

Whitecastle Community Council

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Minutes for the Council Meeting 20 March 2025 7.30pm at the Hogs Head, Treadam

Present : Cllr. C. Lewis, Cllr. J. Biggs, Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons, Cllr. N. Graham (from 7.50pm), Cllr. L. Hughes (from 7.45pm), County Cllr. I. Chandler

In attendance : L. Taylor (Clerk)

Members of the public : R. Metters

Public Speaking

Rhiannon Metters from the Halfway House in Tal-y-Coed provided an update on **Pubtopia Community Interest Company (CIC)**, which operates from The Halfway. The CIC, managed by three directors, has secured funding from *Pub is The Hub* to purchase a marquee and a fridge. These resources will support the establishment of a village shop and facilitate community workshops and wellbeing activities for the farming community. The CIC has also received advice and guidance from the *Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations* to aid its development. The village shop has now been open for two weeks, and the first workshop is scheduled for 19 April. The Chair thanked Rhiannon for her update and requested that the council be kept informed of the CIC's progress.

1. To accept apologies for absence.

None received.

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

It was resolved any declarations of interest should be stated during the course of the meeting.

3. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 January 2025.

Resolution : To approve the minutes of the council meeting on 30 January. Proposed by Cllr. J. Biggs and seconded by Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons. The Chair signed the minutes.

4. Matters arising from the previous meeting.

The council contacted Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) Footpaths Department, emphasising its commitment to preventing the forwarding of vexatious or inaccurate complaints. Furthermore, the council agreed that anonymous complaints cannot be addressed.

5. To consider correspondence.

The Chair asked members to comment on any of the correspondence listed below which had been circulated beforehand.

Electoral Register 2024-25
Digital Guidance from One Voice Wales
Gwent Music - Chair's Charity Music Showcase
Licensing Applications in the community
Latest Development Notes from One Voice Wales (OVW)
Cadoc's, Llangattock Lingoed's Living Churchyard Project

Electoral numbers
Neighbourhood Policing Update
SSAFA Wales Community Council appeal 2025
Welsh Parliament Local Government and Housing Committee report into the Role, Governance and Accountability of the Community and Town Council Sector.
Gwent Young Farmers Clubs appeal letter
One Voice Wales Training
Invitation to Ramadan Community Iftari Event
Biodiversity and Ecosystems Resilience Duty
St Cadoc's Organ Appeal Llangattock Vibon Avel
Community Council Precepts in Monmouthshire 2025/26
OVW and Planning Aid Wales Joint Event 27 March
OVW new website

The council has received appeal letters from Gwent Young Farmers Clubs in the past. It decided to contact the organisation again in the autumn to enable it to consider support in 2026/27. The council discussed St Cadoc's Organ Appeal and decided not to support the appeal.

6. Councillor reports.

- Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons reported that she had been contacted by several members of the community about the events which took place in Tal-y-coed woods over the weekend on 15/16 March. The Glynduro Events Group had organised motorbike events in the woods. She contacted the owners of the woodlands and expressed concerns about the noise, signage and the condition of the tracks after the event.
- Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons attended a remote training event on Community Engagement on 26 February and discussed the possibility of the council producing a newsletter.
- Cllr. N. Graham provided an update on the village gates in Newcastle. Measurements and photographs had been produced and the gates are to be ordered. He confirmed he will be able to install the gates.

7. County Councillor's report.

County Cllr. I. Chandler reported that residents are experiencing issues with smart meters due to poor mobile phone coverage. In some cases, this prevents them from fully accessing the services offered. Members were informed of the current consultation on the Monmouth Town Improvement Plan. The county council is addressing residents' concerns about potholes and more money is coming through from Welsh Government. Monmouthshire County Council observed Covid Memorial Day on 9 March and a special memorial quilt, sewn by the Caldicot Stitched Together Group was unveiled.

8. Community Groups

- Members of the council will be meeting with Village Life on Friday 28 April 10am in St Maughans to discuss the work of the group in the community.
- The Village Quilters are meeting on 22 March in Llanvapley Pavilion and will be working on biotapestry project.

9. Clerk's report

- Members' Allowance payments for 2025/26 will be submitted for approval at the September council meeting. The Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales will be reviewed at the July meeting, where the provisions for 2026/27 will be decided.
- One Voice Wales has published a set of digital guidance documents. Members now have access to its new website, which offers a wide range of resources.
- The council's insurance policy expires in June, and an alternative quote has been requested from Zurich.
- A resident recently alerted the council to a suspicious email linked to the council's website. Advice from OVW confirmed it was a scam.

10. To consider planning matters.

DM/2025/00166 20 February 2025 Proposed new open fronted carport, secure garage and store with accommodation over. Nantygern B4347 Turners Wood To Porthygaelod Farm St Maughans
The current building is set back from the road and reconstruction shouldn't impact on the area. One consideration should be the runoff of water from a field, which gathers in the dip in the road, then flows onto and through the building in question. The council assumes this would be dealt with as part of the development. The council supports approval of the application.

DM/2025/00231 17 March 2025 The Cwtch Llangattock Barn The Grange To Llanvolda Road
Llangattock Vibon Avel NP25 5NG

Replace damaged boundary wooden picket fencing (600mm high from track height) following storm damage to the front of the property (Eastern boundary) with a stone wall to be no greater than this height. Proposed wall will match and be in keeping with the original stone South boundary wall.
Replace wooden north facing boundary fence currently 950mm high with a stone wall maximum height 1800mm (note: this wall height will be a min 450mm lower than the track height).
The wall is in keeping with the building and will not cause any problems to others. The council supports approval of the application.

