

Whitecastle Community Council

Cyngor Cymuned Castellgwyn

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Minutes of the Council Meeting 16 July 2026 7.00pm at the Grange Project

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

In attendance : L. Taylor (Clerk), Chloe Constable

Public Speaking

The Chair welcomed Chloe Constable of the Grange Project to the meeting and invited her to describe the work of the project.

The Chair thanked Chloe for her comprehensive summary of the work of the project and expressed the Council's appreciation for hosting the meeting and for her warm hospitality. The Council acknowledged the difficulties arising from the poor condition of the road from the Onen and assured Chloe that it would continue to pursue the matter with the County Council, following up on its previous report with the aim of securing improvements to make the road safer and more accessible for all users.

Chloe Constable left the meeting.

1. To accept apologies for absence.

The Clerk reported that County Councillor, Ian Chandler is unable to attend the meeting due to other commitments and sent his apologies.

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 18 June 2026.

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 confirmed that all actions arising from the previous meeting had been completed.

5. To consider correspondence.

Members of the council have been updated on various correspondence since the last meeting by email updates. Many of these items are to be covered by later agenda items. Other items included:

- The Community Council website's domain name change.
- Various communications from One Voice Wales.
- Monmouthshire County Council's Let's Talk road safety survey and its Let's Talk Community survey.

6. Chair's report

The Chair reported a meeting with the Clerk on 3 July at the Grange Project to discuss its use for Council meetings.

7. Councillor ward reports

Cllr. Graham (Newcastle) reported a meeting with a resident from Llanfaenor during which several local matters were discussed. He asked the Clerk to report the fallen sign on the triangle of land at the road junction. The work on the village gates and the planter has been completed and a photograph was provided. Speeding concerns are still a problem in the village but motorists are now more aware of the residential part of the village.

8. County Councillor's report.

Cllr. Chandler did not provide a written report but had contacted the Council regarding Community Flood Volunteer events.

9. Clerk's report

- The Clerk suggested that the Council consider developing relationships with neighbouring councils (Clustering). This would enable members to understand how other councils work and to share common interests and concerns. It was agreed that the Chair would contact the chairs of Skenfrith and Grosmont Community Councils to organise a meeting.
- The Clerk, in his role as the Council's representative on the Monmouthshire Culture Forum, reported on a meeting held at the Grange Project with Jo Webb of the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO). The meeting focused on explaining how the Council supports community groups and promotes cultural engagement across the community.
- The Council has been asked by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for nominations for The King's Birthday 2027 Honours Round. Nominations should recognise individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to strengthening community cohesion and resilience through their work or voluntary service, helping to make their local communities safer, stronger, and more inclusive for everyone.
- The Society of Local Council Clerks has launched a new National Survey to Help Build a Stronger Picture of Local Councils. The Clerk will complete the survey on behalf of the council.

10. Community Groups

- Cllr. Graham and the Clerk attended a meeting on 1 July of the trustees of the **Village Life Community Project**. The Trustees reviewed Village Life's financial position, noting a small projected deficit for 2027 despite healthy reserves for future defibrillator replacements, and agreed to pursue a range of fundraising initiatives while continuing CPR training, defibrillator maintenance, and partnership working with local community councils. The meeting also approved updated policies, reviewed progress on defibrillator audits and installations, confirmed the closure of the bleed kit project following the return of grant funding, discussed improvements to the Village Emergency Telephone System (VETS), and celebrated the organisation's 10th anniversary. The organisation's policy documents are on the Community Council website following a request from the group to ensure transparency. Cllr. Graham suggested approaching local businesses to see if they would like to sponsor the work of Village Life. He offered to work with the group to produce an information sheet which will enable businesses to understand the work of the group.
- **The Whitecastle Volunteer Footpath Maintenance Group** met for its first meeting on 1 July and was able to appoint a group coordinator and began work on improving access to a footpath in Llantilio Crossenny. The next meeting is on Wednesday 5 August 10am Llantilio Church car park.

11. Village Greens

The Clerk and the Chair visited Llanfaenor Village Green on 23 June following a report from a resident about its condition. It was evident that maintenance work was required, and the Council arranged for the grass to be strimmed on 18 July. Further maintenance will be needed during the remainder of this season, and a maintenance schedule for 2027 will need to be agreed and approved. The Council considered a quotation for the ongoing maintenance but agreed to defer a decision while alternative arrangements are explored. Before committing to a maintenance contract, the Council will also seek confirmation of the status and ownership of the land by making enquiries with the Land Charges Section at Monmouthshire County Council.

12. Community Open Evening

- Members discussed holding a second Community Open Evening in place of a scheduled full Council meeting. It was agreed that the event would take place on Thursday, 15 October, at Llanvapley Pavilion.

- It was suggested that this year's event should focus on celebrating the achievements and contributions of local community groups. The Chair and the Clerk were asked to develop the arrangements for the evening and issue invitations in due course.

