

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of County Council held
at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 12th
December, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor Su McConnel (Chair)
County Councillor Peter Strong (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: Rachel Buckler, Laura Wright, Tony Kear, Catrin Maby, Jan Butler, Ian Chandler, Sara Burch, Alistair Neill, Mary Ann Brocklesby, Jane Lucas, Emma Bryn, Meirion Howells, Paul Griffiths, Jackie Strong, Rachel Garrick, Steven Garratt, Angela Sandles, Ben Callard, John Crook, Tomos Davies, Dale Rooke, Jayne McKenna, Jill Bond, Louise Brown, Tony Easson, Christopher Edwards, Martyn Groucutt, Simon Howarth, Richard John, David Jones, Penny Jones, Malcolm Lane, Phil Murphy, M. Newell, Paul Pavia, Maureen Powell, Frances Taylor, Tudor Thomas, Armand Watts and Ann Webb

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Peter Davies	Acting Chief Executive
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Jonathan Davies	Head of Finance
James Williams	Chief Officer Law & Governance
Matthew Gatehouse	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.
Ian Saunders	Chief Officer Customer, Culture and Wellbeing.
Deb Hill-Howells	Head of Decarbonisation, Transport and Support Services
Craig O'Connor	Chief Officer, Place
Hazel Clatworthy	Sustainability Policy Officer

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors Fay Bromfield, Maria Stevens, Sue Riley and Lisa Dymock

1. Local Emergencies

The Chair, Group Leaders and the Acting Chief Executive thanked Monmouthshire County Council staff, partners and emergency services for the support provided during the three local emergencies experienced within the County relating to flooding, the fire in Abergavenny, and recent storms.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=kNMDTjyW0cXa3u2r&t=64>

2. Welcome

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Martin Newell to his first County Council Meeting.

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3. Declarations of interest

County Councillor Jayne McKenna declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 8.2 as her father is a farmer.

County Councillor Rachel Buckler declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 8.2.

County Councillor David Jones declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 8.2. He left the meeting taking no part in the discussion or voting thereon in respect of this Motion.

County Councillor Jane Lucas declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 8.2.

County Councillor Simon Howarth declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 8.2. He left the meeting taking no part in the discussion or voting thereon in respect of this Motion.

County Councillor Su McConnel declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 8.2 as her husband is the beneficiary in a will which affects a family farm. She left the meeting taking no part in the discussion or voting thereon in respect of this Motion.

County Councillor Ann Webb declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 8.2.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=biXUeZUmFbhJ9JCI&t=843>

4. Chair's Announcement

The Chair's Announcement was noted.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=UWidK63LyvMKK4BL&t=1020>

5. Receipt of petitions

County Councillor Jackie Strong presented a petition to County Council on behalf of residents of Caldicot. The petition is entitled 'Design over Health and Safety?' which related to the safety of the zebra crossing on Sandy Lane adjacent to The Cross public house.

It was noted that the petition would be referred to the next meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee with an invitation to the relevant Cabinet Member and officers to address the Scrutiny Committee in respect of the matter.

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=yx5ZPRxabm_OQkK&t=1028

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6. Public questions

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=OCeWJhdckkp7mNrU&t=1173>

The Chair welcomed Mr. Jonty Pearce to the meeting. Mr. Pearce gave Members a presentation entitled 'Why has Monmouthshire County Council removed key protection for Monmouth's endangered Greater Horseshoe Bats?'

The following questions were noted:

- Why would the Council do this?
- Why would the Council not want to strengthen, not weaken protection for the bats?
- Why would the Council want to make it so easy for the developer to develop houses?

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Deputy Leader, thanked Mr. Pearce for his presentation and provided a response:

- It is not the Authority's belief that it has removed protection from any ecological feature in the County, including Greater Horseshoe Bats.
- The site being proposed is a smaller site than that which was previously proposed and was deliberately separated from the Horseshoe Bat habitat. Notwithstanding that, the information circulated today is the habitat's assessment which accompanies the proposed deposit Local Development Plan.
- We do not have the authority to remove any species or site protection.
- In accordance with legislation, every stage of the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) is considered for its potential adverse impacts on sites protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation.
- The Habitats Regulation Assessment for the Deposit RLDP considers each policy of the plan alongside it and available on the Monmouthshire County Council website.
- In addition, should this proposed site emerge as part of an approved Replacement Local Development Plan, then any development on that site would require a planning application and there would be detailed ecological surveys submitted and proposed mitigation and enhancement strategies to meet the requirements of the RLDP and of National Planning Legislation.
- The points raised are important and the Cabinet Member agreed to give them serious consideration.
- We are currently in a process of consultation and this matter raised will form part of the consultation process.
- It will be possible to conclude that further amendments to the deposit Local Development Plan would be beneficial in light of the presentation received and questions raised, and we will be able to bring any changes back to the Council in the report from the consultation.

