

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Place Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA with remote attendance on Thursday, 10th July, 2025 at 2.00 pm

Councillors Present

County Councillor Jane Lucas (Chair)

County Councillors: Louise Brown, Emma Bryn, Tomos Davies, Lisa Dymock, Jackie Strong, John Crook, Tony Easson, Armand Watts, Jill Bond, Steven Garratt, Penny Jones, Tony Kear, Malcolm Lane, Dale Rooke, Sara Burch, Meirion Howells and Catrin Maby

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Craig O'Connor, Chief Officer, Place and Community Well-being
Ross Price, Engineer
Daniel Fordham, Regeneration Manager
Tracey Thomas, MonLife Engagement and Workforce Development Officer
Stacey Jones, Senior Accountant

APOLOGIES: Councillors Tudor Thomas and Martyn Groucutt

1. Apologies for Absence

Tudor Thomas, Tony Easson as substitute. Martyn Groucutt due to technical problems.

2. Declarations of Interest

Tomos Davies declared a non-prejudicial interest in Item 10 and recused himself from it.

3. Place Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List

Councillor Davies asked for a report to be brought regarding litter and fly tipping, following a commitment made to do so by the Cabinet Member at a recent seminar – **ACTION**

4. Council and Cabinet Work Planner

Councillor Brown asked about the Chepstow Integrated Transport LUF Project. Members were reminded that the Chepstow Transport Hub is going to Council next week and all members should have received an invitation to join a call tomorrow where they can ask questions of the Cabinet Member.

Councillor Easson asked if an update could be sought regarding Magor Station – **ACTION**

Councillor Bond asked if the Planner could be clarified as to which items have been done, and which are still to come – **ACTION (to follow up with Democratic Services)**

5. To confirm the following Minutes:

Place Scrutiny Committee dated 22nd May 2025

Special Meeting - Place Scrutiny Committee dated 11th June 2025

The minutes were confirmed, with the following amendment to 11th June, under the section in which the call-in signatories outlined their reasons for doing so:

- [Councillor Brown] highlighted the lack of public scrutiny due to the decision not requiring planning approval, which prevented residents and businesses from commenting on issues like traffic, parking, and noise **and restrictions on hours of operation.**
- Councillor Brown questioned the financial aspects of the decision, arguing that the rent of £6,000 per year was significantly lower than **the reasonable market rental in the Council's own budget papers which were** estimated to be between £20,000 and £25,000 per year. She called for an independent valuation of the property and suggested that the Council should use a specialised agent to facilitate the disposal, as outlined in the Council's asset management strategy.
- **Councillor Brown also mentioned that the Council's Asset Management Policy on disposals legally required best consideration to be obtained.**
- **Councillor Brown said that the invitation to tender only covered D1 class of use and for other uses to just contact estates yet the Cabinet report on disposal mentioned both community and commercial uses.**

On page 11:

- **Historic Importance: Proper consideration is given to the building's historic and monumental importance to Abergavenny and its people and potentially selling of the building should be reconsidered and included in the consultation process with the people of Abergavenny.**

6. Public Open Forum

A video from a member of the public was played, in which the speaker made the following points in relation to the work of the Dixon Bat Project at the proposed development site HA4 Leasbrook on Dixon Road in Monmouth:

The project recorded 12 species at one location, 11 at another, and 10 at a third location within five days. This includes rare and endangered species such as the greater and lesser horseshoe bats, barbastelle, serotine, noctule bats, and the brown long-eared bat. The site is of national importance for biodiversity, scoring 31 out of 41 points on a standard bat scoring mechanism. The presence of a new bat roost at Priory Farm, likely a maternity and hibernation site, was also discovered. The speaker suggested that given the site's national importance for biodiversity, the HA4 site should be withdrawn from the Replacement Local Development Plan.

7. Local Flood Strategy (with Public Services members) - Pre-decision scrutiny of adoption of the Local Flood Strategy

Cabinet Member Catrin Maby introduced the report, and Ross Price delivered a presentation. Ross answered the members' questions with Craig O'Connor.

- A member questioned the sufficiency of the six-week consultation period for the local flood strategy, suggesting it is too short and poorly timed during the holiday season. He proposed extending the consultation period from September to mid or end of October.

