

Whitecastle Community Council

Cyngor Cymuned Castellgwyn

Les Taylor
Clerk to the council
2 Firs Road
Llanvapley
Abergavenny
NP7 8SL



Les Taylor
Clerc y cyngor
2 Heol y Pinwydd
Llanfable
Y Fenni
NP7 8SL

Web: whitecastlecommunitycouncil.co.uk
email: whitecastlecommunitycouncil@gmail.com

Minutes of the Council Meeting 9 April 2026 7.00pm at Penrhos Church

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), County Councillor Ian Chandler, Carl Touhig, Monmouthshire County Council Highways Department. (arrived 7.15pm)

Public Speaking

Eleven members of the public from the Penrhos ward attended the meeting. The Chair invited residents to raise any concerns prior to the formal business commencing.

The first resident raised concerns about the condition of the ward's roads, highlighting the significant number of serious potholes. It was noted that no action appears to have been taken, even in terms of temporary repairs. The "top road" was specifically identified as being in particularly poor condition.

Two residents drew attention to the stretch of road near the Old Post Office, where standing water regularly accumulates. This has resulted in damage to vehicles and has caused financial hardship for those affected.

A local farmer acknowledged that, in some instances, road maintenance had been carried out to a good standard; however, he emphasised that substandard repairs too often lead to recurring issues, with work failing to last.

Another resident reported that certain roads within the ward have become effectively unusable and are now being avoided altogether.

A final comment highlighted the risks posed to pedestrians, including dog walkers and runners, particularly where deep potholes fill with water.

The Chair thanked residents for their contributions and confirmed that these concerns would be addressed later in the meeting. The Chair welcomed Carl Touhig from Monmouthshire County Council Highways Department and explained that item 13 (to consider highway matters) would be brought forward and considered after item 3. This was explained to members of the public who left before highway matters were discussed.

1. To accept apologies for absence.

None

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

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

3. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meetings held on 19 February 2026.

Resolution: to accept the minutes as a true record of proceedings. Proposed by Cllr. Biggs and seconded by Cllr. Graham. The minutes were signed by the Chair of the Council.

4. Matters arising from the previous meeting

The Clerk reported that all actions from the previous meeting had been completed. However, the preparation of a document to support the Council's engagement with residents remains outstanding. Cllr. Duncan offered to assist the Clerk in developing this document, and a meeting will be arranged in due course to progress this work.

5. To consider correspondence.

The following matters were circulated to members as part of regular councillor email updates. Members were invited to provide any additional comments. The Clerk added that the levels of councillor remuneration set out in the Annual Remuneration Report remain unchanged from 2025/26.

- Elected Members Guidance to infrastructure consenting.
- The best practice guide for pre-application consultation for the Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024.
- Monmouthshire Cultural Celebration and Networking event March 25th 2026.
- Changes to political restrictions for roles in community councils.
- Publication of the Annual Remuneration Report 2026/27.
- One Voice Wales - Compliance with IT standards.
- Community Litter Picking Group in Newcastle.
- Update on the unsafe monument in Llangattock Vibon Avel Churchyard.
- Cross Ash School News
- Training Dates - March - June 2026
- Audit Wales notification
- Cross Ash PTFA 'Three Castles Walk'.
- Burial and Cremation Final Report.
- Monmouth Town Council flood relief fund.
- Monmouthshire School Admissions Forum.
- Bryn Deri Road closure.

6. Councillor ward matters

- Cllr Graham was thanked for his work in completing the traffic-calming project and was asked to submit an invoice for materials purchased.
- Cllr. Metters reported on the success of Pubtopia CIC in obtaining a grant to enable it to improve and extend its village shop.

7. County Councillor's report

Cllr. Chandler had previously updated the Community Council on these matters:

- Welsh Water works in Newcastle. Residents have been informed.
- Storm Claudia Section 19 Flood Report - Survey

8. Community Groups

- Cllr. Graham reported his work with residents of Llantilio Crossenny on the placing a planter in the community. The project was launched at a meeting of Llanvapley and District Gardening Club in March. Other community groups have also invited been invited to apply for planters. Cllr. Metters said that residents in Tal-y-Coed had also shown an interest and will provide the information to Cllr. Graham.
- There was a meeting of the Village Life Community Project on 2 April. The minutes of the meeting have not as yet been circulated.
- Cllr. Graham reported on an informal litter picking community group in Newcastle / St Maughans.
- The Village Quilters were involved in the launch of a Bio Tapestry on 6 March in Newport.