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- In addition, today's discussion will be reported to the Planning Inspectorate. The Inspector will also consider whether the text within the Local Development Plan conforms with the points raised in the consultation.

Mr. Pearce asked the following supplementary question:

Could the Cabinet Member explain why the wording to the original question was considered too prescriptive and why that wording that would have safeguarded the bats, was removed?

The Cabinet Member responded:

- There is always a balance to be struck between policies which are necessary for the protection of all interests including our environmental interests and whether that balance has been achieved in accordance with the potential need for development alongside it. Whether we have the right balance is one that we will give further consideration to.

7. Confirmation of Minutes

Council resolved to accept the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held on 24th October 2024.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=TuGYBkW-NPGcetrq&t=1794>

8. Reports to Council:

9. Deforestation Free Champion Council

The Cabinet Member presented the report entitled for Deforestation Free Champion Council for Members to consider. The report highlighted the threat that tropical forests face and commits to better understand how Monmouthshire County Council could be contributing to deforestation, by signing the Deforestation Free Champions Charter and committing to develop an action plan which outlines how we will reduce our impact on deforestation and raise awareness of the issues in our communities.

Students from some of Monmouthshire's schools addressed the Council before the report was debated and voted upon.

Upon being put to a vote Council resolved to accept the recommendations:

- That Council signs up to the Deforestation Free Champions Charter.
- That officers develop and implement an action plan setting out the steps that we will take as Deforestation Free Champions both to understand and reduce our impact on tropical deforestation and to champion the importance of these issues in our communities. We have already taken some of these steps over the last year in collaboration with Monmouthshire's young people.

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Following the vote, the students presented Deforestation Free Community Badges to the Chair and Vice-Chair of Monmouthshire County Council, the Cabinet Member for Climate and Environment and Group Leaders.

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=gdGkYQTftSC_U-U4&t=1854

10. Charter for Families Bereaved Through Public Tragedy (The Hillsborough Charter)

The Leader presented the report outlining 'The Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy' (Hillsborough Charter) and to seek Council's agreement to adopt and commit to the outlined principles in the response to a major incident.

Upon being put to a vote Council resolved to accept the recommendations:

- That the Council adopts The Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy (Hillsborough Charter) and champions the transparent and supportive environment for families bereaved by public tragedy as outlined in the Charter.
- That the charter is embedded into the Monmouthshire County Council Emergency Management Plan and other appropriate major incident response plans to ensure the principles captured can be easily referenced, monitored and adhered to during a response.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=vCP3uVS81Lw27gzG&t=3239>

11. Appointments to Outside Bodies

The Cabinet Member presented the report to appoint County Councillors to represent the authority on the Joint Council for Wales and the board of Y Prentis.

Upon being put to a vote Council resolved to accept the recommendations:

- To approve the appointment of the County Councillor Ben Callard to the Joint Council for Wales, alongside County Councillor Phil Murphy.
- To approve the appointment of County Councillor Paul Griffiths, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development and Deputy Leader to the Board of Y Prentis.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=V7Xz3fGMDNVP5X7f&t=3764>

12. Motions to Council:

13. Submitted by County Councillor Jan Butler

County Councillor Jan Butler presented the motion:

This Council:

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- Thanks the emergency workers, volunteers and all those who supported Monmouthshire residents during Storm Bert.
- Expresses concern that a lack of maintenance of the county's drainage infrastructure will have exacerbated flood risks.
- Calls on the Council to reassess its processes to mitigate flood events and evaluate the size and funding of the workforce dedicated to drainage maintenance and environmental management.

Seconded by County Councillor Richard John.

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=V-1stVrNCQOny_Vz&t=4813

County Councillor Catrin Maby proposed an amendment to the Motion:

- Thanks the emergency workers, volunteers and all those who supported Monmouthshire residents during Storm Bert.
- **Recognises the increased frequency of severe weather events related to climate change, and the need for many forms of intervention to mitigate the impact on our communities.**
- Calls on the council to reassess its processes to mitigate flood events and evaluate the size and funding of the workforce dedicated to drainage maintenance and environmental management.

Seconded by County Councillor Chandler.

We proceeded to debate the proposed amendment to the Motion.

