

Whitecastle Community Council

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Minutes of the Council Meeting 17 Septe 2026 at the Hogs Head

Present: Cllr. C. Lewis (Chair), Cllr. J. Biggs, Cllr. C. Duncan, Cllr. R. Metters, Cllr. N. Graham
In attendance : L. Taylor (Clerk)

Public speaking

- Mike Appleton spoke to the Council about the proposed Borderlands Festival in Monmouth in 2027, which aims to continue the tradition of the Monmouth Festival last held in 2019. He outlined plans for a new festival site and highlighted the potential benefits to the local community and rural economy. He asked the Council to consider financial support. The Chair confirmed this would be considered as part of the 2026/27 budget and thanked him for attending.
- Several residents of Penrhos spoke to the Council about their concerns regarding the proposed equestrian barn in the ward and the application for the construction of two reservoirs on land adjacent to Penrhos Farm. Members listened carefully to the concerns raised and explained that both matters would be considered later in the meeting. The Council also confirmed that the residents' concerns would be passed on to the Planning Department.

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.
- Cllr. Astill-Parsons sent her apologies which were approved by Council. Cllr. Lewis was asked to chair the meeting in her absence.

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 16 July 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 the majority of actions arising from the previous meeting had been completed. It is not clear if contact has been made with Skenfrith and Grosmont Community Councils to organise a meeting to discuss issues of mutual interest. Arrangements for the Community Open Evening have not been completed and it was suggested that it could be held in November rather than October.

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:

- An appeal by Cerebral Palsy Cymru. Members are aware of the impact of the charity but decided not to support the appeal
- MCC has published its Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The Council decided to promote awareness of the strategy and to put a link on the Council website.

6. Chair's report

No report was presented for consideration.

7. Councillor ward reports

- Cllr. Graham expressed his support for a local litter-picking group that regularly collects roadside litter in Newcastle, often on busy roads. He asked Members to approve the purchase of signs to alert motorists to the presence of volunteers and help improve their safety. Members approved the request.
- Cllr. Duncan raised the issue of how the Council communicates with residents, noting that noticeboards are often overlooked. Council information is already shared through various community newsletters, although not all areas are covered. Members were asked to consider introducing a newsletter that could be distributed to all properties within the community. Members were supportive of the proposal and agreed that its inclusion in the 2026/27 budget should be considered.

8. County Councillor's report.

No report was presented for consideration.

9. Clerk's report

- The Clerk reminded Members of Remembrance Sunday on 8 November.
- Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) Let's Talk Community survey has been put on the Community Council website and is open until 30 September.
- The Community Council's Statement of Payments to Members for 2025/26 has been put on the website and sent to the Welsh Government.
- One Voice Wales (OVW) has published a new version of Standing Orders which will be considered at Annual Meeting in 2027.
- The Clerk asked for approval to attend a conference on 18 November which will be online. The conference is organised by OVW and the Society of Local Council Clerks. Members approved the Clerk's attendance and the payment of £75 + VAT.
- MCC continues to develop the work of its Culture Forum. The Clerk attended a meeting on 16 September at which the Let's Talk Culture website was launched.
- MCC has outlined arrangements for the elections in May 2027. Information about the full election process will be available in January 2027.
- MCC has released information about projected election costs. The costs depends on whether the elections are contested or uncontested. Councils are urged to make appropriate budgetary arrangements to cover these costs.
- The National Association of Local Councils has published its Annual Pay Settlement 2026/27. Changes are to be backdated to 1 April.
- The Clerk presented a new contract of employment from April 2026 for approval. This follows the publication of a new model contract by OVW and changes to employment law. The Clerk asked members to approve changes to working from home allowances and to how office costs (paper, printer consumables and basic office equipment) are claimed for. The Clerk suggested claiming 50% of these expenses.

Resolution: to accept the new contract for the Clerk. Proposed by Cllr. Biggs and seconded by Cllr. Lewis. The contract was signed by the acting Chair of the Council.

10. Community Groups

- The Llanvapley and District Gardening Club has updated the Council on the Llantilio Crossenny village planter scheme, which has been a great success.
- The Llantilio Crossenny Church Committee has thanked the Council for the installation of a dog waste bin in the Church car park. The Clerk is working out a timetable for collection of the waste on the basis of need.
- Members had been provided with information regarding the proposed Llantilio Crossenny Christmas event. The event is being organised by a Llantilio resident, with the support of the Llantilio Church Committee. It will be a secular, family-focused event and is intended to build on the success of a similar event held in 2024. The Council had been asked to contribute £200 towards the cost of the event. Members discussed the proposal and funding application in detail and agreed to offer a contribution of £100 in support of the event.
- Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern and Llantilio Church committees are looking to install Wi-Fi in the churches.