9. Clerk's report

- Arrangements for council meetings up to September have been completed
- The Clerk attended a Monmouthshire Cultural Celebration and Networking event on 25 March in Abergavenny. Monmouthshire's Cultural Strategy was launched at the event. The Clerk has applied to represent the Community Council and its community groups on a new MCC Culture Forum.

10. To discuss the Council's compliance with IT standards.

- The Clerk had responded to a request from One Voice Wales to provide an update on progress made following a Digital Health Check Report in 2025. The council supports multi-access meetings and has made use of social media since last year. The council now has a gov.uk domain name. A gov.wales domain was not chosen because of the cost of this registration. Members were unsure of the efficacy of introducing new email accounts linked to a gov.uk domain name.
- **Resolution** To change the domain name of the council website to www.whitecastlecommunitycouncil.gov.uk but to retain personal email addresses for members. Proposed by Cllr Astill-Parsons and seconded by Cllr Lewis.

11. To discuss the allocation of Rockfield flood relief funds.

The Mayor of Monmouth has extended support for residents affected by Storm Claudia (November 2025) to include those living in the Rockfield and St Maughans ward. Whitecastle Community Council has been allocated £3,000 to administer locally, with funds to be distributed according to individual need within the community. Members discussed how best to implement the scheme and agreed it would be appropriate to work in partnership with Skenfrith Community Council, which has also received funding. The Clerk was asked to follow up this matter with Skenfrith Community Council to explore establishing a joint scheme.

12. To consider planning matters.

- The Community Council has informed the County Council of possible unauthorised development on Grove Road Newcastle.
- The council has received information from Welsh Government entitled “Meaningful Consultation, Lasting Impact: The best practice guide for pre-application consultation for the Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024” and “Elected Members Guidance to infrastructure consenting”. The changes are important and will form part of the consideration of future infrastructure projects in the community.
- **DM/2026/00406** 2 April 2026
Listed Building Consent Heritage 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.
The council received notification of the application before Easter but details only appeared on the planning portal a short time before this meeting. Members have been unable to consider its response to the application. The Chair offered to meet with residents and members of St. Cadoc's Community to enable the council to respond before the deadline of 23 April.

13. To consider highways matters.

Roads

The Chair decided to discuss this item before item 4 and to invite Carl Touhig (Head of Monmouthshire County Council Highways) to address residents concerns and to answer members' questions after routine matters had been discussed.

- The road closures in March in Llantilio Crossenny and work has been completed. The closures were announced on the Community Council website. The highways department was contacted and asked to include resurfacing and pothole work during the road closures. No reply was received.
- Residents in Llanvolda Lane, Hendre contacted the Community Council about missing HGV signs on the lane which is leading to problems for residents. New signs have been ordered.
- Following concerns raised by residents and members of the council the council asked the Highways department to consider adding an additional sign in the 30mph zone in Tal-y-Coed. No reply has been received.
- A resident of Penrhos reported problems in the ward. The matter had already been reported by the Community Council.
- A resident of Llanfaenor reported the state of the road which links the community to the B4233. The matter has been resolved.
- Cllr Graham expressed concern that road markings had not yet been completed as part of the new Newcastle signage scheme. The County Council has confirmed that this work is still in progress.
- A resident of Llanfaenor has asked if an informal community group would be allowed to clean road signs. This was clarified with the Head of Highways and the advice was not to undertake any work

which might be considered dangerous and to inform the department of the work which has been completed.

CT left the meeting at 8.00pm.

A report on the question and answer session with the Head of Highways (Carl Touhig (CT))

- Cllr Metters requested clarification on the process followed by the County Council when closing roads, noting that diversion signage is not always clear and can discourage drivers from entering the area. CT outlined the Council's procedures and acknowledged that diversion arrangements can be challenging, as they must accommodate all road users.
- Cllr Graham asked whether roads are inspected on an annual basis. CT responded that this is the intention; however, due to workload pressures, inspections may occasionally be delayed, and the Council relies on residents to report issues. CT also confirmed that the Council inspects work carried out by utility companies to ensure roads are left in good condition, and that action is taken where problems are identified. Concerns were raised regarding speeding and parking near the Montessori School. CT advised that additional parking has been provided by the school and that the County Council is considering monitoring vehicle speeds in the area to assess the extent of the issue.
- Cllr Lewis commented on the poor standard of some repair work. CT acknowledged these concerns and highlighted the constraints posed by the volume of reported issues and budget limitations. In response to a question regarding staffing and equipment, CT stated that current resources allow the Council to manage its workload within budget.
- Cllr Duncan asked about pothole repairs. CT noted, by way of example, that 900 potholes were reported in January alone.
- Cllr Astill-Parsons asked about the Council's priorities and whether requests from the Community Council are given precedence. CT explained that all reports are treated equally.
- Cllr Biggs reported that some roads in the Penrhos ward have deteriorated to the point of being effectively unusable due to structural failure. CT offered to meet with Cllr Biggs on site to review the issues and determine appropriate action.