*The officer acknowledged the concern and mentioned that while the statutory consultation period is six weeks, they would consider extending it to eight weeks to allow more time for public engagement. – **ACTION***

- A member expressed satisfaction that historic flooding in Tredunnock Road and the use of CCTV on the White Bridge to monitor the river were being considered. She enquired about measures to address urban creep in already built environments, noting the reduction of green spaces in front gardens and driveways and the effect on flood risk and heat reflection. The member suggested producing guides for residents on how to mitigate flood risk while installing parking spaces or low-maintenance gardens, emphasising the benefits of maintaining greenery.

The officer agreed that producing specific guides for retrofitting SUDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) and encouraging the installation of permeable surfaces in existing properties was a good idea. He mentioned that this could be included in the county-wide flood action plan. There is support for including retrofitting Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in existing properties, especially around driveways, to address urban creep and its impact on flood risk and heat reflection. While current SuDS legislation applies to new developments, the officer acknowledged a missed opportunity to encourage SuDS in already built environments. The idea will be reviewed for inclusion in the countywide flood action plan, alongside existing actions that support community-led flood resilience planning.

- A member highlighted issues with blocked drains under bridges and culverts, which can cut off villages and cause significant flooding. She noted that the flood strategy did not seem to address these practical issues or the coordination between different services. She questioned why the strategy did not include flooding of roads or fields, as these can have significant effects on residential areas. She also enquired about the coordination between different services, such as MCC and the fire service, during flooding events.

The officer explained that the strategy is high-level, but the action plan includes specific actions for localised issues. He mentioned that they plan to undertake assessments for problematic areas and work with residents and local representatives. He also noted that they work with emergency planning colleagues to develop specific emergency response plans for high-risk areas.

- A member asked whether Llanbadoc is within the boundaries of the strategic flood risk area. She noted that Llanbadoc was not mentioned in the table of main settlements in the Usk area and emphasised the importance of including it due to the regular flooding issues faced by residents.

The officer confirmed that Llanbadoc falls within the Usk catchment and is part of the Usk strategic flood risk area. The officer acknowledged the oversight and assured that Llanbadoc would be added to the table. He also confirmed awareness of the flooding issues in Llanbadoc and mentioned that a property flood resilience scheme had been delivered in recent years.

- A member asked for an update on the flood alleviation scheme in Llanbadoc, specifically around Island House and the effects of the brook there. He also enquired about the impact of the 40 houses planned in the RLDP on flooding, referencing the flooding event in May 2023. Additionally, he asked if any work was being done in the highlands to prevent flooding, such as leaky dams and natural swales.

The officers provided an update on the flood scheme, mentioning that they have received grant funding from Welsh Government to develop a scheme for the Woodside area, including Island House. The detailed design work is expected to be completed by the end of the year, and they will seek further funding for construction. The proposed 40 houses in the RLDP are not within a flood zone and will be designed with sustainable urban drainage systems. Officers mentioned that they are actively working on natural flood management schemes and collaborating with the Wye and Usk Foundation to implement measures in the upper catchments, such as reducing grazing and improving soil infiltration.

- A member expressed appreciation for the efforts in managing flooding on the Monnow Road in Overmonnow, Monmouth, noting that council workers effectively managed the flooding events in February 2020 and November 2024. He raised concerns about the unadopted estate, Kingswood Gate, where flooding occurred on Midsummer Way and Acer Way due to a ditch at the back of the property. He highlighted the need for clarity on how flood risk is managed on unadopted estates. The member suggested engaging young voters and geography students in the consultation process to increase engagement and awareness. He also recommended promoting the use of the council's reporting system for residents to report potential flooding risks, emphasizing the importance of proactive management.

The officer acknowledged the issues at Kingswood Gate and mentioned ongoing engagement with the developer and planning enforcement to resolve them. He noted that the new legislation on sustainable urban drainage systems should prevent similar issues in the future. The officer agreed on the importance of engaging schools and promoting the council's reporting system for flooding risks. He mentioned the proactive land drainage inspection program and the potential for community flood wardens.

- A member expressed appreciation for the significant work done on the flood strategy and emphasised the need for better engagement with the public, especially those who work and may not be available during standard consultation hours. She suggested extending consultation hours beyond 5pm or holding

sessions on weekends. She enquired about the status of the seawall and the coastal and tidal flood risk management, referencing the information on page 77 of the strategy document. The member recommended creating a slide or visual content to share on social media to raise awareness about the consultation and the effects of global warming on flood risks.

The officer acknowledged the need for better engagement and mentioned that they could look into extending the consultation hours and holding additional sessions. He also noted that the consultation would be advertised on social media and shared with elected members and town and community councils. The officer mentioned that they are part of the Severn Estuary coastal group and are working with Natural Resources Wales on future schemes to improve coastal defences. He offered to provide more information and potentially hold a briefing for members.