County Councillor Jan Butler, the presenter of the original Motion, exercised her right of reply in respect of the proposed amendment to the Motion.

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=gZCU_TJ_0DfM9BZd&t=5755

Upon being put to the vote, the following votes were recorded:

In favour of the amendment	-	21
Against the amendment	-	21
Abstentions	-	0

The vote was tied.

Due to the closeness of the vote, a recorded vote was held:

In favour of the amendment	-	21
Against the amendment	-	21
Abstentions	-	0

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In light of tied vote, the Chair exercised her casting vote and voted in favour of the amendment. The proposed amendment was carried.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=hl7gYtqcMF10uG4Y&t=9478>

NAME	For	Against	Abstain
Councillor J BOND	X		
Councillor M A BROCKLESBY	X		
Councillor F BROMFIELD Apologies			
Councillor L BROWN		X	
Councillor E BRYN		X	
Councillor R BUCKLER		X	
Councillor S BURCH	X		
Councillor J BUTLER		X	
Councillor B CALLARD	X		
Councillor I CHANDLER	X		
Councillor J CROOK	X		
Councillor T DAVIES		X	
Councillor L DYMOCK Apologies			
Councillor A EASSON	X		
Councillor C EDWARDS		X	
Councillor M. NEWELL		X	
Councillor S GARRATT	X		
Councillor R GARRICK	X		
Councillor P GRIFFITHS	X		
Councillor M GROUCUTT	X		
Councillor S.G.M. Howarth		X	
Councillor M HOWELLS	X		
Councillor R JOHN		X	
Councillor D. W. H. Jones		X	
Councillor P. Jones		X	
Councillor T KEAR		X	
Councillor M LANE		X	
Councillor J LUCAS		X	
Councillor C MABY	X		
Councillor S MCCONNEL	X		
Councillor J MCKENNA		X	
Councillor P MURPHY		X	
Councillor A NEILL		X	
Councillor P PAVIA		X	
Councillor M POWELL		X	
Councillor S RILEY Apologies			
Councillor D ROOKE	X		
Councillor A SANDLES	X		
Councillor M STEVENS Apologies			

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Councillor J STRONG	X		
Councillor P STRONG	X		
Councillor F TAYLOR		X	
Councillor T THOMAS	X		
Councillor A WATTS	X		
Councillor A WEBB		X	
Councillor L WRIGHT	X		

Members proceeded to debate the amended Motion.

County Councillor Tomos Davies proposed an amendment to the motion.

County Councillor Jan Butler accepted the amendment.

Amended Motion:

- Thanks the emergency workers, volunteers and all those who supported Monmouthshire residents during Storm Bert.
- **Recognises the increased frequency of severe weather events related to climate change, and the need for many forms of intervention to mitigate the impact on our communities, including maintenance of the county's drainage infrastructure.**
- Calls on the council to reassess its processes to mitigate flood events and evaluate the size and funding of the workforce dedicated to drainage maintenance and environmental management.

Upon being put to the vote, the following votes were recorded:

In favour of the amended motion	-	36
Against the amended motion	-	1
Abstentions	-	0

The amended motion was carried.

14. Submitted by County Councillor Rachel Buckler

County Councillor Rachel Buckler presented the motion:

This Council:

- Greatly values the role of Monmouthshire farmers in producing high quality food, providing food security and acting as the guardians of our natural environment.

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- Regrets the UK Government's proposed changes to inheritance tax, specifically the removal of Agricultural Property Relief, which threatens the future of family farms in Monmouthshire.
- Agrees to work with local farming unions and other Welsh councils to persuade the UK Government to protect our rural communities and not kill off family farms.

Seconded by County Councillor Maureen Powell.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=Gz2EIN1G0VPMof3T&t=12181>

County Councillor Sara Burch proposed an amendment to the Motion:

This Council:

- Greatly values the role of Monmouthshire farmers in producing high quality food, providing food security and acting as the guardians of our natural environment.
- Recognises that many farmers are facing a particularly difficult time as a result of the policies of previous Westminster governments, including Brexit, poorly negotiated trade deals and the failure to rein in the power of the supermarkets, as well as global instability and the growing impacts of climate change.
- Acknowledges that the UK Government's proposed changes to inheritance tax, specifically the limiting of Agricultural Property Relief, are perceived as a threat to the future of family farms in Monmouthshire.
- Agrees to work with local farming unions and other Welsh councils to protect our rural communities, supporting them to thrive and to sustain the inter-generational transfer of family farm businesses.

Seconded by County Councillor Dale Rooke.

We proceeded to debate the proposed amendment to the Motion.