Rights of Way

The Rights of Way department has been contacted to confirm the date and time of a Community Task Day to inspect the footpath from Llantilio Crossenny to Tal-y-Coed. Dates were suggested but no reply has been received.

14. To discuss churchyard matters.

Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern

- Thanks were expressed to Cllr Lewis and Cllr Biggs for organising the clearance of the southern boundary of the churchyard and for making safe the unstable monument identified during the annual inspection in January. The Community Council was unable to establish ownership of the grave and therefore took appropriate action to ensure it was made safe. A public notice was placed on the Council's website for six weeks, but no responses were received. The Clerk will inspect the completed work and report back to the Council.
- The Clerk reported that the program of grass cutting and tidying up had begun in time for Easter.
- A member of the church committee contacted the council about the bottom end of the path and the issue with the culvert and water overspilling and taking away the bottom of the path and the flooding on the road. This issue has been raised with Highways and an update will be requested.

Llangattock Vibon Avel

- The council has confirmed a gardening agreement for 2026 but has not inspected the work.
- Action has been taken to establish responsibility for the unsafe monument identified in the annual inspection in January. Responsibility has been established and the family have agreed to make the monument safe. Quotations have been received and the The Sir Henry Royce Memorial Foundation has generously offered to contribute to the costs. The Clerk will follow of the progress of the work.
- The Clerk is seeking an additional quotation for the repair of a small section of the tarmac path from the church to the war memorial and will update members in due course.

The Law Commission published its final report on Burial and Cremation in March. The report does not recommend any legislative change to permit Church in Wales churchyards to be transferred to community councils, as occurred with Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern in 1924. However, it does include a number of recommendations that the Council should consider. For example, Recommendation 7

calls on the Welsh Government to issue non-statutory guidance on the appropriate maintenance of different types of burial grounds. It is anticipated that, as a result, churchyards may be subject to inspection to ensure that maintenance standards are being properly met.

15. To consider policing matters.

- The latest police report has been received by the council and published on the council website to inform residents.
- In addition, the council receives advice notes which may be of interest to all residents and the Clerk offered to publish them on the website if appropriate.

16. To consider the use of the council's website and community council noticeboards.

- The Clerk reported the the council's copyright policy and a list members' personal and pecuniary interests have been added to the website.
- The budget for 2026/27 includes funds to replace the Noticeboard in Llantilio Crossenny. No action on the location of design of the board has been taken. Members were asked to consider the possible options.

17. Biodiversity Report

No update

18. To consider financial matters.

- The Council has been notified that a full audit by Audit Wales will take place for the 2025/26 financial year. The Clerk will aim to complete all required work within the specified deadline and will work closely with the Chair to ensure that all records are accurate and that the necessary documentation is submitted to the Auditor General. The first stage of the process will be the completion of the Accounting Statement and the Governance Statement. Following this, the accounts and supporting information will be presented to the Internal Auditor for review. The findings of the internal audit will then be reported to the Council for approval at its June meeting.
- Audit Wales has failed to cash two cheques provided by the council in September 2025. A request for approval of payment will be made later in the year.
- The Clerk presented the following payments for approval:
Cllr. Lewis declared an interest in this matter.

Monmouthshire County Council	Dog waste bags March 2026	£57.60
Society of Local Council Clerks	2026 27 membership additional payment	£42.00
One Voice Wales	Membership 26 27	£265.00
L Taylor	Secretarial duties February 2026 /March 2026 plus expenses	£1,011.18
Nettle2Petals	Gardening services LYL March 26	£120.00
Rockfield Barn	Venue Hire July / December 2025	£100.00
A Vines	Handbell parts for repair	£160.20
C Lewis	Maintenance work on Llanvihangel-y-stern-llewern Churchyard	£250.00

Members scrutinised the payment requests.

Resolution: To accept and approve the payments. This was agreed unanimously. Cllr. Lewis did not take part in the vote.

- The Clerk explained that he had been unable to provide financial Reports due to bank statements being received late. A full year end report will be provided for the Annual Meeting in May.

19. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting.

The next meeting will be an Annual Meeting and a full council meeting at The Hogs Head, Great Treadam, NP7 8TA on Thursday 14 May.

Meeting closed at 9.00pm

