain, repair, protect and alter war memorials and can use this power to support the request. The Clerk informed members that there are a number of war memorials in the community including the Lych Gate at St Cadocs Church Penrhos, the Hendre, Rockfield and Llangattock Vibon Avel. Cllr. Lewis agreed to contact Mrs Parry to discuss this matter and to report back the council. The Church Committee also contacted the council to discuss the possibility of having a dog poo bin put in the car park. This was claimed would be a real help as waste is put into their own black bags and smells and is not at all pleasant. It was pointed out that the car park and toilet are used by many members of the local community and visitors coming to the area. Members discussed this matter in detail and the Clerk provided details of costs. The bin would cost £199 + VAT and the installation would be done by MCC. The council would need to fund the collection of the waste, which was £7.15 per empty in 2025.

Resolution To fund a dog waste bin in Llantilio Crossenny Churchyard car park and the cost of emptying it. Proposed by Cllr. Astill-Parsons and seconded by Cllr. Metters.

9. Civility and Respect Pledge

One Voice Wales have amended the original pledge to make it more relevant to Councils in Wales. Adopting the pledge commits members to show respect by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks and being kind to each other.

Resolution To adopt the Civility and Respect Pledge. Proposed by Cllr. Astill-Parsons and seconded by Cllr. Lewis. The Chair signed the pledge on behalf of all members.

10 Audit update

- The Clerk presented a review of the arrangements for the 2025/26 audit. The cashbook has been closed and financial reports were distributed to members. The year-end balance is £31,615. The accounting statements section of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) was completed and all necessary documents provided to the internal auditor. The internal audit report was presented to the council. Members reviewed the report and noted the comments made. The Chair asked members to consider the Annual Governance Statement section of the AGAR.
- **Resolution** To confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, that for the year ended 31 March 2026 the responses in the Annual Governance Statement were correct. Proposed by Cllr. Astill-Parsons and seconded by all members. The Chair signed the AGAR on behalf of all members.
- The Clerk informed members that he would now proceed to complete all necessary procedures and provide information required by Audit Wales for its full audit and to ensure all legal steps are taken.

11 To discuss the allocation of Rockfield flood relief funds.

- The Clerk confirmed that the council had received funds from the Mayor of Monmouth to be used for flood relief following her appeal after Storm Claudia. The Chair attended a meeting

of Skenfrith Community Council (SCC) on 20 April. At the meeting the Clerk of SCC agreed to liaise with Whitecastle Community Council regarding an application form.

- The council has been given information regarding the residential and business properties in Rockfield which were affected and agreed to contact each property and will ask residents affected to fill in an application form similar to the one used by Monmouth Town Council for residents of Monmouth. This is to be shared with SCC.
- The Clerk noted that the Mayor and Town Council suggested that the Community Councils set up ear marked reserves for any future disasters.

12 To consider planning matters.

DM/2026/00406 St Cadoc's Church, Llangattock Vibon Avel

Internal and external repairs to the church of St Cadoc, Llangattock Vibon Avel, to include: reroofing of the south porch, tile repairs, redecoration of weathervane, re-rendering and limewashing of tower, stonework repair, repointing, redecoration of rainwater goods, installation of birds mesh to openings, rebuilding and stabilisation of chimney to Organ Chamber, replastering, redecoration, repairs to the tiled floor of the Chancel, glazing repairs, and renewal of external below ground drainage.

Members scrutinised the application and the Chair discussed the matter with residents and the council has no objections to the proposal and recommends approval.

DM/2026/00114 Old Hendre Farm Old Hendre Road The Hendre NP25 4DJ

Planning Permission Use of existing 2 no. holiday let units as dwellings.

Members scrutinised the application and have no objections to the proposal and recommends approval.

DM/2026/00605 Ruthlin Barn Skenfrith NP7 8UL

Planning Permission Change of use of existing residential ancillary annexe to holiday let. No alterations or additional work required.

Members scrutinised the application and have no objections to the proposal and recommends approval.