- A member asked about the scale of revenue and capital grant funding that the authority has historically been successful in leveraging from Welsh Government for flood risk management. He sought context on past successes and the confidence in securing similar funding in the future

The officer explained that, historically, the authority received bespoke revenue funding grants, which increased over the years, particularly after storm events like Storm Bert. This funding is now part of the revenue support grant. He mentioned that the authority has been very successful in securing capital grant funding from Welsh Government, with no grant applications being rejected. The authority typically delivers 3 to 6 small-scale schemes per year through the small-scale works grant, and they are currently working on a larger scheme for Woodside in Usk. Ross expressed confidence in continuing to secure funding in the future.

- A member reminded participants that the report is in the context of discussions with Natural Resources Wales and highlighted the importance of community flood plans. She mentioned specific flooding issues in the Caldicot area, particularly Castle Lea, and emphasised the need for residents to have tools and information to manage flooding. The member asked what the council can do to make the website more interactive and user-friendly for residents during emergencies, suggesting that the website should provide quick access to necessary information.

The officer agreed that a Community flood plan would be very useful for areas like Castle Lea and mentioned that it is one of the actions they plan to take forward. He acknowledged that while there is a wealth of information on the website, it needs to be more user-friendly and proactively advertised. He suggested working with the communications team to periodically share information on social media and improve the website's accessibility. The officer also mentioned that the council provides sandbags during emergencies and that this information could be more widely shared. Officers agreed that the idea to put flooding on the front page of the website in a time of crisis with flooding was a good one that they will explore. The Cabinet Member emphasised the importance of having a quick access banner on the homepage of the website to help people find information quickly during emergencies. She noted that while there is a lot of useful information on flooding available on the website, it is not easy to find under

pressure. She mentioned that she had previously asked emergency planning for such a banner and would follow up to ensure it is implemented.

- A member mentioned that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) will not undertake major work to increase the seawall between Newport and Chepstow, considering it a 1 in 200-year risk. He noted that NRW plans to work on the lower reaches of the Usk in the Pill area of Newport, which could put residential properties at risk. He emphasised that only general maintenance will be done on the seawall, and significant funding would be required to raise it.

The officer suggested that it would be useful to have NRW officers clarify the situation, as his recent discussions with them indicated different plans. He proposed having a session with NRW to share information and ensure everyone is aware of the ongoing and planned works.

- A member raised a concern about the availability of sandbags for businesses during the flooding in November. He mentioned that while residents were given priority, businesses were told they could not have sandbags, which caused stress for those whose premises were being flooded. He asked for a response regarding this policy.

The officer explained that the long-standing policy has been to prioritize residents over businesses for sandbags. However, he acknowledged the concern and mentioned that there is a specific action within the strategy to review and develop an up-to-date sandbag policy, which will include considerations for businesses.

- A member asked what indicators and thresholds, post-development of the RLDP, there are to ensure flood protection in Portskewett and Caldicot, and what action plans are in place if flood risk increases.

Officers confirmed that no development will occur on floodplain areas within the proposed sites. All new developments will comply with full SAB (Sustainable Drainage Systems) standards, ensuring effective water management. The drainage systems will be designed to mimic greenfield runoff, meaning they won't increase flood risk. Flood levels – both existing and projected – will be monitored, along with any future flood events. If flood risk increases, review and monitoring mechanisms are in place to guide responsive action.

- A member enquired about the inclusion of flood level plans similar to those provided by NRW in the flood strategy. She suggested that links to NRW maps should be included so people can easily determine if an area is on a floodplain. The member asked about the changes in TAN 15, particularly regarding the simplicity of the previous C1 and C2 gradings, which were easy to understand for the general public. She wanted to know if similar simple information would still be available. The member suggested that the maps in the flood strategy should show the zones around the brooks to make it easier for people to understand the flood risks.

The officer confirmed that they could include references to TAN 15 and links to NRW maps in the flood strategy documents. He explained that the revised TAN 15 now includes references to surface water and has been strengthened to address surface

water drainage in development proposals. The officer also clarified that the new TAN 15 uses Zone 1, 2, and 3 instead of the old C1 and C2 gradings. He assured that the information is still visible and spatial, and encouraged people to engage with planning officers for advice on development projects in flood zones.

