

Whitecastle Community Council

Cyngor Cymuned Castellgwyn

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Minutes of the Council Meeting 11 September 2025 7.30pm

at The Hogs Head, Treadam, Llantilio Crossenny

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

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

The meeting began at 7.22pm when members were assembled. There no members of the public in attendance.

1. To accept apologies for absence.

Cllr. D. Edwards was not in attendance. No apologies were received.

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 meeting held on 10 July.

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 meetings.

The clerk asked members to sign a greeting's card to be presented to the former councillor for the Whitecastle Ward.

5. To consider correspondence.

The chair asked the Clerk to review correspondence from One Voice Wales (OVW) . These included a report on Digital Health of Community and Town Councils and notification of the One Voice Wales National Conference and Annual General Meeting on 1 October. The clerk asked members for approval for him to attend a virtual conference on 12 November 2025 run by OVW and the Society of Local Council Clerks. The event focuses on key topic areas such as future priorities for the local council sector, the latest on the external audit process, employment law update, training update, councillor allowances and biodiversity.

Resolution: to approve the attendance of the Clerk on the course at a cost of £65. Proposed by Cllr. Lewis and seconded by Cllr. Graham.

The Chair notified members of the county council consultation on 'Managing local flood risk in Monmouthshire'. The council decided not to respond to the consultation.

The Chair asked members if they wished to comment on any of the matters raised in email updates to councillors since the last meeting. The following items were discussed:

- Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) has asked community councils to be involved the development of a Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire. The Clerk attended a consultation session July and asked to kept informed of developments.

- The Grange Project contacted the council and offered to give a brief talk to members. It was decided to offer an invitation to a future event.

6. Councillor reports.

- The member for Newcastle updated the council on progress with the traffic calming project in the village (see Highways report)
- The Chair pointed out that Llantilio Crossenny does not have a village sign on the B4233 on the eastern side of the village and asked for MCC to consider providing a sign.
- The member for Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern reported that another motorcycle event is due to take place on 11/12 October in Tal-y-Coed Woods which is owned by Llanarth Estate. The member had been contacted by the estate and been notified of changes which may lead to less disturbance for residents. The Council agreed to contact the organisers of the event to find out more about what is happening.

7. County Councillor's report.

- Cllr. Chandler reviewed the speed limit changes and expressed his support for the changes.
- Flooding problems in the Skenfrith Community have led to changes to emergency planning which will involve the closure of roads to prevent cars making flooding problems worse. A sign has been erected in St Maughans Green which will be used when flooding occurs.
- Residents of Oak Grove, Rockfield have been working with MCC to try to repurpose land owned by the county council to the south of the Grove.
- The water leak at The Onen has not been fixed as there is a dispute about who caused the leak.
- The member for Whitecastle informed Cllr. Chandler of Welsh Government grants being given to Powys County Council.
- The member for Penrhos asked for assistance to try to ensure MCC to fix highway problems close to Penrhos Farm which was report to the County Council earlier in the year.

8. Community Groups.

Village Life were represented at the successful day at Skenfrith Open Day in August. The Council thanked the group for providing a copy of the minutes from the recent VL trustees' meeting. The group will be holding a committee meeting on 2 October in St Maughans. The community council representative is not be able to attend the meeting and gave his apologies. The Clerk and a resident of Llantilio Crossenny have been invited to represent the council and the community.

Quilters Group : The Clerk had discussed with the group the arrangements for financial support, which would involve the Llanvapley Sports and Social Association (LSSA) providing a holding bank account and submitting a full report on how the funds were used to support the group.

Community Meeting

The Chair suggested holding a community meeting in October which would be an opportunity to invite members of the community and representatives from each community group. Each group would be asked to explain what the work of the group in the community and their financial needs for 2026/27. This will assist the council in its preparation for its budget in 2026/27 and the precept. It was decided to hold a meeting on Tuesday 14 October at 7pm in Llanvapley Pavilion. The Clerk and the Chair will arrange the meeting and send out invitations.

