

Whitecastle Community Council

Cyngor Cymuned Castellgwyn

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Minutes of the Council Meeting 19 February 2026 7.00pm at the Hogs Head, Treadam

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)

Public Speaking

No members of the public attended the meeting.

1. To accept apologies for absence.

Cllr. I. Chandler (Monmouthshire County Council) sent his apologies. Cllr. D. Edwards did not give his apologies for not attending the meeting.

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 11 December 2025.

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 previously accepted minutes of the November 25 meeting were signed by the Chair.
- The Chair contacted Cllr. D. Edwards about his failure to attend meetings since December 2024. Cllr. Edwards last contacted the council in June 2025 to give his apologies for not attending the meeting. Members of the council are required to attend at least one meeting every six months. If a member fails to attend a meeting during a six-month period, that member automatically ceases to be a member of the council. The Chair agreed to inform Cllr. D. Edwards of the situation.

5. To consider correspondence

Monmouth Town Council

The Community Council was informed that a resident of Rockfield had applied to Monmouth Town Council (MTC) for financial assistance from the fund established by the Mayor of Monmouth following the serious flooding in November. The application was unsuccessful, as the fund was limited to residents of Monmouth. MTC has since agreed to allocate a proportion of the remaining funds to Whitecastle and Skenfrith Community Councils to support residents affected by Storm Claudia. It was agreed that the Community Council would wait until the funds became available and then request from MTC details of applicants from the Skenfrith and Whitecastle communities whose applications had been unsuccessful.

OVW

- Joint event One Voice Wales and Planning Aid Wales 19 March.
- OVW E-Bulletin Issue 15
- Practice Development Note 19 (Copyright) and Practice Development Note 26 (Participation in Webinars).
- Request for nominations to attend Royal Garden Party

Monmouthshire County Council

A Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire was agreed by cabinet on 11 February. Suggestions made by the Community Council were added to the final version.

Andy Smith, Head Forester Llanarth Estate,

The Community Council was informed of the first Enduro event of the year, which took place over the weekend of 15 February in the woods in Tal-y-Coed. Community concerns had been raised with the event organisers in advance. In response, the organisers committed to an increased on-site presence during the set-up period to prevent overnight camping by organisers or marshals in unauthorised areas, and to install signage at the end of a private drive prohibiting event-related traffic. Members reported that the event was significantly affected by wet weather. While litter continues to be an ongoing concern, steps have been taken to restore the site. The date of the second and final event of the year has not been decided.

Councillor Updates

Members were asked to comment on any of the email updates provided by the Clerk since the last meeting. Various issues had been raised and are recorded in the appropriate agenda item.

6. Councillor ward matters

- Cllr Graham placed a poster on the Newcastle notice board publicising the offer from Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) of a free litter-picking kit.
- Four of the five community gates, along with the new signage, have now been installed in Newcastle. Feedback from nearby residents suggests that most motorists are complying with the measures and that vehicle speeds have reduced. MCC has advised that the road markings are due to be repainted. Cllr Graham was thanked for his work in completing the traffic-calming project and was asked to submit an invoice for materials purchased.
- Cllr. Graham has made planters which will be positioned at suitable places in the community. Llanvapley and District Gardening Club will be asked for help and support in this matter. The Clerk and Cllr. Graham have arranged to speak to the discuss to introduce the planters project to the group.

7. County Councillor's report.

No report received. Various correspondence had been received since the last meeting and raised as part of the meeting agenda.

8. Community Groups

Village Life

The Cllr. Graham and the Clerk attended an online meeting of Village Life (VL) on 16 December at which issues regarding Community bleed kits were discussed. The Clerk attended a trustee's meeting on 12 February and reported that the group's finances and maintenance are strong, training will continue in 2026, a community fundraiser is planned, bleed kit decisions are deferred, and sharing information on the Community Council website was suggested.

Llangattock Community

Llangattock Community contacted the Community Council on 16 December about the repair of the hand bells. Matters are in hand and an invoice will be presented in due course.

Cross Ash School PTFA

The Clerk has asked for the PTFA to contact the Community Council if it are raising funds for any special activities and events in 2026. The Community Council has been added to the email distribution list.

Grange Project

Several events have been organised for 2026 and members have been invited to attend community open mornings. Information was added to the council website.

Pubtopia

Cllr. Metters provided a review of the work of Pubtopia C.I.C in the community. Funding has been given to support events which promote well-being and creative workshops. Cllr. Metters declared an interest as she is a director of this community interest company.

Others

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales has notified the council of her work and it has been suggested that community groups may like to invite her to see their work.

