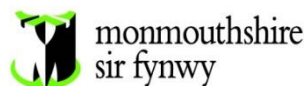


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County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Friday, 4 July 2025

Notice of meeting

Democratic Services Committee

Monday, 14th July, 2025 at 2.00 pm,
Council Chamber, County Hall, Usk

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	To note the appointment of County Councillor Lisa Dymock as Chair	
2.	To appoint a Vice Chair	
3.	Apologies for absence	
4.	Declarations of interest	
5.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 2
6.	Member Online Support	3 - 4
7.	Council Chamber Meeting Software	5 - 8
8.	Date of next meeting - 13th October 2025	

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 Tony Kear	Llanbadoc & Usk;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Su McConnel	Croesonen;	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 John Crook	Magor East with Undy;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Tudor Thomas	Park;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Christopher Edwards	St. Kingsmark;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Lisa Dymock	Portskewett;	Welsh Conservative Party

:

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 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

- to become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Objectives we are working towards

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced;
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency;
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in;
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued;
- Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential

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 5**

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 7th April, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor David Jones (Chairman)

County Councillors: Tomos Davies, Tony Kear, Su McConnel,
Peter Strong, Armand Watts, Laura Wright, John Crook,
Rachel Buckler, Tudor Thomas and Malcolm Lane

Also in attendance, County Councillor Angela Sandles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

John Pearson Local Democracy Manager
Paul Sullivan Head of Customer, Communications and Engagement

APOLOGIES:

Councillors Meirion Howells

1. Apologies for Absence

It was noted that Cllr Lane was attending the meeting as a substitute for Cllr Brown.

2. Declarations of Interest

None received

3. To approve the minutes of the following meetings:

4. Minutes of the meeting held on the 13 January 2025

The minutes of the meeting on held on the 13 January 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on the 10 March 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on the 10 March 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

6. Improvements to Consultations - Verbal Discussion

The chair introduced the item as coming to the committee for review as a result of a discussion at the previous full council meeting where it was recommended that the Democratic Services Committee review the effectiveness of the consultation processes held by the Council.

The chair welcomed Paul Sullivan, Head of Customer, Communication and Engagement, to the meeting who provided an overview of the Lets' Talk programme which is Monmouthshire's new platform for digital consultations and how it will be used in the future and embedded into standard practice. It was also noted that a recent members seminar was held to give members a detailed overview of the platform and how it intends to be used.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 7th April, 2025 at 2.00 pm

Members provided their views which included supporting the shift to the new platform but were keen to ensure there are many mechanisms for engaging with the Council in the way that allows for face to face engagement to continue for those that prefer that way of communicating with the council. It was also noted that its important to encourage residents to register with the platform to maximise its effectiveness.

Members were advised that the community hubs have equipment and staff have been trained to ensure the facilities and knowledge are available to allow users to register easily.

The committee questioned the synergy between Lets Talk and other council platforms such as My Monmouthshire and whilst they are different systems that require separate accounts, the Lets Talk platform can use the My Monmouthshire system to share information with over 15,000 residents and link them into the Lets Talk platform.

Councillor Watts joined the meeting at 14:39.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/IZ7WfOffwZw?feature=shared&t=150>

7. To note the Final Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Report 2025/26

The Local Democracy Manager introduced the item and informed the committee that the attached report is the final proposals by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales detailing the level of remuneration councillors will receive for 2025/26. The committee received the draft report in late 2024 and it was noted there are no changes between the draft report and the final report it was just for the committee to note the final proposals.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/IZ7WfOffwZw?feature=shared&t=2416>

8. To note the date of the next meeting as the 14th July 2025

The meeting ended at 14:45



MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

SUBJECT:	Member Online Support
MEETING:	Democratic Services Committee
DATE:	14 July 2025
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide the committee with an update on the changes being made to the intranet where members can access information and the introduction of E-forms for specific tasks.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee consider the changes and propose changes to improve its use and effectiveness.

3. REASONS:

- 3.1 The resources available to Councillors on the intranet has been built upon since the elections in May 2022. It is now a rich repository of information containing guidance documents, topic specific information, officer contact details and structures as well as recordings and slides from members seminars and induction sessions. It has however been difficult to navigate and for members to find the information they are looking for.
- 3.2 To that end the look and feel of the support pages for councillors has been redesigned to significantly improve navigation and the ability to find pertinent information. Members of the committee can access the pages on the intranet here: [Democratic Services Homepage](#).
- 3.3 These pages are not yet live but are ready to switch over when considered appropriate. Members will access the pages from the homepage of the hub, scrolling down and selecting the democratic services tab.
- 3.4 Incorporated at the top of each page are quick links to common things councillors ask us for such as the forward planner and declaration of interest forms. The changes to the new pages have allowed us to consider how other things are submitted such as questions and motions for full council and call in requests.
- 3.5 With questions and motions members are relied upon to email a specific officer who, if absent, may miss receiving those details and potentially miss it off the agenda. With that in mind, E-forms have been introduced for questions, motions and call in's and are available on these pages. The form requests you to input all the information relevant to each action and will

email members of the democratic services team with the information automatically so that it can be extracted and included on the agenda. As a back up, all submissions will be saved to a table on sharepoint, as well as in office365 so there are multiple back ups to ensure nothing is lost. Councillors will also be emailed confirmation, including the details of the submission, as confirmation of its successful submission.