County Councillor Rachel Buckler, the presenter of the original Motion, exercised her right of reply in respect of the proposed amendment to the Motion.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=XWUf5XlIq7qDV4VP&t=13891>

Upon being put to the vote, the following votes were recorded:

In favour of the amendment	-	21
Against the amendment	-	17
Abstentions	-	0

The proposed amendment was carried.

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Members proceeded to debate the substantive motion, as amended.

County Councillor Tomos Davies proposed an amendment to the first bullet point:

This Council:

- Recognises that many farmers are facing a particularly difficult time as a result of the policies of previous Westminster governments, including Brexit, poorly negotiated trade deals and the failure to rein in the power of the supermarkets, as well as global instability and the growing impacts of climate change [as well as continued uncertainty from the Welsh Government's own reforms].
- Acknowledges that the UK Government's proposed changes to inheritance tax, specifically the limiting of Agricultural Property Relief, are perceived as a threat to the future of family farms in Monmouthshire.
- Agrees to work with local farming unions and other Welsh councils to protect our rural communities, supporting them to thrive and to sustain the inter-generational transfer of family farm businesses.

Seconded by County Councillor Jane Lucas.

As there were no requests to speak on the amendment subject to the second amendment proposed by County Councillor Davies, we proceeded to the vote:

In favour of the amendment	-	32
Against the amendment	-	3
Abstentions	-	1

The amendment was carried.

We proceeded to debate the amended Motion.

County Councillor Rachel Buckler, the presenter of the original Motion, exercised her right of reply in respect of the amended motion.

Upon being put to a recorded vote the amended Motion was carried.

For	-	21
Against	-	18
Abstentions	-	0

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=l5NkF3fxlorXdTjs&t=16497>

NAME	For	Against	Abstain
Councillor J BOND	X		
Councillor M A BROCKLESBY	X		
Councillor F BROMFIELD Apologies			
Councillor L BROWN		X	

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Councillor E BRYN	X		
Councillor R BUCKLER		X	
Councillor S BURCH	X		
Councillor J BUTLER		X	
Councillor B CALLARD	X		
Councillor I CHANDLER	X		
Councillor J CROOK	X		
Councillor T DAVIES		X	
Councillor L DYMOCK	Apologies		
Councillor A EASSON	X		
Councillor C EDWARDS		X	
Councillor M. NEWELL		X	
Councillor S GARRATT	X		
Councillor R GARRICK			
Councillor P GRIFFITHS	X		
Councillor M GROUCUTT	X		
Councillor S.G.M. Howarth			
Councillor M HOWELLS	X		
Councillor R JOHN		X	
Councillor D. W. H. Jones			
Councillor P. Jones		X	
Councillor T KEAR		X	
Councillor M LANE		X	
Councillor J LUCAS		X	
Councillor C MABY	X		
Councillor S MCCONNEL			
Councillor J MCKENNA		X	
Councillor P MURPHY		X	
Councillor A NEILL		X	
Councillor P PAVIA		X	
Councillor M POWELL		X	
Councillor S RILEY	X		
Councillor D ROOKE	X		
Councillor A SANDLES	X		
Councillor M STEVENS	Apologies		
Councillor J STRONG	X		
Councillor P STRONG	X		
Councillor F TAYLOR		X	
Councillor T THOMAS	X		
Councillor A WATTS	X		
Councillor A WEBB		X	
Councillor L WRIGHT	X		

Following this agenda item the Vice-Chair called for a short break. During this time, County Councillors Tudor Thomas, Malcolm Lane, Frances Taylor and Ann Webb, left the meeting and did not return.

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15. **Members Questions:**

16. **County Councillor Steven Garratt to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment**

Please can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the experimental prohibition of driving (except for access) on the section of Goldwire Lane, Monmouth from the junction with Somerset Road to the junction with Drybridge Street?

The Cabinet Member explained that Goldwire Lane is a one-way street in Monmouth that loops around in a 'U' shape from Cinderhill Street down to Drybridge Street. The arm of the loop that runs down to Drybridge Street has a narrow section at the end with narrow pavements. This is the area that is subject to the Prohibition of Driving except for access to properties.

This is the only direct route for pedestrians into the town. There are blocks of sheltered housing flats on Goldwire Lane and it is these residents who approached the Authority with a request that something be done to address the dangers faced from vehicles using this route as a shortcut. Recently, 11 residents had written to the Cabinet Member regarding this route and requested that the lane be closed to through traffic. The route is used as a walking and cycling route into the town.