9. Clerk's report

- One Voice Wales are aiming to provide guidance on the use of AI in the near future.
- The Pensions Regulator has contacted the council regarding re-enrolment and re-declaration requirements. The regulator has been informed of the organisation's name change from Llantilio Crossenny CC to Whitecastle CC, and the account has been deactivated. If the council employs staff in the future who are subject to auto-enrolment, the regulator will need to be contacted to update contact details and reactivate the account.
- The Chair reported on the Clerk's annual appraisal which took place in January. The Chair reported good performance in communication, representation, and financial management, identifies training and audit preparation as areas for improvement, and notes an increased workload that led to approved additional paid hours. Key priorities include training and networking, improved delegation and external support, and addressing council matters such as online access, email/website updates, and councillor recruitment.
- On 21 January the Clerk attended the Gwent PSB Climate Change Risk Assessment Workshop in Abergavenny. The workshop stressed the importance of embedding resilience thinking across public services and communities is essential to ensure they can respond and recover effectively.'

10. Discussion of a policy to cover copyright issues.

A draft copyright policy had been presented to members following advice from One Voice Wales which was published in December 2025. The Clerk explained that a copyright policy helps the Council avoid legal claims, financial penalties, and reputational damage by ensuring that images, documents, music, and other materials are used lawfully. It protects the Council when publishing content online or in print, supports compliance with statutory duties, and promotes respect for the intellectual property rights of others.

Resolution: to agree and publish the copyright policy. Proposed by Cllr. Biggs and seconded by Cllr. Graham.

11. Governance review and action plan

The Clerk explained that the Council is required to operate in accordance with the governance procedures set out in its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The Society of Local Council Clerks has published guidance on how Community Councils can assess their compliance with these requirements, which had already been circulated to Members. Members are confident that the Council is compliant; however, they are concerned that its profile within the community needs to be raised, with the aim of increasing representation in the 2027 election. Cllr. Duncan suggested that more information should be provided to help residents understand the Council's role and the work it undertakes. A list of points was drawn up, and the Clerk was requested to prepare a draft document for the Council to use in its engagement with residents.

12. To consider planning matters.

- The Clerk informed members that the appeal against the refusal of planning consent for Forge Cottage, The Hendre, was dismissed on 22 December.
- **DM/2025/01590** 5 January 2026 Planning permission sought for the erection of a steel-framed, agricultural-style building to be used for horse stabling, along with the construction of an all-weather horse arena. Land opposite Commin, between Penrhos Farm and Beilliau Wood, Penrhos. Following concerns expressed by residents, the ward councillor organised a meeting on 11 January at which the applicant was discussed. Following the meeting the Community Council contacted the County Council to object to the proposed equine building and arena, citing lack of demonstrated need, inappropriate scale and design, unauthorised works, and harmful impacts on landscape character, residential amenity, highway safety, drainage, and biodiversity. It recommends refusal of the application or referral to the Planning Committee.
- **DM/2025/01299** 5 January 2026 Listed Building Consent Heritage Internal alterations to the existing club house changing rooms and external works to create an accessible entrance The Rolls Of Monmouth Golf Club B4233 The Hendre NP25 5HG. Members examined the documentation and consider the scheme aligns with relevant planning policies and is considered acceptable and worthy of approval, subject to standard conditions.
The Community Council supports granting Listed Building Consent, finding the works appropriate and sympathetic to the historic church, subject to careful implementation and adherence to approved plans.

- **DM/2026/00002** 8 January 2026 Listed Building Consent Heritage Removal of existing redundant pew heaters and installation of new pew heaters St Cadocs Church Llangattock Vibon Avel NP25 5NG
The Community Council supports the application, noting the unsafe existing heaters, the need to improve comfort, and that the proposed replacements are safe, efficient, and sympathetic to the historic church, with no known objections from the community.
- **DM/2026/00054** 19 January 2026 Planning Permission Installation of temporary Portacabin units for use as classroom accommodation, ancillary to the existing school use, with no change of use. There will be 3 x Portacabins each 32ft x 10ft. They will be require as temporary classroom space until we have completed a procurement of a property that is in currently in process Llangattock School Llangattock Vibon Avel NP25 5NG
Members were notified of the application on 20 January. No members were directly contacted by residents expressing any concerns. No issues were raised at the meeting, and members expressed their support for approval.