- The Chair raised concerns about the flooding on Forge Road, particularly the issue of vehicles driving through floodwater and causing waves that exacerbate flooding in properties like the mill. She mentioned the difficulty in getting the road closed quickly enough to prevent this. She highlighted the lack of council assistance in the cleanup after flooding, noting that residents were left to manage on their own. She emphasised the need for better pre-planning and more organised responses to flooding events, including the cleanup of pavements, which were hazardous after the flood.

*The officer acknowledged that some of the issues fall under the responsibility of Highways colleagues and agreed to take the concerns away for further discussion. He suggested setting up a separate meeting with highways colleagues to discuss the specific issues related to Forge Road and Monmouth, including the procedures for road closures and cleanup operations – **ACTION**. The officer also recognised the importance of having a more organised and proactive approach to managing flooding events and ensuring that residents receive the necessary support during and after such events.*

Chair's Summary:

Emma thanked Ross on behalf of residents for how he has helped after flooding

8. Car Parking Review - To scrutinise the findings of the council's Car Parking Review

Daniel Fordham delivered a presentation, introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Craig O'Connor.

- A member asked for an update on how the additional funds allocated for enforcement functions two years ago have been utilised and whether there has been a noticeable step change in enforcement across MCC's car park estate. He requested information on the number of enforcement actions successfully taken and successful prosecutions across Monmouthshire's car park estate.

*The officer mentioned that he would need to check and look back at the additional allocation to understand its impact. He noted that there have been challenges in the enforcement team, but they have recently appointed a new civil enforcement manager and are about to recruit three new Civil Enforcement Officer posts, which will significantly increase their capacity. The Chief Officer added that they are ensuring the team is fully functioning and looking to recruit additional resources. He assured that this is a key objective, and they are moving in the right direction. Officers would provide the figures for enforcement actions and prosecutions in writing. – **ACTION***

- A member highlighted the lack of a one-hour parking option in Monmouthshire's car parks and compared it to other authorities that offer one-hour parking. She mentioned the inconvenience of having to pay for two hours when only needing a short period, and the effect on short visits to town centres. She noted the low

occupancy of the Drill Hall car park in Chepstow and mentioned that poor street lighting from St. Mary's Church area to the Drill Hall discourages people from parking there. The member also pointed out the competition from Cribbs Causeway, where parking is free, and the impact on trade in Chepstow. She mentioned that some areas in Monmouthshire have free parking, while others like Chepstow, Monmouth, and Abergavenny charge for parking. She expressed concerns about the allocation of EV and disabled parking spaces, noting that often these spaces are underutilised, which can be frustrating for other drivers.

The officer acknowledged the points raised about the one-hour parking option and mentioned that it could be considered as part of the review of parking charges. He noted the balance needed between encouraging short visits and supporting town centre businesses. Regarding the Drill Hall car park, he mentioned that they are working with the Chepstow Placemaking group to improve connections and lighting between the town centre and peripheral areas, including the Drill Hall. The officer agreed that car parks should not be seen in isolation and should fit into the broader town centre ecosystem. On the allocation of EV and disabled parking spaces, he stated that they would need to assess the effect and current utilisation before implementing the recommendations.

- A member enquired about the inclusion of the new car park over the back of the railway lines at Severn Tunnel Junction in the survey and asked for an estimate of the revenue loss due to the lack of a footbridge connecting the car park to the station.

*The officer responded that he would need to check whether the survey included the mentioned car park and would come back with information on the associated costs and revenue loss. – **ACTION***

- A member asked if residents could report incidents such as contractors parking in blue badge spaces at Shire Hall with timestamped photos for enforcement. He expressed satisfaction with the balance of free and paid parking in Monmouth but noted the importance of ensuring turnover of spaces. The member enquired about the status of EV chargers in the Cattle Market car park and whether more could be introduced in Monmouth.

*The officer explained that there are strict legal requirements for issuing penalty charges, making it difficult to enforce based on resident-submitted photos. However, enforcement can be targeted in areas with reported issues. He acknowledged the importance of the balance between free and paid parking and the need to revisit this as part of the review. Regarding EV chargers, the officer mentioned that he would check the status of the Cattle Market car park chargers and noted the ongoing programme for installing new chargers. – **ACTION***

- A member expressed concern about the cost and effectiveness of the report, noting the need for additional data collection and questioning why this wasn't included initially. He criticised the assumption that most car park users in Usk are residents, highlighting the town's role as a visitor destination. The member pointed out the skewed data due to weekend surveys and the lack of consultation with Usk Town Council and business groups. He emphasised the need for

specific local considerations, such as the impact on residents and businesses, and the potential for increased street parking if charges are introduced. He also mentioned the enforcement issues in Usk and the need for a comprehensive review.