- There will be an AGM of St Cadoc's Community at 6pm on 25 September. Owing to the church being closed, the meeting will be held at The Dovecote, Llangattock Manor NP25 5NQ
- Cllr. Graham updated Members on the Council's partnership with the Village Life Community Group. The group has reorganised responsibilities within the group and a full report of the changes has been presented. Cllr. Graham is assisting the group with fundraising and is looking to gain the support of local businesses.
- Cllr. Metters updated Members on the work of Pubtopia CC. A number of dementia-friendly events have been organised, and additional funding has been sought to enable the installation of a more up-to-date vending machine. It is hoped that the new machine will be installed in the near future.

11. Village Greens

- The Clerk informed Members that Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) had confirmed that the Council's name is listed in the County Council's Register of Village Greens. Photographs of the relevant register entries and associated maps have been provided for the Llanfaenor and Newcastle village greens. Neither village green is currently registered with the Land Registry. The Clerk asked Members to consider whether the Council should apply to the Land Registry to formally register the Council as the legal owner. Members agreed that there could be benefits to doing so and asked the Clerk to establish whether registration is necessary, the process involved, and the associated costs.
- Llanfaenor Village Green has been tidied up for a last time this year.
- Quotations for the maintenance of the village green has been received. Members approved appointing CJF Garden Maintenance and suggested three cuts a year.

12. Audit update

- The Clerk informed Members that a meeting with the Chair was held on 21 August to go through the papers and previous Audit Wales reports.
- The full documentation requested by Audit Wales was posted on 24 August.

13. Community Open Evening

Discussion about the evening was postponed until the October meeting.

14. Planning matters

- **DM/2026/00820** 20 July 2026 Planning Permission Single storey extension to previously built boiler house to provide additional kitchen space for wedding venue. Llantilio House Pentwyn Farm Llantilio Crossenny NP7 8SS
The Council responded to the consultation and recommended approval.
- **DM/2026/00967** 7 August 2026 Householder Erection of single storey rear extension including raising the roof of the existing side element of the dwelling. The Blacksmiths Shop, Llantilio Crossenny Village Thoroughfare NP7 8SU
The Council responded to the consultation and recommended approval.
- **DM/2026/00932** 12 August 2026 Planning Permission The removal of holiday occupancy restriction and change of use to unrestricted residential accommodation (Use Class C3). The Cottage 1 Tre-adam Lane Llantilio Crossenny NP7 8TA
Members of the Community Council scrutinised the application and are not against the application.
- **DM/2026/01020** 21 August 2026 Householder Proposed single storey side extension and first floor extension over existing side extension Jubilee Cottage Penrhos Farm To Beilieu Wood Penrhos NP15 2LF
The Council responded to the consultation and recommended approval.
- **DM/2026/01094** 15 September 2026 Proposed new garage and garden store with associated works. Orchard Cottage Rockfield Road Rockfield
Members are aware of this second application in 2026 and were satisfied that this development is acceptable and recommended approval.
- **DM/2026/01041** Proposal: Construction of two on farm water storage reservoirs for winter fill from surface water run-off. Penrhos Farmhouse, Penrhos Farm, Llantilio Crossenny, Penrhos, Monmouthshire, NP7 8TN
Members discussed this in detail and took residents' views into account. The Clerk was asked to contact the planning officer to explain its views. The Community Council has serious concerns about the proposal's feasibility and its potential impacts on drainage, water resources, landscape, habitats and biodiversity. It asks that the application is not determined until the Planning Officer's requested further information is provided and these issues are fully assessed, taking into account local residents' concerns and the Council's local knowledge.

- **DM/2025/01590** Land Opposite Commin. Erection of steel framed agricultural-style building for stabling and all weather horse arena and change of use of field to equestrian use including new entrance on to road.

The Community Council has already responded to this application on two occasions. Members discussed the latest information in detail and took residents' views into account. The Clerk was asked to contact the planning officer to explain its views. The Community Council is concerned about the length of time taken to resolve the planning application and the applicant continuing development on the site, including the recent addition of a wooden building, while the application remains unresolved. The Council reiterates strong local opposition, requests that the application be determined by the Planning Committee, and asks to be kept informed as the process progresses.

15. To consider highways matters.

- A new 30mph speed limit repeater sign has been installed on the B4233 in Tal-y-coed following concerns expressed by local residents.
- A road in Llanfaenor has had its potholes filled in following concerns expressed by local residents.
- Road cleaning of the road to the north of the village has not as yet been completed.
- A broken sign on the B4233 at The Onen has been replaced
- The footbridge over the stream near to the Llanvolda road has been reinstated following a request from local residents.
- There will be a road closure in Rockfield on 28 September. Information about the closure has been posted on the Council website.
- Cllr. Graham asked the Clerk to ask the County Council to complete the agreed road markings in Newcastle.
- Cllr. Biggs congratulated the County Council on improvements completed on roads in Penrhos ward. He reported that work on verges has not been completed.
- Cllr. Lewis also reported that work on verges has not been completed in Whitecastle ward and that several roads signs in Llantilio Crossenny had been damaged.