13 To consider highways matters

- The Clerk reminded members of various road closures which had been added to the website.
- The council has received a number of updates to service requests made to the County Council. Many of the updates were for historic requests which had alerted the county council to problems in the community.
- Residents of Llantilio Crossenny contacted the Community Council seeking advice regarding the placement of the village planter. The Highways Department was subsequently contacted to request approval for minor alterations to the area surrounding the planter, which is adjacent to the highway. Although no response has yet been received from the County Council, members agreed that the work should proceed in accordance with the proposed plans, as it is unlikely that Highways will respond within a reasonable time frame and the proposals are not considered to have any impact on the highway.
- Cllr. Biggs reported on actions undertaken in the Penrhos ward since the last meeting. A meeting took place with Carl Touhig, Head of Monmouthshire County Council Highways, together with a council road surveyor, to assess the works required. On 23 April, the County Council announced that significant resurfacing works would commence in Whitecastle during the week beginning 27 April. Cllr. Biggs expressed satisfaction with the work carried out by the jet sprayer, although not all of the scheduled works have yet been completed. Concerns have also been raised by a resident of Llantilio Crossenny regarding the lack of progress on a section of road within the village that had been included in the County Council's programme of works. The Clerk has contacted Carl Touhig for an update but has not yet received a response. Members requested that the Clerk follow up the matter to establish the current position.

14 To discuss churchyard matters.

- The Clerk reminded members about the annual churchyard report which was circulated before the meeting
- Progress has been made in resolving the safety issues raised in Llangattock Vibon Avel churchyard. Responsibility for the Charles Rolls grave has been ascertained and it has been agreed that family members will be make the monument safe. A quotation for the work has been provided which will be partially covered by a grant from the Sir Henry Royce Memorial Foundation. The Clerk is to monitor progress.
- Llangattock churchyard maintenance work was completed in April.
- The Clerk is awaiting a quotation for the repair of an area of tarmac on the path to the war memorial.
- The council has received a request from a resident living adjacent to the churchyard for support to carry out work on a yew tree located next to their property. An estimate for the proposed work was presented to members. It was agreed that the tree should first be inspected and that a meeting should be arranged with the residents.
- Maintenance work in Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern churchyard is on schedule.

15 To consider policing matters.

- Neighbourhood Watch news and the Gwent Police Neighbourhood Matters report for April have been added to the website
- No other policing issues were raised by members.

16 To consider the use of the council's website and community council notice boards

- The Clerk has been contacted by Ceredigion Network regarding possible improvements to the Council's website. The company advised that it can help make statutory information, including minutes and accounts, clearer and more accessible across all devices, while also making the site easier to maintain. The Clerk acknowledged the need to improve accessibility and will discuss these matters with the Council's existing website provider.
- Cllr Duncan holds a key for the Onen notice board, Cllr Graham holds a key for the Newcastle notice board, and Cllr Biggs holds a key for the notice board in Penrhos.
- The Council has allocated funding to replace the old notice board in Llantilio Crossenny. However, no suitable location for the new board has yet been identified, and members held a detailed discussion regarding a number of possible sites. Cllr Lewis suggested the lay-by on the B4233 as a potential location. Members agreed that local residents should be consulted before a decision is made and resolved to seek views through a notice in the church newsletter, as well as via the Council's website and social media channels..

17. To consider the Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and to determine members allowances.

- The Annual Remuneration Report 2026–27 requires the Council to determine Members' allowances for the forthcoming year. Members noted the mandatory payments and considered the optional payments relating to the Chair, Deputy Chair, attendance allowance, financial loss, and travel and subsistence expenses. Following discussion, the Chair asked the Clerk to prepare draft policies covering attendance allowance, financial loss, and travel and subsistence expenses.
Resolution: To adopt all optional member allowances subject to approval of the policies. Proposed by Cllr. Astill-Parsons and seconded by all members. The Chair signed the form on behalf of the council.
- Members were given a form to confirm if they wished to decline all or part of the Councillor Allowances Payments.
- The Clerk confirmed that payments for extra costs and office consumables would be put forward for approval at the next meeting.

18 To consider financial matters.

- The Clerk confirmed that Cllr. Biggs and the Chair would continue as signatories on the bank account. Cllr. Lewis asked for his name to be taken off the list.
- The Clerk provided an update on the cashbook since the last meeting.

Balance 31/3/26 brought forward	£21,573.83
Receipts	£12,047.00
Payments as per approved payments at the last meeting	£2,005.98
Current balance	£31,614.85

- The Clerk asked member to scrutinise the list of payments for approval

L Taylor	Clerk services and expenses April 2026	£439.43
Audit Wales	Audit Fees 2022/23 Full Audit	£525.00
Audit Wales	Audit Fees 2023/24 Basic Audit	£210.00
Nigel Graham	Supplies to support community gates and planters project	£306.07
Catherine Williams	Internal audit 25 26	£360.00

Resolution: To approval the payments. Proposed by Cllr. Astill-Parsons and seconded by all members. The Chair and Cllr. Biggs signed the cheques.

20. Date of the next meeting.

- 18 Jun 26 at Penrhos Church at 7pm
- The Clerk noted that meeting for the rest of the financial year need to be decided and will produce a schedule at the next meeting.

Meeting closed at 8.50pm