

# **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 18th September, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor Peter Strong (Chair)  
County Councillor Martyn Groucutt (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: Rachel Buckler, Laura Wright, Tony Kear, Catrin Maby, Jan Butler, Ian Chandler, Sara Burch, Alistair Neill, Su McConnel, Mary Ann Brocklesby, Fay Bromfield, Jane Lucas, Emma Bryn, Meirion Howells, Paul Griffiths, Jackie Strong, Rachel Garrick, Maria Stevens, Steven Garratt, Angela Sandles, Ben Callard, John Crook, Tomos Davies, Dale Rooke, Sue Riley, Jayne McKenna, Jill Bond, Louise Brown, Lisa Dymock, Tony Easson, Christopher Edwards, 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:**

Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Peter Davies	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources
Jane Rodgers	Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Matthew Gatehouse	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.
James Williams	Chief Officer Law & Governance
Deb Hill-Howells	Chief Officer Infrastructure

### **APOLOGIES:**

County Councillors Simon Howarth

#### **1. Declarations of Interest**

County Councillors Tony Kear, Tomos Davies and Rachel Garrick declared a personal, prejudicial interest in relation to 8.1 on the agenda.

#### **2. Chair's Announcement**

Noted.

The Chair thanked those who had supported the summer raffle which had raised over £500.

#### **3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held at 10:00am on the 17th July 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held at 10:00am on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

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#### **4. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held at 14:00pm on the 17th July 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held at 14:00pm on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

County Councillor Louise Brown asked that responses to Cabinet Member questions are followed up and shared to Members.

#### **5. Public Question:**

#### **6. Submitted by Mr. Peter Short**

The Chair invited Mr. Peter Short to present his question to Council:

*Will the Council immediately consider divesting from all 'complicit' companies and exert pressure on the Greater Gwent (Torfaen) Local Government Pension Fund, and through them on the Wales Pension Partnership, to divest from all complicit companies. To not do so would seem to be contrary to both Monmouthshire's, Torfaen's and the Wales Pension Partnership's 'Responsible Investment Policy'.*

The Cabinet Member for Resources, County Councillor Ben Callard thanked Mr. Short for his timely question and was pleased to say that Wales Pension Partnership had recently issued a statement recognising the strength of feeling at the moment. He added that he would be supporting Councillor Chandlers motion and was happy to work with officers and the pension fund to review the investments.

[Watch the meeting here.](#)

#### **7. Reports to Council**

#### **8. Monmouthshire County Council Self-Assessment 2024/25**

The Leader presented the report to seek Council approval of the self-assessment report 2024/25 to ensure that members have a clear and transparent assessment of the authority's performance during the year ending 31 March 2025 in line with requirements outlined in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

**Upon being put to a vote Council resolved to accept the recommendation:**

**That the self-assessment for 2024/25 be approved.**

[Watch the meeting here.](#)

#### **9. Motions to Council**

#### **10. Submitted by County Councillor Ian Chandler**

The Chair asked that all Councillors who were members of the Greater Gwent Pension Scheme declare a personal, non-prejudicial interest. The following Councillors declared an interest: Brocklesby; Groucutt; John; Neill; Griffiths; Buckler; Chandler; Wright; Watts; Brown; Bond;

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Howells; Bryn; D. Jones; Taylor; Thomas; Maby; Burch; Sandles; Butler; Edwards; McConnel; J. Strong; Callard; Garrett; Lucas; Webb; Newell; Riley; Bromfield; Dymock; McKenna.

*This Council notes with grave concern the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and the widespread international calls for an immediate ceasefire. Council further notes the findings of the United Nations and respected human rights organisations that serious breaches of international humanitarian law are being committed, including the targeting of civilians and the obstruction of essential aid.*

*Council recognises its responsibility to ensure that public money, including its own investments and those of the Greater Gwent Pension Fund, is used in a manner consistent with our values of peace, human rights, and respect for international law.*

*Council therefore resolves to:*

- 1. Review its own investments and request that those of the Greater Gwent Pension Fund are reviewed to identify any direct or indirect holdings in companies that are supplying arms, military technology, or logistical support which enable breaches of international law in Gaza;*
- 2. Work with its asset managers to take steps to end such investments and request that the Greater Gwent Pension Fund does the same; and*
- 3. Report back to Council within three months on progress made.*

Seconded by County Councillor Dale Rook.

**Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.**

[Watch the meeting here.](#)

#### **11. Submitted by County Councillor Emma Bryn**

*Following the announcement in August that Monmouthshire has joined the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities:*

- *The WHO Network which commits to listening to the needs of their ageing population, assess and monitor their age-friendliness, and work collaboratively with older people to create age-friendly physical and social environments.*

*This Council agrees that it will support towns and communities to becoming better places to grow older and resolves to increase its investment and focus on enhancing highway infrastructure to improve residents' mobility beyond private vehicles and to advance the reporting and recording of footway taxonomy required to achieve this within the county.*

Seconded by County Councillor Frances Taylor.

**Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.**

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Councillor Stevens left the meeting at 16:52  
Councillor McKenna left the meeting at 17:32

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#### **12. Submitted by County Councillor Richard John**

The Chair moved that the item be moved to 8.1 of the agenda.

*This Council:*

*Recognises the significant contribution the Bridges Centre in Monmouth makes to the lives of residents across Monmouthshire.*

*Calls upon the Cabinet to seek an affordable and fair agreement with the trustees of the Bridges Centre to secure its long-term future.*

Councillor John presented a petition to Council with 3121 signatures urging MCC to provide Bridges Centre with a sustainable long-term lease without rebate reviews.

Seconded by County Councillor Alistair Neill.

**Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.**

[Watch the meeting here.](#)

#### **13. Submitted by County Councillor Richard John**

*This Council:*

*Calls upon the administration to set out its plans to tackle surplus places in the Monmouth and Chepstow clusters.*

Seconded by County Councillor Paul Pavia.

County Councillor Paul Griffiths proposed an amendment, seconded by County Councillor Sara Burch:

To Add - *having first fully engaged with schools and the local community in developing such plans.*

Councillor John accepted the amendment.

County Councillor Tudor Thomas declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as Chair of Ysgol Gymraeg Governing Body.

**Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.**

[Watch the meeting here.](#)

Councillor Frances Taylor left the meeting at 18:15

#### **14. Submitted by County Councillor Lisa Dymock**

*This Council notes that access to affordable childcare is essential for parents/guardians seeking to return to work and that the current Welsh Government childcare offer provides funded childcare from the age three to four, while in England parents will now be entitled to 30 hours per week funded childcare starting at nine months.*

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*This Council believes that Monmouthshire families should not face such high childcare costs and this Council therefore resolves to write to Welsh Government to call for an extension of the current childcare offer to match the entitlement in England by providing free childcare from nine months old.*

Seconded by County Councillor Fay Bromfield.

**Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.**

[Watch the meeting here.](#)

Councillor Pavia left the meeting at 18:40  
Councillor Lane left the meeting at 18:43  
The following Councillors left the meeting at 19:00:  
Bromfield; D. Jones; Chandler; Newell; McConnel; Easson and Davies

#### **15. Member Questions**

#### **16. From County Councillor Jan Butler to County Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services**

*Changes in treatment modalities have resulted in residents who previously held blue badges for their medical condition being refused renewal. Neither their underlining condition nor the disability they might cause will have gone away.*

*It is usual in the case of refusal for applicants to be referred to an independent assessor: the designated assessor, Able2 (a subsidiary of Nottingham Rehab Ltd), is no longer operational following the parent company's closure on 31st July 2025.*

*What measures are being put in place to correct these two issues?*

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement responded that she was sorry to hear of the difficulties experienced by the resident. She explained that as a Council, we recognise the requirement to reapply for a blue badge every three years may feel burdensome. However this is not an MCC decision, but a requirement set by WG as part of the Blue Badge Scheme and the duration of badge is stated in legislation as a maximum of three years after which reapplication is necessary. While some applicants may not need to provide new medical evidence, the process is applied consistently across Wales. Residents can reapply up to 12 weeks before their current badge expires to help avoid delays. Over the last 12 months, 2937 badges have been issued in Monmouthshire, with 102 applications refused for not meeting the eligibility criteria.

Following the closure of Able2 on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025, local authorities have temporarily taken on responsibility for carrying out the assessments. The Cabinet Member thanked officers for taking on the additional work. WG has confirmed that a new supplier for the independent assessor role has now been secured following a successful procurement process. We are awaiting further details on implementation timelines but can reassure residents that the change has not had a detrimental impact on the processing of applications.

As a supplementary, Councillor Butler stated that she would forward on further correspondence.

[Watch the meeting here.](#)

#### **17. From County Councillor Alistair Neill to County Councillor Catrin Maby Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment**

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*Some two months after private construction work by European Energy began, using large heavy trucks on the narrow lanes adjoining the B4598, there is still no construction traffic management plan in place, communicated to local residents, and being implemented. The consequence has been entirely avoidable chaotic problems for local residents either in 'stand-offs' with large trucks or convoys, or reversing hundreds of yards, potentially compromising safety. Would the cabinet member please ensure that the draft plan is immediately fully communicated and implemented and take this matter up with the planning authority, the Welsh Government?*

The Cabinet Member explained that the Construction Traffic Management Plan was agreed by the planning inspector from PEDW as part of the determination of the planning application. However, it is the local planning authority in the County Council that has responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the permission and ensuring it complies with any plans and conditions. So MCC has the power to take enforcement action if it considers that the development does not comply with the permissions.

In this case, Highways have met with the Community Council, residents and European Energy and have agreed a revised version of the traffic management plan that looked to further address the issues on the access lane off the B4598. The revised version has taken on board the vast majority of ideas and concerns presented at those meetings and it looks for a pragmatic approach to reduce conflict in the lane while maintaining free-flowing traffic as much as possible.

As a supplementary Councillor Neill asked that officers ensure residents are kept informed of the detail of the plan.

[Watch the meeting here.](#)

Councillor J. Strong left the meeting at 19:10.

#### **18. From County Councillor Christopher Edwards to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment**

*Could the Cabinet Member provide an update on the road safety review of Welsh Street, Chepstow that was promised by herself on behalf of the council's Traffic Team at full council in March of this year.*

The Cabinet Member explained that the new speed indicator devices have been installed on Welsh Street and further traffic monitoring is due to be carried out over the coming weeks now that the schools have returned. The police agreed to have PCSO presence at the school during drop-off times during the first few weeks of the new school year to reiterate the safety message.

As a supplementary Councillor Edwards referred to 27.12.7 of the constitution, questions by members, and asked how responses are dealt with to ensure credibility.

The Cabinet Member apologised if she had misunderstood a previous question and would discuss further following the meeting.

[Watch the meeting here.](#)

#### **19. From County Councillor Christopher Edwards to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment**

*Could the Cabinet Member provide an update on the review of the B4235 junction (particularly the road-markings and signage) off St Lawrence Road in Chepstow that was agreed at full council in March of this year.*

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The Cabinet Member explained that there is a programme of maintenance work planned of the next few months which includes the B4235.

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#### **20. Date of next meeting - 23rd October 2025**

Noted.

**The meeting ended at 7.15 pm**