11. To consider highways matters.

- The council tracks reports submitted to the Highways department and is actively monitoring the progress in addressing the reported issues. The most recent report, submitted on 24 February, concerns the deteriorating condition of the road edges near Tavern Cottage in Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern, and it is currently under review. A report from 31 January regarding a collapsed drain/culvert in Penrhos was mistakenly listed with an incorrect address. Additionally, the report submitted on 13 February regarding the poor condition of the road near Bottom Farm in Penrhos has not yet appeared on the county council's service request list.
- Cllr. J. Biggs and County Cllr. I. Chandler held a site meeting in Penrhos on 28 February to discuss highways issues. Following the meeting, Cllr. I. Chandler raised the issues with the highway department and progress has been made in resolving the issues.
- Cllr. N. Graham reported damage to the village sign in Newcastle.

12. To discuss churchyard matters.

Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern Churchyard

- Pre-season maintenance work has begun to tidy up Llanvihangel-Ystern-Llewern Churchyard.
- On 12 March, the Chair and Clerk met to review the churchyard boundaries. Following a request from the Chair at the previous meeting, the Director of Property Strategy for The Church in Wales provided a copy of the 1925 transfer document, which assigned responsibility for the churchyard and its walls to the parish council. The Chair referred to the Welsh Church (Burial Grounds) Act 1945, which does not clarify the status of churchyards previously transferred to local authority control. The Chair acknowledged that maintaining the churchyard remains the responsibility of the community council.
- The Chair had previously discussed the issue of the southern boundary wall with the landowner. The wall collapsed in the 1970s and was replaced with a stock fence. Over time, the boundary has become overgrown, and it was agreed to collaborate with the landowner to remove trees and bushes as soon as possible. **Resolution:** To expedite the clearance work while ensuring costs remain controlled, as the churchyard maintenance budget has already been set. Proposed by Cllr. J. Biggs and seconded by Cllr. C. Lewis.
- An inspection of the other boundary walls identified minor issues with the wall adjacent to the Offa's Dyke footpath and the roadside wall on the eastern side of the churchyard. Cllr. J. Biggs offered to consult a local builder and report back to the council on their availability and estimated costs.
- The county council has provided "Dogs on Leads" signs as part of the Public Spaces Protection Order (Dog Fouling). The church committee has been asked to erect three signs at entrances to the churchyard.

Llangattock Vibon Avel

- The set of handbells owned by the council has been permanently loaned to the St Cadoc's Community. The group has been asked to keep the council informed of the repair and use of the handbells.

- A new bench has been selected by the group to replace the broken bench next to the war memorial and will be ordered for delivery in the near future.
- Arrangements for churchyard maintenance are hand. The council is awaiting confirmation of dates.

Churches Count on Nature The conservation charity 'Caring for God's Acre' is running a Love your Burial Ground Week and a Churches Count on Nature event from Saturday 7th of June to Sunday the 15th of June. Churches in the community will be informed of this event.

Local Toilet Strategy The Clerk has contacted Monmouthshire's Environmental Health Officer Alun Thomas and has asked the county council to include local church toilets in its Local Toilet Strategy. Financial support may be available.

Llangattock Lingoed's Living Churchyard Project The clerk attended a meeting on 7 March in Llangattock Lingoed to find out how the local community is looking after the churchyard.

Management Plan update and Risk assessment The council's Churchyard Management Plan has been updated and a risk assessment made for Llanfihangel-ystern-llewern churchyard.

13. To consider policing matters.

The January and February police had been circulated to members. No comments or local reports were made.

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

- During a meeting with members of Rockfield Church, a request was made for access to the noticeboard in Rockfield Village. This would allow the church to post its notices in the village and the council to place its notices in the cabinet. The Clerk provided a key to the churchwarden at St. Cenadlon Church and will coordinate with the other churchwarden when council notices need to be displayed.
- Cllr. J. Biggs had spoken with the members of the community about the use and location of a noticeboard in Penrhos. It was agreed to go ahead with this project and for the clerk to contact local carpenters.

15. To consider a training plan.

The Clerk circulated a training plan and highlighted the importance of members completing mandatory training. The plan stressed the need for the council to maintain a record of completed training. Members agreed that this was especially important for new members.

16. To consider financial matters.

- Financial statements had been circulated to members and the Clerk asked the Chair to inspect and sign the statements. **Resolution** : to approve the balance sheet, bank reconciliation, budget report and receipts and payments records. Proposed by Cllr. N. Graham and seconded by Cllr. C. Lewis.
- The clerk presented a list of payments for approval.

L Taylor	Secretarial duties January / February 2024 plus expenses	£842.40
One Voice Wales	Cllr Astill-Parsons remote training x 2	£80.00
Audit Wales	2019/20 Audit Fee Llangattock-Vibon-Avel CC	£200.00
Audit Wales	2020/21 Audit Fee Llangattock-Vibon-Avel CC	£368.00
Nettles2Petals	Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern churchyard February 2025	£108.00
Black Country Metal Works	Bench for Llangattock Vibon Avel Churchyard	£297.00
Cross Ash PTFA	Support for school project S137 funding	£400.00
One Voice Wales	Membership 2025 26	£254.00
Total		£2,549.40

17. To consider recent reports from Audit Wales and the 2024/25 audit timetable.

- The council has received the 2022-23 and 2023-24 audit reports and circulated them to members. The comments made by the auditor were noted. The council has posted the statutory notices on a community noticeboard and published the reports on the website.
- The Clerk explained that the approved payments to Audit Wales were not for these reports. The payments were for previous payments which were sent to the address on the invoice which was incorrect.
- The Clerk notified members that he had contacted the internal auditor about the 2024/25 audit and all arrangements were in hand.

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

8 May 7.30pm at The Hogs Head, Treadam. This meeting will be the Annual General Meeting and an ordinary council meeting. The Chair notified members of his intention to stand down as Chair at the AGM.

Meeting closed 21.20