

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 16th July, 2026 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor Tudor Thomas (Chair)
County Councillor David Jones (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, Peter Strong, 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, Martyn Groucutt, Simon Howarth, Richard John, Penny Jones, Malcolm Lane, Phil Murphy, M. Newell, Paul Pavia, Maureen Powell, Frances Taylor, Armand Watts and Ann Webb

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Jane Rodgers	Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
James Williams	Chief Officer Law & Governance
Deb Hill-Howells	Chief Officer Infrastructure
Craig O'Connor	Chief Officer, Place and Community Well-being
Adam Fall	Democratic Services Officer

1. Declarations of interest

- County Councillor Tomos Davies declared a non-prejudicial interest in the motion 7.3 relating to solar energy. Councillor Davies advised that they are a trustee of a charity involved in solar energy and confirmed that there is no financial gain associated with this role.
- County Councillor Rachel Garrick declared an interest in motion 7.3, stating that they are employed by an energy company whose business includes renewable energy. Councillor Garrick advised that they believed this constituted a prejudicial interest and confirmed that they would withdraw from the debate and any decision on the item.
- County Council Catrin Maby declared a non-prejudicial interest in motion 7.3, as a Trustee of Awel Aman Tawe, a charity which develops and runs a range of sustainable energy projects, including wind and solar.

2. Public Questions

- 2.1. Question from Kelvin Vater to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment**

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Why is the evidence sent to the Council in the form of the 1881 Census, our electoral roll address and a petition signed by 35 residents of the village - to support the historic Welsh name of our road as Banal Lane - deemed to be circumstantial and unsubstantiated?

County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment, advised that officers had responded in detail to the correspondent, the local MP and MS regarding the matter. The Council's only authoritative source is the statutory list of streets originally compiled by Gwent County Council and transferred to Monmouthshire County Council in 1996. Council records show the road as Panel Road, and there is no record of a formal name change.

It was explained that all official Council documentation, including the highways register, historical highways maps, local street gazetteer and local land and property gazetteer, refers to Panel Road. Checks with Royal Mail and the Land Registry did not identify an alternative street name.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged research provided by the questioner, which indicated that the name had evolved over time from the Welsh word *Banadl* through several variants. Officers had also reviewed a number of other rural road names and found several discrepancies between official records and names used locally.

It was advised that, should a formal road name change be sought, an application could be submitted subject to the relevant administrative process and fee.

As a supplementary the questioner asked whether the Council could provide any evidence predating its existing records that conclusively demonstrated the road had never been known by another name.

The Cabinet Member advised that the Council held no earlier evidence capable of conclusively proving that the road had never been known by another name. It was noted that several names appear to have been used historically for the road. The Council's position remains based on the official records currently held.

The Cabinet Member reiterated that a formal application could be made should the resident wish to pursue a road name change, noting that any proposed name would also need consideration in relation to Welsh language requirements. The complexity of the issue and the resident's frustration were acknowledged.

3. Question from Charles Heaven to County Councillor Paul Griffiths, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development

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Please can the Council explain what long-term, sustainable measures the Council intends to implement to protect both Sudbrook Cricket Club and the neighbouring school playing fields from repeated unauthorised encampments?

The Cabinet Member for Engagement and Equalities acknowledged the significant impact that repeated unauthorised encampments had had on Sudbrook Cricket Club, the neighbouring school fields and the wider community. It was noted that these sites are important community assets that support sport, recreation and education, and that the disruption caused to local residents and users of the facilities was fully recognised.

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The Council is reviewing a range of measures aimed at reducing the likelihood of future incursions and improving the resilience of the affected sites. This includes assessing enhanced access control measures and considering physical deterrents designed to prevent unauthorised vehicle access. Any measures implemented will need to balance site protection with maintaining appropriate access for legitimate users and preserving the character and appearance of the area.

The Council will continue to work closely with the school, community organisations and the police to identify the most effective and proportionate solutions. It was also noted that, while measures can reduce the risk, it is not possible to completely eliminate the possibility of future unauthorised encampments.

As a supplementary the questioner asked what short-term temporary measures could be implemented immediately and whether all access points to the area could be blocked pending the funding and delivery of a more permanent solution.

The Cabinet Member advised that work was ongoing and noted that Council officers had attended the site on the day of the first encampment to explore ways of minimising disruption and preventing future incursions. Discussions and assessments remain underway, taking into account similar issues at other locations across the county.

It was confirmed that the Council would continue to engage with local members, residents and the wider community throughout the process and that any decisions regarding preventative measures would be communicated once they had been agreed.

4. Chair's Announcement

Noted.

5. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on the 25th June 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2026 were approved as an accurate record.