The officer acknowledged the need for additional data and explained that the current report helps identify data gaps. He assured that the cost of additional data collection would have been incurred regardless. He confirmed that the Usk Town Council survey was considered and that further consultation with local stakeholders would be part of the next steps. The Chief Officer emphasised the importance of having conversations with local communities to ensure the parking strategy supports town centre vibrancy and meets local needs. He reassured members that the status quo remains until further consultation and data collection are completed.

- A member asked if the traffic enforcement officers are responsible solely for issuing notices in car parks or if they also handle enforcement on double yellow lines and other areas. She enquired about the revenue generation from EV charging spaces in MCC car parks and the arrangement for installing these chargers.

The officer clarified that the civil enforcement officers are responsible for both car park enforcement and on-street enforcement, including double yellow lines. Regarding EV charging spaces, the officer explained that recent installations were done by Connected Curve under the Cardiff Capital Region program. He noted that while there is potential for revenue generation, current usage levels mean that income is currently low.

- A member expressed disappointment with the lack of action in the review's action plan and questioned the scope of the review. She raised concerns about enforcement pressures, especially with the upcoming responsibility for pavement parking, and asked if additional funding would accompany these added responsibilities. The member noted the absence of motorbike spaces and overnight spaces for motorhomes in the recommendations, suggesting these could be trialled in quieter car parks. She highlighted the issue of increasing vehicle sizes and the effect on visitor experience in tightly packed car parks. The member enquired about the risk of organised gangs exploiting car park machines and the visibility of machine buttons, suggesting improvements to reduce queues. She asked if the pay-by-phone app allows users to remotely add time to their parking. The member mentioned the lack of EV charging provision in Wyesham and suggested working with larger businesses to offer this service. She questioned if there are plans to review smaller out-of-town free car parks, which have seen increased pressures.

The officer confirmed that the transfer of responsibility for pavement parking would not come with additional funding, and the review of enforcement capacity would address this. He acknowledged the need to balance short-stay and long-stay parking to support local economies and mentioned that the review included all MCC car parks, not just town centres. He confirmed that users can add time to their parking via the pay-by-phone app, as long as it doesn't exceed the maximum stay. The officer noted that the review did not include non-MCC car parks but agreed to discuss management with

highways colleagues. He acknowledged the need to address the visibility of machine buttons and the potential for organised gangs exploiting car park machines.

- A member expressed concern about the lack of data and analysis in the report, questioning if the work was scoped properly and if funding limitations affected the data collection. She pointed out an error in the report regarding the number of parking spaces in Woodstock Way, Caldicot. She raised concerns about the potential phasing out of coin payments, emphasizing the need to consider vulnerable and older residents who may not use digital payment methods.

The officer acknowledged the error regarding the number of parking spaces in Woodstock Way and confirmed it would be corrected. He assured that there are no current proposals to phase out coin payments, and the review identified the availability of multiple payment options (cash, card, and pay-by-phone) as a strength of the service.

- The Chair expressed concerns about the potential implementation of number plate recognition (ANPR) technology, citing personal experiences and the challenges it could pose for residents. She suggested adding simple shades over parking machines to improve visibility and reduce queues. The Chair emphasised the need for more free parking options, either through shorter free parking periods or additional free parking spaces, to encourage people to visit town centres. She questioned the relevance of cycle parking in car parks, noting that cyclists typically prefer more convenient locations closer to their destinations.

The officer acknowledged the potential risks and benefits of ANPR technology, stating that a thorough assessment of risks and opportunities would be necessary before implementation. He agreed to consider the suggestion of adding shades over parking machines to improve visibility. The officer noted that there are no current plans to remove cash payment options and highlighted the importance of maintaining multiple payment methods. He recognised the importance of balancing free and paid parking to support town centre economies and mentioned that the review would consider the relationship between parking charges and footfall. The officer acknowledged that cycle parking in car parks might not be widely used but could support sustainability objectives.

Chair's Summary:

9. Exclusion of the Press and Public

The members voted unanimously to move into closed session for Item 10, for the reasons outlined by the officer: on the grounds that an open session could prejudice any future financial investment into the Shire Hall capital project going forward, and officers are currently under embargo with certain decisions being made.

10. Shire Hall Financial Update - To scrutinise progress of the National Lottery Heritage Fund development phase

Tracey Thomas and Stacey Jones introduced the report and answered the members' questions.

11. Next Meeting

Thursday 25th September 2025 at 2.00pm.

The meeting ended at **5.31 pm**.