16. To discuss churchyard matters.

Llanvihangel-ystern-Ilewern

- The Clerk confirmed that this year's churchyard maintenance schedule has been adjusted due to unusual weather.
- The Clerk presented a Churchyard safety notice which is intended to be placed adjacent to north west edge of the churchyard. Members agreed on the need for a notice and approved the purchase of the sign from the 2026/27 budget.

Llangattock-Vibon-Avel

- Work on the unstable monument has progressed.
- In a message From St Cadoc's Community the Council has been informed that St Cadoc's Church is now closed and it will remain closed until probably March 2027. Friends of Friendless Churches are overseeing the carrying out of major and important works in relation to the roof, the tower, the drainage together with various internal matters. The turning circle field has been prepared and is being used for construction traffic. Public access can still be gained to the churchyard on foot via the field gate.

17. To consider policing matters

- The Council has not received a report for August.
- The Clerk suggested inviting Gwent Police and a Community Support officer to a meeting in the near future.

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

- The Clerk asked for approval to order extra keys for the Penrhos noticeboard. This would enable more members of the community to publicise community event. Members agreed to go ahead with the purchase of two keys.
- A resident of The Hendre has enquired about using the village noticeboard and has requested access to display information about local events. Members supported the request and asked the Clerk to follow up the matter.
- The Clerk informed the Member that news items continue to be added to the website based on information provided to the Council by external organisations.

19. To consider financial matters

- The Clerk presented financial reports for consideration and approval. A list of payments, receipts and a balance sheet was presented.
Resolution: to accept the reports as a true record of the Council's financial affairs. Proposed by Cllr. Biggs and seconded by Cllr. Duncan. The reports were signed by the Chair of the Council.
- The Clerk presented a list of payments for approval.

Invoices

L Taylor	Clerk services and expenses July/August 2026	£975.20
NettlestoPetals	July 2026 gardening work Llanvihangel-ystern-llewern	£140.00
NettlestoPetals	August Llanfihangel and extra work at Llanfaenor Village Greeb	£190.00
Parish Online	Mapping Software 26-27	£57.60
Monmouthshire County Council	For use on public right of way network in Whitecastle Community	£1,000.00
Power to repair and maintain footpaths and bridleways Highways Act 1980, ss. 43		

S137 Payments

Wales Air Ambulance	For providing emergency medical help to residents and visitors	£250.00
Cross Ash Primary School PTFA	Support for school activities and equipment	£250.00
Crucorney Young Farmers Club	For providing activities for young people.	£150.00
Llantilio Crossenny Church (St Teilo)	Churchyard maintenance, war memorial repair, biodiversity project and facilities for visitors	£1,750.00
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	£500.00
Monmouthshire Citizens Advice	For providing support for residents on a range of matters	£250.00
Penrhos Church (St Cadoc)	Churchyard maintenance	£500.00
Rockfield Church (St Cenhedlon)	Churchyard maintenance	£500.00
St Cadoc's Community	Handbells, noticeboard and turning circle	£500.00
St Maughan's Church (St Cadoc)	Maintenance of the open part of LVA churchyard	£250.00
St Maughan's Church (St Meugan)	Churchyard maintenance	£500.00
Llantilio Crossenny Women's Institute	Social activities for residents	£250.00
The Quilters Group	Social activities for residents and community projects	£250.00
The Village Life Community Project	The maintenance and development of a network of defibrillators	£2,500.00

Resolution: to approve the payments. Proposed by Cllr. Biggs and seconded by Cllr. Metters. The list of payments was signed by the Chair of the Council.

- The Clerk reminded Members that the payment to the Llantilio Church Committee includes £1,000 towards the maintenance costs of the war memorial, as agreed at the meeting held on 18 June. The payment was made on the understanding that the Committee would secure sufficient additional funding from other sources to complete the project. The Committee has since been awarded £5,000 by the Community Green Energy Advisory Group.
- The Clerk outlined arrangements for deciding the budget and precept for 2027/28. The Community Open Evening in November will be used to review whether previous support has resulted in positive outcomes for the community and to identify any further needs. The Clerk will present a draft budget at the December and the precept will be decided in January 2027.

20. Dates of future meetings

- 15 Oct 26 7pm Full council Meeting at The Hogs Head, Great Treadam, NP7 8TA
Cllr. Duncan gave his apologies in advance.
- 12 Nov 26 7pm Community Open Evening at Llanvapley Sports Pavilion.

Meeting closed at 9.03pm