6. Response to Council Motion: Review of Council and Greater Pension Fund Investments

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The Cabinet Member presented a report to provide Council with an update on progress made in response to the motion agreed at Full Council on 18 September 2025 concerning the review of Monmouthshire County Council's own treasury investments and the request that the Greater Gwent (Torfaen) Pension Fund reviews relevant pension fund investments.

The report asked Council to note the action taken to date, the current position reported by the Greater Gwent (Torfaen) Pension Fund and Wales Pension Partnership, the findings of the Council's own treasury investment review, and the proposed next steps for ongoing monitoring and reporting.

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

That Council notes the progress made in response to the motion carried on 18 September 2025.

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That Council notes the separate role and fiduciary responsibilities of the Greater Gwent (Torfaen) Pension Fund Committee in relation to pension fund investments, and the update provided by the Chair of that Committee.

That Council notes the revised Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) Responsible Investment Policy and exclusions framework approved by the WPP Joint Governance Committee on 10 March 2026 and implemented from 1 April 2026.

That Council notes the outcome of the review of Monmouthshire County Council's own treasury investment portfolio and the finding that no direct holdings in individual defence contractors, arms manufacturers or military companies have been identified within that portfolio.

That Council agrees the proposed next steps set out in section 6 of this report, including continued engagement with treasury advisers, investment managers and the Greater Gwent (Torfaen) Pension Fund on responsible investment matters.

That Council notes the Integrated Impact Assessment at Appendix 1.

7. Motions to Council

8. Submitted by County Councillor Peter Strong

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This council notes that in the manifesto of Plaid Cymru for the most recent Senedd election, commitments were made to review and reform the Local Government funding formula, including the statements: "And we will review and reform the Local Government funding formula, so that it fairly reflects the realities of serving largely rural populations" And "Review the funding formula for Local Government so that it better reflects the real cost of delivering services in different parts of Wales."

Any changes to the Local Government funding formula could have significant implications for Local authorities across Wales, including Monmouthshire County Council. The importance of ensuring that any reform to the funding formula reflects fairness, transparency and does not disadvantage communities within Monmouthshire.

This council therefore resolves to: Write to the Welsh Government Minister for Finance and the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, seeking urgent clarification on the detail scope and proposed implementation of the commitments made regarding reform of the Local Government funding formula.

To also, seek assurances that any proposed reforms will not have a detrimental impact on communities within Monmouthshire.

We request that Monmouthshire County Council be fully consulted on any proposed changes to the funding formula prior to implementation.

Seconded by County Councillor Ben Callard.

County Councillor Richard John proposed an amendment to the motion, that the last paragraph be removed and replaced with 'The letter should make the case for a fundamental review of the

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local government funding formula, explaining the significantly higher costs of delivering services in rural counties and seek a funding settlement that brings Monmouthshire closer to the Welsh average’.

The amendment was accepted by Councillor Peter Strong.

Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.

8.1. Submitted by County Councillor Emma Bryn

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Council notes: The considerable impact that the current lane closure on Staunton Road (A4136) is having on residents, businesses, public & school transport operators travelling between Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire. The growing concern amongst residents regarding the lack of certainty around a permanent solution to the land slippage affecting the highway.

Council believes: That restoring the A4136 to a condition that safely accommodates two-way traffic should be a priority for the Authority. That residents and businesses deserve clarity regarding the long-term future of this important route. That transparency around the options, costs and timescales for delivery is essential in maintaining public confidence.

Council therefore resolves: To request that the Cabinet Member responsible for Highways brings forward a report to Full Council setting out: - The proposed long-term solution for the restoration of the A4136. - The estimated cost of delivering that solution. Including funding options. - A projected timetable for delivery of the scheme. - The risks associated with delaying or not proceeding with the preferred option.

Seconded by County Councillor Martin Newell.

Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.

8.2. Submitted By County Councillor Fay Bromfield

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This Council: Notes the increasing number of proposals for large-scale ground-mounted solar farms on productive agricultural land in Monmouthshire, including the proposed Candwr Solar Farm between Ponthir and Llangybi.

Believes that renewable energy development should prioritise previously developed land, commercial and industrial rooftops, public buildings, car parks and other suitable brownfield sites before productive farmland is considered.

Is concerned about the cumulative impact that multiple large-scale solar developments could have on the county's rural landscape, agricultural economy, biodiversity, tourism and food security.

Resolves to:

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a) Ensure that the Council's Local Impact Reports on Developments of National Significance give full consideration to the loss of agricultural land, landscape and visual impact and the impact on biodiversity, highways and the local economy.

b) Write to the Cabinet Minister for Enterprise, Connectivity and Energy calling for planning frameworks and policies to be strengthened by introducing a presumption against large-scale ground-mounted solar developments on prime agricultural land.

c) Request that the Welsh Government adopt a "Rooftops Before Fields" approach to solar energy, prioritising rooftop, brownfield and previously developed land for solar generation before productive agricultural land is considered.