There is a clearly marked alternative route for vehicles via Somerset Road, so it is unnecessary for vehicles to use the lane as a shortcut. The shortcut is dangerous to people walking or wheeling along the lane, to people crossing the end of the lane at Drybridge Street where cars emerging block the crossing from pavement to pavement, and to traffic on Drybridge Street with cars emerging from an unexpected source with poor visibility close to the roundabout and impeding the flow of traffic on this street. Minor accidents have occurred at this location.

The Prohibition Order was delayed during the Welsh Water works but was implemented on 25th October 2024. However, many drivers continue to ignore the Order and continue to use the shortcut. The Cabinet Member expressed concern that by continuing to speak against it, Councillors might be encouraging drivers to continue to use the lane, which is presenting a real danger to vulnerable people. The Cabinet Member asked Members to think about the wellbeing of people in Monmouth including traffic congestion and air quality.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Garratt asked if the Cabinet Member had received any feedback from pedestrians about the impact of the experimental Prohibition of Driving Order.

The Cabinet Member stated that she had received feedback from local residents and read one of the letters to the Committee. The Cabinet Member asked Council to support her and the Road Safety Team in this matter.

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=ITVcu-XWoj_1HWsq&t=17532

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17. **County Councillor Martin Newell to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment**

In light of the flooding on Wonastow Road last month, when will the Cabinet Member abandon plans to partially close Goldwire Lane?

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=M5qlqeF13BcNDz7d&t=17890>

The Cabinet Member stated that the Prohibition Order will be trialled for six months, after which the impact on traffic will be assessed and whether further measures will be required to ensure the safety of all road users. Wonastow Road and several other roads across the region were flooded temporarily on 24th November 2024.

During an emergency event, the Council works with the emergency services to ensure safe and secure access and egress routes are provided for all of our communities. The importance of safe pedestrian routes during emergency events is as important as vehicular access. Feedback has been received from people who had walked into town during this period. Emergency vehicles will use whichever roads are available as needed, as is normal practice.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Newell asked the Cabinet Member when will common sense be used and the road turned into a shared route for vehicles and pedestrians with the path being removed and when will local residents be consulted?

The Cabinet Member responded by stating there had been several examples of near misses in terms of accidents. There have been several requests for safety. The dangers of vehicles using this route as a shortcut had been identified. There is an appropriate access for vehicles via Somerset Road onto Wonastow Road. It is illegal for vehicles to be driving along this section of Goldwire Lane.

18. **County Councillor Tony Kear to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment**

Please could the cabinet member advise of the current details of road sweepers in use in Monmouthshire, how their use is deployed and managed across the county and in particular the allocation to Llanbadoc and Usk Ward?

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=-1Z9GN-c_FVVMWf5&t=18146

The Cabinet Member stated that the Authority has three large mechanical sweepers at present supported by three small mechanical town centre sweepers. The majority of work outside town centres is response reactive with villages receiving three scheduled sweeps per year, as well as reactive when necessary. Capital funding from the previous administration is due to end this financial year.

The budget challenges faced by the Authority will make for difficult decisions on works prioritised, going forward. The Cabinet Member informed County Councillor Kear that

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she would get back to him as soon as possible with more details in respect of this matter.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Kear asked if a bigger mini sweeper (7.5 tonnes) could be provided and that Usk is given greater priority?

The Cabinet Member stated that she would liaise with relevant officers and get back to County Councillor Kear.

19. County Councillor Tony Kear to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment

Please could the cabinet member give an update on road repair schedules / backlog progress and priorities in Monmouthshire, with particular reference and context to the deteriorating surfaces in my Ward on Chepstow Road, Maryport Street and Porthycarne Street?

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=geRAFyr1MPR_ttJd&t=18316

The Cabinet Member stated that with regard to schedules and priorities, the Council prioritised resurfacing based on a number of factors including road condition usage and access to services, but also the impact of closing roads for resurfacing on the strategic network and route diversion. The programme of work for 2024/25 is on target. However, there are some difficult decisions to be made for next year.

With regard to Porthycarne Street, decisions have to be made regarding the Chain Bridge. The Chain Bridge cannot be closed at the same time as the works carried out on Porthycarne Street.

Work was scheduled to be undertaken in Little Mill this year. However, due to the electricity upgrades to the Glascoed works, work had to be temporarily stopped within Little Mill. It is anticipated that this work will be undertaken next year.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Kear asked when the Cabinet Member could give details of work to be undertaken on roads within his ward so that he can inform residents.

The Cabinet Member stated that a precise date could not be provided as budgets and work programmes for 2025/26 were being discussed and had not yet been set.