13. To consider highways matters

- A number of issues have been raised by residents and members of the council. These concerns have been raised with the Highways department and the matters are 'Under Review' or 'Passed to service area'. Issues include the condition of the road from Penrhos to Tregare, numerous potholes on the road through the village of Llantilio Crossenny and damaged road signs near Newcastle.
- Cllr. Duncan raised residents' concerns about the 30mph speed limit signs through Tal-y-Coed. A suggestion has been raised to add extra speed limit signs at a point which is long and straight. The Clerk was asked to follow this up with the Highways department.
- The council was alerted to a road closure in Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern from 2 February to 19 February.
- Cllr. Lewis reported his concern about the state of the roads in Whitecastle ward. He pointed out several roads which are in a deplorable condition. The condition of roads seems to be getting worse and several members agreed with his comments. Despite reporting problems to the Highways department very little is actually achieved and there is no clear communication about when work is being done. The weekly road works report confirms the lack of action in the community. The Clerk offered to invite a highways officer to a meeting of the council to answer members' questions and concerns.

Rights of Way

Members of council and the Clerk attended a meeting with Countryside Access Team on Monday 19 January in Tal-y-Coed. Three River Trothy footbridges are closed: Sunnybank will be replaced first in 2026/27, while New House Farm and Tal-y-Coed are more complex and targeted for 2027/28. In the meantime, the Council supports improving alternative routes and forming a local volunteer group to help maintain footpaths. The Clerk reported that residents will be invited to take part in a survey of a footpath between Llantilio and Tal-y-Coed in April/May.

14. To discuss churchyard matters.

The annual churchyard inspection took place on 19 January. The Clerk and the Chair noted problems with a number of monuments which are reported below.

Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern

- The Clerk confirmed that the existing contractor will continue to maintain Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern churchyard in 2026. Members approved a slight increase in the hourly rate.
- On 19 January National Grid removed growth from around cables on the southern side of the churchyard. This will enable further work to be completed. Cllr. Lewis noted that this would enable him to coordinate further clearance work in the near future.
- A headstone on the western side of the churchyard was found to be unsafe. Action was taken to cordon off the grave and to contact descendants to alert them to the problem and to ask them to take action. The Church Committee was informed of this action.

Llangattock Vibon Avel

- The existing contractor for Llangattock Vibon Avel church has been invited to continue for the new season but there has been no response.

- A quotation has been received for the repair of a section of the tarmac path. Members asked for further quotations and the Clerk offered to contact the contractor who had done work previously for the council.
- The annual safety inspection found a small headstone and two crosses were unsafe. Immediate action was taken to cordon off the Rolls grave, and efforts were made to contact descendants to alert them to the issue and request remedial action. The Charles Rolls Heritage Trust was contacted; however, it is not aware of any living descendants of the Harding-Rolls family. The Trust has limited family contacts and has advised that the costs of repair should first be identified. It has also suggested exploring shared funding with other interested organisations, with the possibility of future support. This may include promotional activity and fundraising talks focused on the life and legacy of Charles Rolls.

15. To consider policing matters.

The December and January report from the Monmouthshire North Neighbourhood Policing Team has been circulated to members and published on the website. Information has also been shared about a newly created police email alert system, which allows subscribers to receive updates on local issues.

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

- Members highlighted the importance of communicating the work and achievements of the council on the website and village noticeboards.
- The Clerk reminded members of the aim of replacing the Llantilio Crossenny village notice board in 2026/27.

17. Biodiversity Report

- The Council has been added to the list of compliant Community & Town Councils which can be found on the Wales Biodiversity Partnership website.
- Cllr. Metters suggested a programme of bulb planting on road side verges as a way to enhance the community and to improve biodiversity.

18. To consider financial matters.

- Catherine Williams has offered to act as the internal auditor for year 2025/26
Resolution: to appoint Catherine Williams as the internal auditor for year 2025/26 . Proposed by Cllr. Astill-Parsons and seconded by Cllr. Lewis.
- The Clerk presented a series of financial statements including a balance sheet, a list of payments and receipts, a budget report and an account reconciliation. Audit Wales have to yet to cash cheques provided in September 2025.
- The Clerk presented payments for approval shown below. Payments were approved and the Chair signed the form.

Monmouthshire CC	Noticeboard Penrhos erection 2025	£270.00
Society of Local Council Clerks	2026 27 membership	£116.00
L Taylor	Secretarial duties Dec/Jan 2026 plus expenses	£882.94

19. Meeting dates and venues for 2026/27

It was decided to schedule the following meetings and venues

9 April Full Council at Penrhos Church
 14 May Annual Council at The Hogs Head
 18 June Full Council at Penrhos Church
 16 July Full Council at The Grange Project

Meeting closed at 20.59

The next meeting is on 9 April at Penrhos Church at 7pm.