Seconded by County Councillor Rachel Buckler.

Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.

8.3. Submitted by County Councillor Tony Kear [Click here to watch the meeting](#)

This Council:

Notes that current methods of controlling weeds largely rely on manual and mechanical methods, which can be time-consuming, damage highways and raise concerns about effectiveness.

Calls on the Cabinet to commission a review of the Weed Management Policy, including:

- A cost-benefit analysis of current and alternative methods; assessment of environmental impact, operational effectiveness and whole-life costs;*
- Consideration of an Integrated Weed Management approach combining targeted herbicide use with non-chemical methods where appropriate;*
- Identification of pilot locations, particularly near schools, parks and environmentally sensitive areas; and*
- consultation with residents, community councils, environmental groups and staff.*
- Expects findings and recommendations, including any policy or budget implications, to be reported to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet within six months.*

Seconded by County Councillor Lisa Dymock.

Upon being put to a vote the motion was defeated.

9. Members questions

10. From County Councillor Meirion Howells to County Councillor Mary Ann Brockelsby, Leader of the Council

In light of the recent period of exceptionally high temperatures, which has affected communities across Monmouthshire, could the Leader outline what measures the Council has taken to support residents—particularly vulnerable individuals such as the elderly, young children, and those with health conditions—during the recent heatwave?

The question was withdrawn, to be answered in writing.

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10.1. From County Councillor Jackie Strong to County Councillor Angelas Sandles, Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement

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Can the Cabinet member provide an update on progress made towards protecting Monmouthshire County Council property in Caldicot from further unauthorised encampments.

The Cabinet Member advised that officers continue to work across departments to reduce the likelihood of future unauthorised encampments, including consideration of appropriate physical measures and improvements to internal processes to enable a faster and more coordinated response. It was noted that any response must remain lawful, balanced and compliant with Welsh Government guidance, while recognising the Council's responsibilities to both Gypsy and Traveller communities, and local residents.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the wider shortage of authorised transit sites across Wales and reiterated the need for a strategic, Wales-wide approach to provision.

Thanks were also recorded to Councillor Strong for her ongoing engagement with residents, community groups and businesses during recent encampments.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Strong referred to reports from residents regarding anti-social behaviour, vandalism and concerns over police responsiveness during recent encampments, and asked whether discussions were taking place with Gwent Police.

In response, the Cabinet Member confirmed that meetings had taken place with Gwent Police and that several actions had been agreed in principle, including:

- Sharing policies and operational procedures between the Council and Gwent Police.
- Arranging a members' seminar on the legal powers and responsibilities of local authorities and the police in relation to unauthorised encampments.
- Holding further discussions between council leaders and police representatives to identify lessons learned and improve future coordination and communication.
- Supporting a Gwent-wide meeting involving all five local authorities to develop a more consistent regional approach.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the positive dialogue with Gwent Police and emphasised the shared commitment to improving partnership working and future responses to unauthorised encampments.

10.2. From County Councillor Paul Pavia to County Councillor Paul Griffiths, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development

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Will the Cabinet Member provide an update on plans to improve the Highbeech Roundabout in Chepstow?

The Cabinet Member advised that a Welsh Government-commissioned study had considered a wide range of options and had now identified a number of proposals, including:

- Improved active travel links.
- Enhanced public transport opportunities.
- Changes to roundabout entry and exit arrangements.

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It was reported that the next stage would be a public consultation exercise. Discussions are ongoing between Monmouthshire County Council, Welsh Government and Transport for Wales regarding the timing and delivery of the consultation. Progress had been delayed during the election period but discussions have now resumed.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Pavia referred to the time taken to progress the scheme and requested that the study report be shared with members, together with a member briefing before public consultation takes place.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged frustrations regarding the timescale of the project and confirmed his support for a members' briefing in advance of consultation. He advised that this request had been raised with the Welsh Government project team, although precise timings were not yet available.

10.3. From County Councillor Paul Pavia to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for for Climate Change and the Environment

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Will the Cabinet Member make a statement on the financial and operational implications of transitioning the Council's fleet of heavy goods vehicles, including refuse trucks, to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles?

The Cabinet Member advised that the Council is undertaking feasibility work with external consultants to assess options for decarbonising the fleet, including electric, hydrogen and hydrotreated vegetable oil technologies.

Initial findings indicate that vehicles currently available on the market do not fully meet the Council's operational requirements due to limitations relating to:

- Vehicle range.
- Capacity requirements.
- Availability of suitable vehicle body types and chassis configurations.