County Councillor Tony Kear left the meeting following determination of this agenda item.

20. County Councillor Emma Bryn to County Councillor Sara Burch, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing & Tourism

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on what the Council is doing to ensure the Penallt Viaduct (also known as the Wye Bridge in Redbrook), remains open to users for the foreseeable future, considering the fact that the attached footbridge, built in around

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1955 is now well beyond its expected lifespan and is showing severe signs of decay. Next Year marks the 50th anniversary of the Wye Valley walk and so there is likely to be an upsurge in walkers.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=Dc1S7rBirLaez3ZE&t=18543>

The Cabinet Member stated that the bridge is of great concern to the Wye Valley Walk Management Group. The bridge is monitored by Gloucestershire County Council and it has commissioned a consultant to produce an options report which will be used to consider options for construction and funding with Monmouthshire County Council. This report is due imminently and Monmouthshire County Council officers will be contacted in due course. Members will then be updated accordingly. A contribution from Monmouthshire County Council is identified in the capital pressures for 2025/26.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Bryn asked to be updated on progress so that she may notify the local community on progress in respect of this matter.

21. County Councillor Emma Bryn to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment

Following the news that the extensive Wye Bridge (Wyesham/Mayhill) repairs will not now take place until at least the spring of 2025. Can the cabinet member please let us know what will be done to ensure the rutted potholes that plague the bridge surface will be repaired to standard that will last until then?

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=kQulfE2INOdCh7GM&t=18648>

The Cabinet Member stated that maintenance will be carried out on the bridge until the bridge surfacing takes place. We are working towards March 2025 for the resurfacing to take place.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Emma Bryn asked that residents be given peace of mind regarding the timing of works for the new year.

The Cabinet Member stated that she recognises the issues raised and will provide further information of timescale of works, as soon as possible.

22. County Councillor Emma Bryn to County Councillor Sara Burch, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing & Tourism

Can the cabinet member please provide an update on the progress of the Wyesham/Mayhill to Monmouth Town walking and wheeling bridge?

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=3nkYDda-XKf_AkFw&t=18794

The Cabinet Member stated that delivery is dependent on securing external funding. The next stage of progressing this scheme is to reach agreement over land purchase, the detailed design and early contractor involvement and this work continues to move

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forward. We will then be in a position to bid for construction funding in the future utilising grant funding opportunities.

The changes for the Active Travel Fund criteria from Welsh Government means that we can only bid for one strategic project for 2025/26, and that project must have all permissions in place including the land acquisition and be construction ready. We are in ongoing dialogue with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales regarding the funding applications for 2025/26 and 2026/27 which are focussed on the Abergavenny and Llanfoist Active Travel Scheme.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Emma Bryn stated that a regular progress update on slower moving schemes would be helpful so that communities can be assured that this project is being driven forward.

The Cabinet Member stated this is not a lesser priority but that a matter of this scheme being ready for submission and also ready for funding.

23. County Councillor Tony Easson to County Councillor Sara Burch, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing & Tourism

Footpath 376/8 alongside the Neddern Brook, Caldicot, has been closed for well over 500 days. There is a recommendation from the Health & Safety Executive that the adjacent recycling yard has created a risk to the public. Can the Cabinet Member provide me with a firm update on when this problem will be resolved, and the footpath will be reopened?

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=q9TLWOIWfiiLMV1m&t=18966>

The Cabinet Member stated that she could not provide a firm update on when this problem will be resolved, and when the footpath will be reopened, at present. The path will remain closed until it is safe to be re-opened. It was closed because there was a perceived risk to users from the adjoining business. The responsibility for enforcement regarding that hazard sits with the Health and Safety Executive and with Natural Resources Wales.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Easson considered the response to be not acceptable and asked the Cabinet Member if she was aware that at least 17 outside bodies have been involved in correspondence for the last 500 days and asked that this matter be expedited via the Acting Chief Executive.

The Cabinet Member stated that a multi-agency meeting was required with a view to resolving this matter as soon as possible.

24. County Councillor Meirion Howells to County Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services

Could you provide an update on the support being provided to looked-after children and young care leavers during the Christmas period? Specifically, what initiatives or measures are in place to ensure their wellbeing and inclusion during this time, and how

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can we, as elected members, and members of the public get involved by contributing gifts or other forms of support to make their Christmas brighter?

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=r2P2jx6NLAB1BNG&t=19165>

The Cabinet Member stated that as Corporate Parents we strive to do the best for the children that we look after and for the young adults that have left our care. Each year the Council hosts the Monmouthshire Christmas Wishes Campaign providing gifts to vulnerable children. Local businesses, supermarkets and Council Hubs have collection points across the County. We also have an online portal for those who prefer to donate financially.

