

Whitecastle Community Council

Cyngor Cymuned Castellgwyn

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Unapproved Minutes of the Council Meeting 11 April 2024 7.30pm at The Hogs Head, Treadam

Present : Cllr. C. Lewis (Chair), Cllr. J. Biggs, Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons

In attendance : L. Taylor (Clerk), County Cllr. I. Chandler

Public Speaking : The chair welcomed a resident of Newcastle ward to the meeting. Mr Nigel Graham is interested in the work of the council and explained his background. The Chair thanked Mr Graham and asked him to make a formal application to be co-opted. Mr Graham remained for the rest of the meeting.

1. To accept apologies for absence.

Cllr. D. Edwards, Cllr. L. Hughes

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

None. Members agreed to disclose any relevant interests should they be relevant to any discussions.

3. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 February 2023.

Resolved: The minutes from the full council meeting held on 15 February 2024 were agreed as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr. J. Biggs and seconded by Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons and agreed unanimously.

4. Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

- Members discussed the Civility and Respect Pledge. The Chair proposed signing the pledge to reduce the impact of bullying, harassment and intimidation.
Resolved: For the chair to sign the pledge on behalf of the council. Proposed by Cllr. J. Biggs and seconded by Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons and agreed unanimously.
- The framed portrait of King Charles has been received by the council and will be on show at the next council meeting. Members were asked to suggest how the picture could be displayed.
- Information about MCC's Chair's Charity Music Showcase and the Future Generations Commissioner's 'Cymru Can' project were passed on as requested.
- A copy of the Staff Support, Appraisal and Performance policy has been added to the website.
- Comments made by members about application DM/2023/01769 were sent to the planning department.
- The clerk has contacted members of the Village Life Project to organise further discussions on developing a partnership with the community council to ensure reliable management of defibrillators in the community area.

5. To consider the use of the council's website.

The clerk reminded members of recent changes to the website and asked for comments. Following information received by the clerk, the Chair discussed the possibility of changing the domain name of the council website. Community councils are being encouraged to change to a .gov.uk domain name. The clerk outlined the benefits and costs of the change and the possibility of introducing new email addresses for members. The Chair suggested the council maintains existing arrangements which were considered to be appropriate.

6. Clerk's Report

The clerk informed members of the information and support he receives from the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and reported he had attended a social media course run by One Voice Wales in February

7. To consider correspondence.

One Voice Wales

- A joint event took place with One Voice Wales and Planning Aid Wales.
- Community and town councils have been asked to support the D-DAY 80 Flag Of Peace campaign. Skenfrith Community Council has been contacted on this matter to see if Cross Ash School can be involved.
- A subscription renewal letter has been received. Members supported continuing membership of One Voice Wales.
- Annual Financial Timetable of Actions has been published.
- Training dates have been published and emailed to councillors.
- Agenda for the Newport Area Committee Meeting.
- A Cost-of-Living Crisis Project has been set up to assist Community and Town Councils in further supporting their communities.
- Pre-election Period Timetable of Actions.

Monmouthshire County Council

- Monmouthshire becoming an Age-Friendly County. Cllr. I. Chandler explained the aims of the project and members asked to be kept informed.
- Public Spaces Protection Order 2024 (Dog Control) has been approved.
- Invitation to Ramadan Community Iftari Event.
- Plans for Ysgol Gymraeg Trefynwy have been announced. The school will open in September and Whitecastle Community is part of the catchment area.
- Information about the Local Toilet Strategy has been passed to Llanfihangel Ystern Llewern Church Committee. Cllr Lewis asked for further information.
- Charity Afternoon Tea at the Three Salmons Hotel.
- Upcoming bird ID and survey skills training.
- Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership Spring newsletter.
- Citizen Science Projects.
- The county council is to review its contract for milk following concerns about its Local Food Strategy. Members supported this review.
- MCC Local Food Strategy informal consultation.

General

- Hedgehogs R Us Highway Project
- Request For Nominations For The Kings New Year 2025 Honours
- The King's Awards for Voluntary Service.
- Appeal campaign for the National Eisteddfod Rhondda Cynon Taf 2024.
- The Urdd's Fund for All free place scheme.

- Severn Wye Energy Advice Services in Monmouthshire are looking for venues for meetings.

8. Councillor reports

- Cllr. Astill-Parsons updated members about progress with the installation of a notice board at the Hendre. The bus shelter has been removed and the board is expected to be in place shortly. Members were informed of her work to develop a Biodiversity Action Plan for the council. The council's membership of the Local Nature Partnership is providing support for the development of the policy. Members were made aware of The National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme and the Bees of Monmouthshire Recording Project.
- Cllr Hughes was unable to attend the meeting and had given her apologies. She is contacting Cross Ash School PTFA to find out if the community council can support any of its projects. Cllr Hughes was thanked for handing over a cheque to Llantilio church committee.
- Cllr. Lewis reported his meeting with the Crucorney branch of Gwent Young Farmers.
- Cllr. Biggs expressed his concern and dissatisfaction with the Sustainable Farming Scheme. He also brought up the issue of the removal of apple trees from the orchards in Penrhos. Members were concerned about the commercial decision made by the owners but Cllr. Biggs reminded members of the local opposition to the project when the trees were first planted.

9. County Councillor's report

Cllr. Chandler discussed the project to make Monmouthshire an Age-Friendly County. He is asking community councils to nominate one of its members to be a champion for older people. Members were interested in the project and asked to be informed of developments.

10. Training and professional development

The clerk informed members that any training received by members would be recorded in a training record.

