

# Whitecastle Community Council Cyngor Cymuned Castellgwyn

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## **Minutes of the Council Meeting 16 January 2025 7.30pm at the Sports Pavilion, Llanvapley**

**Present :** Cllr. C Lewis (Chair), Cllr. J. Biggs, Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons, Cllr. L. Hughes (from 7.45pm)

**In attendance :** L. Taylor (Clerk), County Cllr. I. Chandler (from 8pm)

**Members of the public :** N. Sanders (St Maughans Church Committee), N. Smith (St Michael's Church Committee), G. Edmunds (St Cenhadlon's Church Committee), M. Parry (Llantilio Crossenny Church Committee) and L. Morris (Llantilio Crossenny Women's Institute)

### **Public Speaking**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited members of the public to address the council.

Lin Morris thanked the council for its continued support in 2024. While membership numbers have slightly declined, a comprehensive programme of activities has been planned for 2025.

Nick Sanders expressed the gratitude of the St Maughans Church Committee for the council's assistance in maintaining the churchyard, as well as the closed section of St Cadoc's churchyard in Llangattock Vibon Avel.

Nigel Smith conveyed the church committee's appreciation for the council's support and engagement, highlighting the particularly valued contributions of Cllr. Astill-Parsons.

Glyn Edmunds informed the council that its support has been instrumental in sustaining the rural church and ensuring the churchyard is maintained to a high standard.

### **1. To accept apologies for absence.**

Cllr. N. Graham, Cllr. D. Edwards

### **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. Council budget for 2025/26**

The Chair opened the discussions by explaining its purpose: to discuss and agree on the budget for 2025/26. While the Clerk had presented a draft budget at the December meeting, it was decided to call an extraordinary meeting to allow more time for discussion. The Chair reminded members that the budget could be funded either by increasing the precept or by utilising the council's reserves. The Clerk emphasised the importance of

smaller councils maintaining reserves at a significant proportion of the annual budget.

The Clerk then raised several key points for members' consideration:

### **Website and IT**

The projected cost for website and IT is set to rise to £1,000, allowing the council to consider purchasing a new laptop in 2025/26.

### **Member Costs**

Member costs are projected to remain at £2,496, consistent with 2024/25, as allowance levels have not changed.

### **Premises Costs**

Premises costs are expected to increase by £20 in 2025. Members discussed ongoing difficulties in obtaining an invoice for the use of the regular venue but reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring payment is made.

### **Insurance**

The council's insurance premium is anticipated to rise slightly.

### **Churchyard Maintenance**

The Clerk and Cllr. Astill-Parsons presented a budget for maintaining the council's two churchyards. Grass cutting remains the primary expense, but additional maintenance is needed to restore the churchyards to the expected standard. The projected budget for this was set at £2,550.

### **Services and Subscriptions**

Projected costs for services and subscriptions are expected to rise due to increased audit fees for internal and external audits. The council is still awaiting Audit Wales reports for 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25, creating some uncertainty around the total cost.

### **Grants and Donations**

The council has established a system for providing grants and donations to community groups that support the community. The projected budget for this was set at £6,400.

Members discussed its level of support for each group in detail:

It was agreed to increase support for church committees to enable maintenance of churchyards. (Cllr. Biggs declared an interest in Penrhos Church) Support for most community groups was deemed appropriate, with some groups considered sustainable without additional aid. After much discussion, the council approved a £250 grant to Monmouthshire Citizens Advice. A request for £2,500 from the Village Life Community Project was also approved to help establish its partnership with the council.

### **Training Costs**

Training costs are not projected to increase.

### **Community Services and Maintenance**

The Clerk presented a budget for community services, including the maintenance of village signs, footpaths, benches and noticeboards. This budget would enable the council to consider new noticeboards in two wards and a bench in another. Discussions with the county council's Rights of Way department are ongoing, and the council expressed a willingness to support its work provided it delivers significant community benefits. A budget of £1,000 was agreed, with further discussions planned on its use.

### **Contingency Funds**

It was proposed to maintain funds for contingencies at their current level.

### **Employee costs**

The Chair explained that the council may have to consider the hours of work of the clerk as a result of the workload involved in administering community grants and services.

**Resolution:** To approve a budget of £27,462 for 2025/26

Members voted unanimously in favour of the proposal. Details of the agreed budget are shown below.

## Whitecastle Community Council Budget 2025/26

Expenditure type	24/25	25/26	Change
Employee costs	£5,500	£6,500	£1,000
Office services	£300	£480	£180
Website and IT	£350	£1,000	£650
Member costs	£2,496	£2,496	£0
Premises cost	£180	£200	£20
Council insurance	£800	£900	£100
Upkeep of WCC churchyards	£1,200	£2,550	£1,350
Services and subscriptions	£700	£1,750	£1,050
Grants and donations	£4,350	£6,900	£2,550
Training	£500	£500	£0
Community services and maintenance	£500	£3,686	£3,186
Contingency	£500	£500	£0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£17,376</b>	<b>£27,462</b>	<b>£10,086</b>

### Grants and donations

For maintenance of local churchyards	£1,750	£2,000
Support for Community groups	£3,100	£4,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>£4,350</b>	<b>£6,900</b>
Maximum allowance		£11,666
Unused		£4,766

Section 137 Expenditure Limit for 2025-26 The maximum expenditure that can be incurred under both section 137 (1) and (3) for the financial year 2025-26 is £11.10 per elector. Number of electors in 2019 was 1051

## Grants and donations in Whitecastle Community Council in 2025/26

Community Group	Funding	Churchyards
Air Ambulance	£250	
Cross Ash Primary School PTFA	£400	
Llantilio Crossenny Church (St Teilo)	£250	£250
Llanvapley and District Gardening Club	£250	
Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern (St Michael)	£250	
Monmouthshire Citizens Advice	£250	
Other requests	£500	
Penrhos Church (St Cadoc)		£500
Rockfield Church (St Cenhedlon)		£500
St Maughan's Church (St Cadoc)		£250
St Maughan's Church (St Meugan)		£500
Llantilio Crossenny Women's Institute	£250	
The Village Life Community Project	£2,500	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£4,900</b>	<b>£2,000</b>

### Date of the next meeting

The next meeting is a full council meeting on 30 January 2025 7.30pm at the Hogs Head, Treadam

Meeting closed at 8.45pm