

# Public Document Pack



County Hall  
Rhadyr  
Usk  
NP15 1GA

Friday, 29 September 2023

## Notice of meeting

### Democratic Services Committee

Monday, 9th October, 2023 at 2.00 pm,  
County Hall, Usk – Steve Greenslade Room

### AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
3.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 2
4.	You Decide Project	
5.	Changes to the format of minutes	3 - 6
6.	Members Teams Channel & Chatbot	7 - 8
7.	Key Site Visit - Verbal	
8.	Date of next meeting - 22 January 2024	

**Paul Matthews**

**Chief Executive / Prif Weithredwr**

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillor Louise Brown	Shirenewton;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Tomos Dafydd Davies	Llanfoist & Govilon;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Meirion Howells	Llanbadoc & Usk;	Independent
County Councillor David Jones	Crucorney;	Independent Group
County Councillor Su McConnel	Croesonen;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Maria Stevens	Severn;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Peter Strong	Rogiet;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Armand Watts	Bulwark and Thornwell;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Laura Wright	Grofield;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Rachel Buckler	Devauden;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Ann Webb	St Arvans;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Tudor Thomas	Park;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru

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## Public Information

### Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

A copy of this agenda and relevant reports can be made available to members of the public attending a meeting by requesting a copy from Democratic Services on 01633 644219. Please note that we must receive 24 hours notice prior to the meeting in order to provide you with a hard copy of this agenda.

### Watch this meeting online

This meeting can be viewed online either live or following the meeting by visiting [www.monmouthshire.gov.uk](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk) or by visiting our Youtube page by searching MonmouthshireCC.

### Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

# Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

## Our purpose

Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities

### Objectives we are working towards

- Giving people the best possible start in life
- A thriving and connected county
- Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment
- Lifelong well-being
- A future focused council

## Our Values

**Openness.** We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

**Fairness.** We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

**Flexibility.** We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

**Teamwork.** We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

**Kindness:** We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.



# Public Document Pack Agenda Item 3

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held  
at Conference Room - Usk, NP15 1AD on Monday, 12th June, 2023 at 2.00 pm

**PRESENT:** County Councillor Ann Webb (Chair)

County Councillors: Louise Brown, Meirion Howells, Su McConnel,  
Peter Strong, Armand Watts, Laura Wright, Rachel Buckler,  
Tudor Thomas and Alistair Neill

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Matt Phillips	Chief Officer People and Governance and Monitoring Officer
John Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer

### **APOLOGIES:**

Councillors Maria Stevens

#### **1. To note the appointment of County Councillor Ann Webb as Chair**

Noted.

#### **2. To appoint a Vice Chair**

County Councillor Peter Strong was appointed as Vice Chair.

#### **3. Declarations of interest**

None.

#### **4. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 were approved. In doing so we noted that the following should read September 2026:

*There was concern around the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education being replaced by the Standing Advisory Council, considering that SACRE would still be in existence until September 2024. The Chief Officer assured Members that both SAC and SACRE would be covered under one committee, which could be titled SAC/SACRE. The Monitoring Officer advised that any further concerns be directed to the relevant officers.*

#### **5. All Councillors teams channel & chatbot**

The Local Democracy Manager referred to the dedicated Members area on the intranet where we upload documents such as guidance, induction training and seminar

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at Conference Room - Usk, NP15 1AD on Monday, 12th June, 2023 at 2.00 pm**

recordings. Members were informed that a specific Teams channel has been created and will be rolled out fairly soon and were provided with a demonstration.

Members were invited to use the channel for a couple of weeks and provide feedback.

In terms of resources it was recognised that the development of the system allows access to information out of hours and is the digital way of moving forward. The set-up is complete and it would now be a case of monitoring and updating.

There were some concerns around the use of AI.

The Committee welcomed the channel and chatbot and looked forward to using it. It was agreed that an update be brought to the next meeting.

#### **6. Area Committees**

The Chair opened a discussion on the possibility of reinstating Area Committees. The local Community Council had considered this a useful forum and were keen to re-establish Lower Wye Area Committee.

There were mixed views on Area Committees:

- Area Committees had been more of a talking-shop and not an effective use of time.
- Had been useful when grants were being issued to local groups
- Officer attendance had been problematic.
- The status of the meeting meant that they were not taken seriously.
- Issues raised had been important
- Scrutiny Committees are able to invite relevant key partners for updates.
- Severnside Area Forum is up and running and was considered successful.

It was decided that Members should be able to establish an informal forum, but this would not be across the board and only when necessary.

#### **7. Date of next meeting - 9th October 2023**

Noted.

It was agreed to arrange the tour of the County in September.