9. Clerk's report

- Local Government Pay Award 2025/26 from 1st April 2025. Rate of pay of the Clerk now £16.08/hour.
Resolution: to approve the pay increase backdated from 1 April. Proposed by Cllr. Astrill-Parsons and seconded by Cllr. Graham.
- Members were notified of the annual Ombudsman report. The number of complaints are still high and are mainly about equality and respect.
- Members were asked if they wanted to represent the Community Council at any church services or events on Remembrance Sunday.

10. To consider planning matters.

- **DM/2025/00856** 11 July 2025 Planning Permission Change of use of field to the rear of The Halfway for 6 designated stoned permeable pitches for motor homes and bell tents, to include a caravan to be used as an office and storage space (retrospective) and siting of wooden shelter for vending machines for community use. The Halfway Talycoed Road Llantilio Crossenny NP7 8TL

Cllr. Metters declared an interest in this matter and left the room. The council had not responded to the consultation by the deadline due to the date the application was received. The application has not yet been decided due to the need to submit additional information. Members agreed to support the application and asked the Clerk to submit a comment.

- **DM/2025/01098** 27 August 2025 Garden Room Chapel Cottage Wernrheolydd Road Wernrheolydd Penrhos NP15 2LJ

Cllr. Metters rejoined the meeting. The council is satisfied that the scale and location of the garden room are appropriate to the site and that the proposed biodiversity enhancements are proportionate given the limited impact of the new building. Accordingly, the council recommends approval of the application..

- A Planning Appeal had been submitted for **DM/2024/01468** Forge Cottage The Hendre. The reasons for not approving the original application were discussed.
- **DM/2025/00564** Removal of existing single storey extension and porch and erection of an extension to incorporate a staircase. Pen Y Cae Pant Lane Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern Monmouthshire NP25 5HN. (discussed at the July meeting of the Council)

The council has received reports of a development on the site that is not included in the approved plans. This development is likely to require a separate planning application, and further advice will be sought from MCC on this matter.

11. To consider highways matters.

Newcastle Traffic Calming

The Clerk and the member for Newcastle have been in contact with the Assistant Traffic Engineer in the county council. An update was provided by the officer regarding the signage and road marking works. Both elements are in progress and will be completed in due course. The traffic calming measures (white gates), have been approved for reinstallation beneath the new signage, maintaining the previous layout.

Changes to speed limits in the community

The Community Council held a site meeting on 22 July with a county council traffic officer, during which the reasons for proposed speed limit changes were explained. The meeting was also attended by member of the community. Following this meeting, the Council resolved to support the introduction of: a 20mph speed limit at the B4233/B4347 junction in Rockfield, a 40mph speed limit on the B4233 between Monmouth and Rockfield and a 30mph speed limit on the B4233 at The Hendre. Members recognise that the highway through The Hendre does not currently meet the criteria for designation as a 20mph zone. However, the Council remains mindful of residents' concerns, particularly around road safety. These include the risks associated with children being dropped off along the main road and the high volume of traffic using the entrance to the Rolls of Monmouth Golf Club. The Community Council therefore asks the County Council to take these concerns into account when speed limits are next reviewed. The above speed limit changes are scheduled to come into effect in Autumn 2025.

Others

- The member for Penrhos reminded the Council that the repair work to the section of carriageway near Penrhos Farm, where the edge of the road appears to have collapsed, has still not been completed. The Clerk was asked to provide an update on this matter.

- The Clerk informed the Council that responsibility for roadside trees along the western entrance to The Hendre has been referred to MCC Grounds team for any necessary flailing works. It was noted that there are tree-related issues in a particular section, including ash dieback, and that the required works are scheduled for winter 2025/26.

Rights of Way

The Countryside Access Manager at Monmouthshire County Council has updated the Community Council on progress regarding the replacement of the closed footbridges at Tal-y-Coed and Newhouse Farm. A survey has now been completed, which will confirm the locations of the new bridges. Members noted that the bridges are being moved by contractors and that grant funding will be needed due to the scale of the work. Members were pleased to note that proposals to improve the footpath from Llantilio Crossenny to Tal-y-Coed will be discussed with the Community Council in the near future.