13. The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) Survey

- DBCC has been asked by the Welsh Government to explore attitudes and perceptions of Town and Community Councillors with particular consideration to their views on the size and structure of such councils and how they vary according to local circumstances. The survey is in response to Welsh Government's review of community and town councils in 2023.
- The survey is aimed at finding out the views of community councillors but can also be completed by the Council itself.
- Members have in the past commented on the problems caused by the boundary review which lead to the formation of Whitecastle Community in 2022. The Council is unrepresented in several wards and this has not improved despite its efforts to encourage a wider democratic representation.
- The Clerk was asked to complete the survey on behalf of the Council and to circulate its response to members.

14. Audit update

- The Council has published a statutory notice of appointment of the date for the exercise of electors' rights which will last until 31 July.
- Audit Wales will then be provided the documentation and information requested as part of a full audit.

15. Planning matters

Previous applications

- The council responded to DM/2026/00594 (Rowancroft, The Hendre). The Chair received an email from the Head of Llangattock School following the last meeting on 17 July. The Chair acknowledged receipt of the communication.
- The Council previously submitted comments on planning application DM/2025/01590 (an equestrian development in Penrhos). Since the last meeting on 16 June, two additional documents have been submitted to the Planning Portal: a Manure Management Plan by the applicant and a Biodiversity Report by the County Council. The Council has also received an email from a resident outlining their views on the Manure Management Plan. Members noted both the additional documents and the resident's comments and agreed to submit a further representation to reaffirm the Council's position on the proposed development.
- Following the council's response to DM/2026/00689 (Bryn Edrych Farm) it was contacted by the Planning department about its interpretation of the application. The Council confirmed its previous comments.

New applications

- **DM/2026/00835** 10 July 2026 Householder Proposed ground floor extension Alderbrook Llantilio Crossenny To Penrhos Farm Llantilio Crossenny NP7 8SU. Members considered the application and agreed that the modest scale of the development would not pose any problems and recommended approval.

16. To consider highways matters.

Recent service requests

- The condition of the road leading from B4233 at the Onen (NP25 5EN) to Grange Farm had been reported and the importance of improving access to the Grange Project was emphasised.
- Two reports were made concerning the condition of the road to the west of Llanfaenor which leads to a farm and the road to the north of the village which needs scraping to make it safe for road users.
- The condition of Llanvolda Lane at the Hendre has been reported previously. No action has been taken as yet and this has been followed up. A request for a new sign at the top of Llanvolda Lane has been completed.

Rights of way

- Following an enquiry from a resident it was confirmed that a replaced bridge will be put in place by the end of the Summer to enable the footpath from Llanvolda Lane to be reopened.

17. To discuss churchyard matters.

The Clerk informed members that Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) has introduced new enforcement officers to tackle litter and dog control offences. Both churchyards covered by MCC dog control measures but Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern churchyard is also a designated 'dogs on a lead' zone.

Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern

- Following discussions with members of the Church Committee, an additional grass cut was arranged for 18 July. The reasons for this were explained to Members, who were asked to approve a variation to the usual cutting schedule of April, May, August and October. The change will not affect the areas managed under the Council's biodiversity controls.

Llangattock-Vibon-Avel

- Residents have been asked to give financial support to maintenance work on a yew tree in the churchyard. The Council has not received a response to the plan.
- The Clerk noted the need to check progress with the stabilisation of the Rolls grave which was identified in the annual safety check.
- Members were informed that three cuts have been completed and one more is scheduled in September

18. To consider policing matters

- Copies of a Neighbourhood Watch report and a Neighbour Police report had been circulated to Members.
- No other incidents of concerns were reported by Members.

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

The Council has received a suggestion to install Community Council noticeboard outside the churchyard in Llantilio Crossenny near the bench. Members were unable to agree on this suggestion and will continue to look for a solution.

20. To consider financial matters

- The Clerk asked Members to consider the financial reports which had been circulated before the meeting. These included a budget report.
- The Clerk presented a list of payments for approval.

Resolution: to approve the payments and financial reports.

Proposed by Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons (Chair) and seconded by Cllr. C. Lewis.

L Taylor	Clerk services and expenses June 2026	£559.03
Matt Baker	Mowing Llangattock-Vibon-Avel April/May/June	£320.00
St Cadoc's Church	Venue Hire April/June 2026	£100.00
NettlestoPetals	Llanfaenor Village Green maintenance	£130.00
Audit Wales	Llangattock-Vibon-Avel Community Council 2021/22 Audit Fees	£100.00
Audit Wales	Whitecastle CC 2024/25 Audit Fees	£208.18

- The Clerk reminded Members that the Budget for 2026/27 includes support for community groups and approval for payments would be made at the next meeting in September.

21. Date of the next meeting.

17 September Hogs Head, Great Treadam, NP7 8TA

Meeting closed at 8.45pm