About 350 children and families will benefit from approximately 1500 parcels. We also operate the Christmas Hamper initiative which provides over 60 festive food hampers to our County's most vulnerable families in the week before Christmas. Our efforts are supported by two Monmouthshire Primary schools, King Henry VIII School, local churches and local businesses.

For children looked after in Foster placements or with Kinship Carers, there is money to support Christmas built into their Foster Carers fees and allowances. Children's Services also deliver a chocolate selection pack to all our children within a Fostering family.

For those children that are looked after but still placed with their parents, social workers work with the parents to ensure that the children have appropriate food, warmth and presents from their parents which is supported by Children's Services Christmas Wishes Campaign.

For children in residential care placements, the care provider is paid to support Christmas which is overseen by the child social worker.

With regard to our care leavers, they are supported by Children's Services, the Christmas Wishes Campaign and local charities ensuring that they have a £50.00 voucher, a £30.00 food hamper and a handpicked Christmas gift.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Meirion Howells asked how we are thanking the residents and businesses for their donations.

The Cabinet Member shared a short video with the Committee, produced by the Children's Services Team, thanking businesses and residents for their support and donations.

25. County Councillor Paul Pavia to County Councillor Ben Callard, Cabinet Member for Resources

Could the Cabinet Member provide a statement on the administration's assumptions regarding the increase in National Insurance rate for employers and its impact on the Council's budget?

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<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=gQwXVcuYZA9vvyjqL&t=19561>

The Cabinet Member stated that we have calculated that the impact of the increase in National Insurance contributions for direct employees will be around £3.1 Million. The funding of the direct National Insurance impact is expected to be forthcoming from UK Government in the first half of the next financial year. Welsh Government continues to work with the UK Government to ensure the full impact of the changes on the public sector are considered and adequate funding is provided.

The consideration of the indirect impact of the National Insurance changes, which is primarily driven by our commission services, is more complex. It is impacted by external factors including the size of external businesses, their staffing structure, their ability to access any relief schemes and how they may look to absorb any cost increase through their business models.

We continue to engage in dialogue with our major providers to better understand any resultant impact and will make the case for further funding support through the appropriate channels where appropriate.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Paul Pavia asked that given the 2.8% increase in the Council's core funding earmarked by Welsh Government for the next financial year, significantly below the Welsh average of 4.3%, and with no clarity from either the Welsh or UK Governments regarding whether the Local Government Sector will be shielded from the National Insurance increases, it is evident that any uplift that we are going to receive is going to be absorbed by this policy. How does the administration plan to mitigate the financial pressures resulting from the increased National Insurance rate for employees and what measures will be taken to ensure that essential services are maintained without compromising the quality of service delivered to our residents?

The Cabinet Member stated that the uplift in the draft budget of 2.8% is higher than that expected before the summer, which had been anticipated as being a 0% increase in our funding. However, we are in a much better position now than we were in the spring.

We will continue to work with Welsh Government regarding the impacts of the National Insurance contributions on our budget. We are expecting funding to be forthcoming. The impact on services will be addressed when the budget is brought to Council.

26. County Councillor Richard John to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment

What discussions has the Council had with Welsh Government and partners about improving road safety on the A40 junction between Raglan and Tregare?

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=oPZq9eaixzGAha2_&t=19817

The Cabinet Member stated that along with officers, she has liaised with the South Wales Trunk Road Agency (SWTRA) with a view to SWTRA taking action to address the road safety issues. We now have the road safety study setting out the options.

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Welsh Government is arranging a meeting in the new year to discuss this matter with Members, community councillors and other key stakeholders. Monmouthshire County Council has offered to host the meeting at the Raglan depot and when a date has been finalised, invitations will be sent out.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor John stated that there are likely to be six options outlined in the Road Safety study with Welsh Government anticipated to support option 6. This option creates congestion and deters private car use by turning the dual carriageway into a single carriageway. Councillor John asked the Cabinet Member's view on this option. Concern was expressed that this option could make the junctions even more dangerous.

The Cabinet Member stated that it wasn't her position to take a strong view on the options at this stage and that she would like to hear what the community thinks about the options available via the meeting in January 2025.

27. County Councillor Jayne McKenna to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment

Will the Cabinet Member provide an update on plans to resurface R46, the main road through Mitchel Troy?