12. To discuss churchyard matters.

Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern

- Two cuts had been completed in August and a final cut will take place in October.
- Work on the southern boundary: The National Grid has inspected the power cables along the southern boundary and identified trees growing too close to an overhead line. To safely carry out the required trimming, a temporary shutdown will be necessary. The tree works have been assigned to the contractors, Ground Control, and will be completed at no cost. Clearance of the southern boundary will proceed once this work has been finished. Members requested that the Clerk contact the National Grid to confirm who is responsible for overseeing the works, to ensure they are carried out as soon as possible.
- Wall repairs: An estimate for maintenance work on parts on the western and eastern walls has been received. The cost of the work is significant but the need to maintain the stability and safety of the walls is clear. Members asked for a minimum of two more quotations for the work before making a decision.

Annual inspection of each churchyard

The Clerk notified members that he will undertake safety inspections in October in line with agreed management plan. The Chair offered to assist the Clerk in this work.

13. To consider policing matters.

- Copies of the July Neighbourhood Policing report had been circulated to members before the meeting and added to the website.
- Gwent Police are actively monitoring incidents involving graffiti and the unauthorised display of flags or banners on MCC street furniture. A protocol has been agreed for MCC staff to follow should such incidents occur in Monmouthshire. Members approached by residents about these matters are asked to contact the Clerk for further information.

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

Website

- The Clerk report that there has been significant use of the website since monitoring started in April 2025.
- Members are reminded that all road closure notices are posted on the website.

Noticeboards

- In July, discussions were held with the ward member for Penrhos and local residents regarding the location and use of the new noticeboard. The notice board will be placed on the left of the entrance on the northern side of the church. This land is part of the highway. Local residents are being made aware of the work. The Highways Department has approved its installation and provided a quotation for the work, which must be carried out by operatives certified to work on the public highway. Monmouthshire County Council is able to undertake the installation at a cost of £225. The noticeboard itself costs £1,186.17, bringing the total expenditure to £1,411.17. This is within the allocated budget of £1,500 for noticeboards.

- The County Council has agreed to cut the grass verge around the Rockfield notice board.

15. Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Reporting

No update was provided on this matter.

16. To consider a Welsh Language Scheme.

No update was provided on this matter.

17. To consider financial matters.

Financial reports a list of payments for approval had been circulated before meeting.

Resolution : to approve the financial reports a list of payments. Proposed by Cllr. N. Graham and seconded by Cllr. C. Lewis. The Chair signed the document.

Audit Wales	Audit Fees 2022/23 Full Audit	£525.00
Audit Wales	Audit Fees 2023/24 Basic Audit	£210.00
Geosphere Ltd	Parish Online - Mapping Software	£57.60
L Taylor	Secretarial duties July / August 2025 plus expenses	£889.75
Cllr. N. Graham	Reimbursement for extra costs of working from home and consumables	£208.00
Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons	Reimbursement for extra costs of working from home and consumables	£208.00
Cllr C. Duncan	Reimbursement for extra costs of working from home and consumables	£156.00
Cllr. R. Metters	Reimbursement for extra costs of working from home and consumables	£156.00
Air Ambulance	Provides emergency medical help.	£250.00
Llantilio Crossenny Church (St Teilo)	Churchyard maintenance, car park and toilets open to visitors	£500.00
Llanvapley and District Gardening Club	Social activities for residents and community projects	£250.00
Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern (St Michael)	Church facilities for walkers on Offas Dyke	£250.00
Penrhos Church (St Cadoc)	Churchyard maintenance	£500.00
Rockfield Church (St Cenhedlon)	Churchyard maintenance	£500.00
St Maughan's Church (St Meugan)	Maintenance of the open part of Llangattock churchyard and churchyard at St Maughans	£750.00
The Gwent Federation of the Women's Institute	Social activities for residents	£250.00
The Village Life Community Project	The maintenance and development of a network of defibrillators	£2,500.00
Llanvapley Sports and Social Association	Fund holder for The Quilters Group to enable them to use the facilities in the village hall	£250.00

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

Thursday 13 November at 7pm at The Hogs Head, Treadam, Llantilio Crossenny.

Meeting closed at 9.08pm