**The meeting ended at 2.48 pm**

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Changes to the format of committee minutes</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Democratic Services Committee</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>October 2023</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>N/A</b>

**1. PURPOSE:**

To consider the changes to the format of the minutes for committees and bring them in line with a similar format introduced for full Council.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

To approve the changes to the format of minutes and provide consistency across all committees.

**3. KEY ISSUES:**

- 3.1 It is a legislative requirement that minutes are drafted and agreed for all committees of the Council to accurately record the decisions taken and agreed at each meeting. There is no prescribed legal definition of the format or content of a set of minutes for a meeting and views can vary from verbatim records through to brief action points or decision logs as meeting the legal requirement.
- 3.2 The legislative requirement to record minutes pre dates the introduction of technology to support meetings and the online library of recordings of meetings that is now available. Whilst it became mandatory to live stream certain council meetings in May 2022, Monmouthshire has been live streaming all council meetings where possible since 2014 and recordings are available on the Councils youtube channel.
- 3.3 The recording of the meeting being available to refer back to allows individuals to watch the full debate and the context in which the debate took place as well as allow individuals to hear the full verbatim contribution from councillors should they wish to do so. This eradicates the need for most committees that the minutes reflect any detail of the debate and the contributions councillors make as the full record is already publicly available for review.
- 3.4 From the meeting of Full Council in July 2023 a new style format of minutes was trialled which have been approved at both meetings. The new style is summarised as follows:
- An agenda item title
  - A brief overview the decision to be taken linked to the purpose/recommendation of the report
  - A link to the time stamp of the online recording where the item begins on the whole recording

- An overview of the decision taken where the result is clear; or the details of the recorded vote where one is taken be that at the request of councillors or due to the close nature of the vote.

3.5 In most cases, the new style format should be sufficient to cover most committees and scenarios that arise at meetings. There will inevitably be occasion where the summarised format might need further clarification for various reasons and where this is the case the chair or members of the committee can request that additional details are included. Exemptions to the new format could include but are not limited to;

- Scrutiny Committees – Given the flexible nature of the debate at scrutiny committees and need to summarise the debate and questioning from committee members, a link to the debate as well as a summary of comments/questions could be included in the minutes.
- Quasi-Judicial Committees – Committees such as planning and licensing which are heavily guided by legislation and can be impacted by other agencies may require a different format depending on the nature of the decision being taken.

The de facto position should be to retain the standard format where possible but its appreciated that certain scenarios could arise where clear clarification is required and committees have the responsibility to determine those instances.

3.6 Committee chairs were consulted as part of the change to gather their views on the new format. On the whole, chairs are supportive of the changes with only one chair commenting that they would prefer to retain the current format for their committee.

3.7 It is recommended that Democratic Services Committee review the format in 12 months time to ensure that the new format is effective and accessible for councillors as well as members of the public.

**4. REASONS:**

To simply the recording of decisions taken at committees and utilise new technologies to better reflect fuller debate held at committee meetings.

**5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

None

**6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no sustainable development or equality impacts arising from this report.

**7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

There are no safeguarding or corporate parenting implications associated with this report.

**8. CONSULTEES:**

Committee Chairs  
Group Leaders

**10. AUTHOR:**

John Pearson, Local Democracy Manager



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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Teams Channel Update</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Democratic Services Committee</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>October 2023</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>N/A</b>

**1. PURPOSE:**

To provide members with an update on the Members Teams channel and chatbot since the previous update.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

To note the changes and recommend any other areas for inclusion.

**3. KEY ISSUES:**

3.1 At the previous meeting of Democratic Services Committee members were introduced to a dedicated teams channel for member support which included a chatbot to assist members with queries and direction to services that are specific to their role. Members welcomed the channel and following the meeting were provided with access to it and requested adding it as a standing item going forward for the committee to review its progress.

3.2 Updates to the chatbot since the previous meeting include the following:

- Committee, cabinet working group and outside body specific links and references so when you search for a committee name it will return a specific result rather than direct you to all committees.
- Blue badge contact information – link to website information and contact information
- Improved Payroll/HR contact information
- Gifts and hospitality guidance
- Declaration of interest form
- Updated SRS Support guidance
- Contact information for Democratic Services
- Corporate Structure
- Contact information for road issues
- Recycling and waste collection guidance for residents and contact information
- School holiday details
- Freedom of Information guidance and contact information

3.3 The channel was also used as part of the interview for the new head of legal and monitoring officer to share confidential information with members during the interview process.

3.4 Following this meeting, access to the channel will be shared with all councillors and reported back to the next meeting of the committee.

**4. REASONS:**

To provide members with an update on progress.

**5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

None

**6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no sustainable development or equality impacts arising from this report.

**7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

There are no safeguarding or corporate parenting implications associated with this report.

**8. AUTHOR:**

John Pearson, Local Democracy Manager

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