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=p4kFa_1mzWZNQjKv&t=20024

The Cabinet Member stated that R46 has been identified in the capital pressures list for resurfacing for 2025/26 but we are currently working through the programme for next year as it may be impacted by the storm damage from the recent storms.

28. County Councillor Jane Lucas to County Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby, Leader

Will the Leader provide an update on the Vauxhall/Inglis Bridge?

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=QZ5IMvU44QqvE_Bt&t=20116

The Cabinet Member stated that we are all working together to put pressure on the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to come to a swift conclusion and to provide a solution that opens Inglis Bridge as quickly as possible. We are aware of a meeting on 13th December 2024 where MOD officers will better understand the latest position on replacement or repair. The Cabinet Member has requested an update from this meeting, as soon as possible, regarding the options that are being considered.

The Cabinet Member stated that she would update County Councillor Lucas, Monmouth Town Council, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment, The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement, Catherine Fookes MP and County Councillors Martin Newell and Steven Garratt of any developments arising from the meeting on the 13th December 2024.

County Councillor Jayne MacKenna left the meeting during discussion of this agenda item and did not return.

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29. County Councillor Laura Wright to County Councillor Paul Griffiths, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Deputy Leader

Following the devastating fire in Abergavenny town centre, can the cabinet member please give an update on what the County Council is doing to support the local community and businesses in the aftermath?

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=Y7TKspaypuJZyXq0&t=20336>

The Cabinet Member stated that he was with County Councillor Wright at a meeting convened by Y Fenni Business Community. He thanked the business community and its convenor, Lucy Howell, for the spirit and resilience they have shown in the face of severe challenge. He also thanked the emergency services and Monmouthshire County Council staff for all they have done. The businesses and County Council staff have worked together to manage the difficult consequences. The Authority and the owner will work together to consider the longer-term options for this site.

County Councillor Tony Easson left the meeting during discussion of this agenda item and did not return.

30. County Councillor Laura Wright to County Councillor Angela Sandles, Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement

There has been a rise in the number of recorded incidents of antisocial behaviour in Abergavenny. Will the cabinet member please tell us what the County Council is doing to tackle this problem?

<https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=vmJX4y2UmRQnhp9C&t=20419>

The Cabinet Member stated that we are aware of increased demand in Abergavenny which is driven by youths travelling into the area by train from outside our County. Our Community Safety Team is working closely with partners, including Gwent Police, British transport Police and Gwent Community Safety Teams in Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent to tackle this issue. We are utilising our CCTV to its fullest and sharing information and intelligence to prevent, detect and disrupt further occurrences. Our ASB strike process is also being implemented for the youths involved. This process aims to tackle ASB and prevent further escalation or if necessary to allow us to apply for an injunction.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Wright asked what are we as a Council doing to cooperate with Torfaen County Borough Council and is there a process for identifying offenders that are known to other local authorities which would enable the Police to fast track their ASB pathway and more easily tackle known offenders who are targeting Abergavenny.

The Cabinet Member stated that through our Community Safety Partnerships, Monmouthshire County Council Officers are liaising with partners including Gwent Police, the CCTV control room and Youth Services on a weekly basis where updates

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and information are shared regarding this matter. Our ASB strike process is also being utilised for the youths involved. The aim of the ASB strike process is to tackle anti-social behaviour through intervention which will prevent further incidents from occurring. Officers continue to monitor the situation to reduce anti-social behaviour in Abergavenny with all our partners and communities using all the legislation and guidance available. They are also exploring the use of Home Office funding to provide additional resources in the area.

31. County Councillor Richard John to County Councillor Paul Griffiths, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Deputy Leader

What steps is the administration taking to support high street businesses?

https://www.youtube.com/live/PHi1FvgAtig?si=_ZT1kAUHeB2MBSqr&t=20624

The Cabinet Member stated that our key strategy in supporting our High Streets is to work through the Transforming Towns Framework established by Welsh Government. We work with town councils, town businesses and communities to develop a shared vision for our towns identifying changes that we can support or employ to support that vision. By agreeing that vision and the placemaking plan we gain access to funding opportunities to support town centres and their business premises.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor John asked that the Administration redoubles its efforts, improve relations with town centre businesses and representative groups as there are businesses that are struggling, and we should be supporting them.

The Cabinet Member stated that it concerns us all when any business ceases to trade in our high streets. The vacancy rate in Monmouth has diminished over the last six months, notwithstanding all the difficulties occasioned by the investment that took place in the town through Welsh Water. The Cabinet Member will continue to make relationships that can be made with businesses in each of our towns throughout the County.

The meeting ended at 7.48 pm.