11. To consider planning matters.

Previous applications

DM/2023/01769 Grange Farm Upper House Lane is still under consultation until 24 April.

DM/2023/00195 Woodlands Farm, Penrhos. The delegated panel of the planning department met on 14 March and approved the application with conditions.

New applications

DM/2023/01417 27 February 2024 and **DM/2024/00261** 26 March 2024 Listed Building Consent Heritage and Planning Permission for the reinstatement of former stables to main house at Hilston Park Outdoor Education Facility Crossway Newcastle NP25 5NY.

Members were supportive of the proposed developments and recommended approval.

Members were made aware of **DM/2024/00342**. The application was for installing a treatment plant for barns at Pant y Colyn Farm, Llanvetherine which was completed in February 2005. The application did not need public consultation.

12. To consider financial matters.

- The clerk presented financial statements up to 29 February 2024. The statements consisted of a bank reconciliation, a balance sheet and an actual spend versus budget analysis. The financial statements were accepted by members and signed by the Chair in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations.

Resolution To approve the reports. Proposed by Cllr. J. Biggs and seconded by Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons and agreed unanimously.

- The clerk asked members for approval of an amendment to financial regulations to allow the clerk to liaise with the Chair to approve training costs in situations when there is a need to do so.

Resolution To change Item 4.1 of the council's regulations to say 'the Clerk, in conjunction with Chairman of Council or Chairman of the appropriate committee, for any training items below £500. Such authority is to be evidenced by a Minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chairman'. Proposed by Cllr. J. Biggs and seconded by Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons and agreed unanimously.

- The clerk informed members of receipt of the Audit Notice 2024 on 18 March from Audit Wales. The clerk explained the steps involved in the auditing of the council's accounts and the requirement for the council to approve an annual report on the financial and governance arrangements of the council.
- The clerk informed members of the average council tax levels in Monmouthshire and the average precept levels in the county. Precept levels in Whitecastle Community are significantly lower than other community areas.
- The clerk asked for approval of the following payments. The Chair examined invoices and documentation to confirm accuracy of the payments.

L Taylor	Secretarial duties February 24 + expenses	£633.70
L Taylor	Secretarial duties March 24 + expenses	£378.95
One Voice Wales	Training Fees January 24	£38.00
HMRC	Overdue payments inc interest	£14.50

13. Community Groups

Approved financial support of community groups and churches has been given and thanks received.

14. To consider highways matters.

- The work to improve the condition of the roads in Llantilio Crossenny village (scheduled for April 2024) is no longer in MCC's weekly road report. MCC has been contacted and the council's concerns have been forwarded to the appropriate officer.
- An emergency road closure in Llantilio took place without the council being informed. The closure was reported on the council website following a request for further information.
- Members were informed of a capital investment of £150,000 to allow for maintenance works to be undertaken on footpaths and bridges across the county's public rights of way network in 2024/25. Cllr. Astill-Parsons expressed her concern of the effect this will have on the work to replace bridges in the community council area and asked if there was anything the community council could do to help.
- The replacement of the bridge on Offas Dyke National Trail adjacent to White Castle has not been scheduled. Construction of the replacement bridge is expected to take place during 24/25.
- Members of the MCC Local Access Forum have been approved and will meet shortly.
- The Chair reported an incident involving a culvert and a horse in Treadam. This has been resolved.
- A report of a tree over the road in Llantilio on 28 February was resolved.
- Cllr. Biggs reported on highway work in Penrhos and commented that repairs to the carriageway didn't last long due to the use of 'cold fill' methods. The lack of capacity of the council to deal with the number of problems was recognised as a significant issue.
- Cllr. Lewis reported a blocked drain at Treadam and asked the clerk to report it.
- Cllr. Chandler reported speed limits in Maypole and St Maughans are under consultation but was unaware of progress to change the speed limit in The Hendre.

15. To discuss churchyard matters.

- The cutting schedule for Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern Churchyard has been modified following a request from the church committee. A new quotation has been received which is acceptable.

- The installation of the bench in Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern Churchyard is scheduled to take place in the near future. The work has been approved by the council and is being undertaken by the Jubilee group.
- Monmouthshire County Council's Public Spaces Protection Order (Dog Control) has come into effect. Both churchyards will be 'Dogs on Lead' zones and signs will be put up to alert visitors. MCC will be involved in the installation and will be looking to recover costs from the community council.
- The updating of the information board at Llangattock Vibon Avel Churchyard has not progressed.
- A copy of a Churchyard Policy had been circulated before the meeting. The clerk outlined the contents of the policy and asked members for comments. The policy requires a member of the council to be the churchyard safety officer who will liaise with the clerk to ensure effective management of the churchyards. Cllr. Astill-Parsons offered to take on this role and to work with the clerk to check the policy before asking the council to approve it.

16. To consider policing matters.

Members had already been given copies of recent monthly reports.

Cllr. Lewis commented favourably on the visibility of the rural police team. Cllr. Biggs thanked the police for its good support in dealing with matters which have arisen in Penrhos ward.

17. Any other business

- The clerk asked the council to review the use of community council notice boards which were underused at the moment. The support of ward members to maintain and update boards is needed where this is possible. Cllr. Biggs asked the council to consider the installation of a board in Penrhos. The clerk was asked to provide a quotation.
- Date of the next meeting is Thursday 9 May at 7.30pm at The Hogs Head, Treadam. The meeting will be the AGM and will be followed by a full council meeting.
- Meeting closed at 21.16