- 3.6 The support pages for officers have also been significantly improved including new guidance on the decision making process, e-forms for requesting members seminars as well as a new design of the forward work programme.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 4.1 Not applicable

5. CONSULTATION:

Political Group Leaders

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Current support pages - [Democratic Services - Home](#)

- 7. **AUTHOR:** John Pearson, Local Democracy Manager
johnpearson@monmouthshire.gov.uk



MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

SUBJECT:	Council Chamber Meeting Software
MEETING:	Democratic Services Committee
DATE:	14 July 2025
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide the committee with an update on the upgrade to the Council Chamber and the software used to host Council meetings.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee consider the advantages of the implementation of the new software and how it can be used to enhance the experience during the meeting and for residents.

3. REASONS:

- 3.1 In 2021 the Council Chamber was refurbished due to an increase in the number of councillors appointed to the Council and the existing equipment with the chamber used for meetings is coming to the end of its lifespan. New regulations coming into force in 2022 also mandated the requirement for councils to provide for councillors to attend meetings remotely and to ensure that as a minimum, meetings of Full Council were live streamed.
- 3.2 As a council, a policy of live streaming all public meetings where possible was adopted many years ago and those recordings are available on the councils Youtube channel. Similarly, changes were made to the constitution to allow the Council to adopt remote attendance well ahead of the legislative changes and many successful trials had already taken place to allow councillors to do so. It was however not without its challenges and required many time-consuming workarounds, including the use of external hardware, to run these successfully.
- 3.3 With that in mind, a full review of the requirements of the council chamber was undertaken both for council meetings as well as ordinary use as a meeting room which resulted in the current equipment being installed and future proof the council chamber for future upgrades.
- 3.4 At that time, the main suitable platform for hosting council meetings was Microsoft Teams. Zoom was used by some councils but was not adopted by Monmouthshire due to ICT concerns relating to the platform. Whilst there were options from external providers that could be used as a potential options, they were still in their infancy and offered little opportunity to tailor the system to our local needs or the costs of adopting those platforms were,

and continue to be, prohibitive. Additionally, there were little costs associated with Microsoft Teams due to it forming part of the Councils ICT arrangements and given the way technology was going to adapt in the years since the pandemic, offered a suitable holding position until a platform became available that could do what the Council required it to do. Unfortunately, development in this area since the pandemic has been relatively slow due to the small customer base that is able to utilise the software. Current regulations in England do not allow for remote attendance at meetings so it can only be utilised in Wales and Scotland which has led to slower development than expected.

- 3.5 Whilst Microsoft Teams and some of the functionality within it proved effective from the outset, the local elections in 2022 significantly altered the political balance of the Council and required greater auditing and information of the votes being cast at Council meetings. With that not available within Teams, it has resulted in a greater number of recorded votes being requested. Similarly, functionality used for meetings that could previously be relied upon have become unsupported and risk meetings not functioning as expected. Teams also does not interact with the equipment that is installed in the Council Chamber well and essentially means there are two meeting environments (in person and remotes) that somehow need to be brought together. There is also a lot of functionality within the new Council Chamber equipment that is not being fully utilised due to the interoperability issue.
- 3.6 As such, following a procurement exercise a new provider of meeting software, MVI Meeting Management, has been identified that can lead to significant improvements in the meeting experience for both councillors and for residents and will be installed during the August recess.
- 3.7 The new platform allows integration with the equipment in the Council Chamber and provides an interface for remotees similar to Microsoft Teams but also replicates the microphones in the Council Chamber. Importantly, all users will have access to the same functionality and be within the same environment regardless of whether they are remote or in person. It will also allow for users to be identified by type (officers / councillors / public) and set different roles within the meeting which is important for voting purposes.
- 3.8 Additionally, it will allow for a better end user experience on the live stream by including things such as agenda item titles, placeholder cards to identify who is speaking at a particular time and the option to display the voting results on the live stream once they are completed.
- 3.9 It has also been requested to have a timer displayed in the council chamber for speakers to be aware of the time limit available to them when debating an item. Clearly though, a device in the chamber will not be useful for those attending remotely and the platform allows for speaking times to be allocated to users which will display on the screen for all to see during the meeting regardless of where they are. This will also benefit the planning committee where there are strict restrictions on how long contributions on particular items can be.

- 3.10 Similarly, the new meeting software will allow for interaction with our software that manages the website and the publication of agendas and minutes. As discussed at the committee earlier this year, there was a desire to explore the option of publishing all councillors voting preferences on the website. The new meeting software will automatically record each councillors votes and send those results to our other software which can allow for greater publicity and transparency of voting preferences if that is something the committee wants to take forward.
- 3.11 The introduction of new software will obviously require new ways of working. On the whole, the meeting experience will be similar to the one that councillors are already used to. There will however be pre meeting set up such as placing an id card in the microphone to identify individual councillors or ensuring that your device is registered correctly to attend remotely. Given the uniqueness of each individual and their profile, sharing of joining links before meetings will not be possible and councillors will need to join through the link provided to them. The 'push to speak' functionality that is currently in place will also be removed and the chair will operate the switching of microphones when they are ready to invite the next speaker to give their contribution. Voting will also switch to pressing buttons on the microphones for those attending the meeting in person.
- 3.12 Currently Cardiff City Council and the Vale of Glamorgan have adopted this software for their council meetings. Examples of how the software can be utilised is available on their respective websites and the live streaming of their meetings.
- 3.13 Installation of the software is due to commence during the August recess alongside training for the staff operating the system. Following this an extensive testing a training plan will put in place for councillors to make them aware of how to use the software fully during meetings.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 4.1 Costs for the installation of the new software were met from a surplus in the services budget from the previous financial year. There is a small ongoing annual licence for the meeting software that will be met through in year budgets.

5. CONSULTATION:

n/a

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

n/a

7. **AUTHOR:** John Pearson, Local Democracy Manager
johnpearson@monmouthshire.gov.uk

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