The Cabinet Member added that the financial implications are complex and extend beyond vehicle purchase costs to include operational, logistical and workforce considerations.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Pavia referred to fleet-related budget pressures identified in the Council's outturn report and requested that projected costs of meeting decarbonisation targets be published. He also suggested that representations be made through the Welsh Local Government Association regarding the impact of net-zero fleet requirements on rural authorities.

In response, the Cabinet Member agreed that the findings of the fleet studies and associated cost information should be shared with members once available, potentially through the scrutiny process. She noted that it was not yet clear whether the issues identified were primarily related to policy requirements or vehicle availability within the market and suggested that any future policy representations should be informed by the completed feasibility work.

10.4. From County Councillor Paul Pavia to County Councillor Laura Wright, Cabinet Member for Education

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Will the Cabinet Member make a statement on the resilience of Monmouthshire's school estate to periods of extreme heat and the council's plans to respond to the increasing frequency of such events?

The Cabinet Member advised that recent periods of extreme heat had highlighted the importance of ensuring that the school estate remains safe, resilient and fit for purpose. It was noted that newer school buildings are designed in accordance with Welsh Government net-zero operational energy requirements, incorporating measures such as energy efficiency, passive cooling, natural ventilation and renewable energy generation. Similar principles are also applied to refurbishment and retrofit projects.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged that some older school buildings face challenges during prolonged periods of extreme heat and confirmed that lessons learned from recent weather events are being reviewed. Work is underway to strengthen guidance and support for schools, including risk assessment processes and practical measures to manage high temperatures. Climate change resilience also forms part of the Council's wider strategic risk management arrangements.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Pavia thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their engagement with members during the recent heatwave. He expressed concern that, in the absence of specific heat-related thresholds within existing guidance, headteachers had been required to make difficult decisions regarding school closures and operational arrangements. He suggested:

- The development of a Council extreme heat plan and decision-support framework for schools.
- Representations to Welsh Government and Public Health Wales seeking updated guidance, including indoor temperature thresholds.
- A review of the recent heatwave response, including the impact on school buildings, childcare arrangements, school meals and learning continuity, with findings reported to Scrutiny Committee.

In response, the Cabinet Member agreed that the recent heatwave had placed significant responsibility on headteachers and noted that decisions had been informed by guidance from Public Health Wales and health partners. She confirmed that the Council had worked closely with schools throughout the period and supported further consideration of the issues raised, including reviewing guidance and exploring the introduction of maximum indoor temperature guidance alongside existing minimum standards.

10.5. From County Councillor Lisa Dymock to the Cabinet Member for Resources

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Can the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the current status of the Section 106 funding associated with ARW Primary School expansion and the Church Road development?

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Section 106 contributions associated with the Church Road development had now been received in full, totalling £441,484.

It was noted that when funding from the Sudbrook development was allocated to Castle Park School, assurances had been given that contributions from the Church Road and Crick Road developments would instead be available for investment at Archbishop Rowan Williams School.

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The Cabinet Member advised that officers are currently working with Archbishop Rowan Williams School to identify the most beneficial use of the funding and to develop investment proposals. Local ward members and the wider community will be informed as proposals progress.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Dimmick welcomed confirmation that the funding had been received but stated that the school and governing body were unaware of the allocation and had been seeking information on the matter.

In response.

The Cabinet Member reiterated that discussions are taking place regarding the most appropriate use of the funding and acknowledged the importance of ensuring that ward members and school governors are kept informed as the proposals develop.

10.6. From County Councillor Lisa Dymock to the Cabinet Member Resources or Planning and Economic Development

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Can the Cabinet Member please confirm the total cost to the Council of clearing and restoring the site following the previous unauthorised encampment, alongside Sudbrook Cricket Club and Caldicot Comprehensive School?

The Cabinet Member for Resources advised that the costs identified to date, including site security, enforcement notices, court order costs, site clearance and waste collection, amounted to £2,923.

It was noted that this figure represented the best estimate currently available and did not include officer time associated with case conferences and coordinating the Council's response across multiple service areas.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Dimmick referred to previous assurances regarding preventative measures at sites affected by unauthorised encampments and stated that she had submitted information identifying vulnerable sites within the Severnside area. She sought confirmation that proactive measures would be implemented to protect community facilities and open spaces.

In response, the Cabinet Member advised that he had not personally received the information referred to but undertook to liaise with relevant Cabinet colleagues to ensure that the concerns raised were followed up and considered.

10.7. From County Councillor Jan Butler to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

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Can Cabinet Member Catrin Maby give residents of Goytre Fawr some idea when repairs and resurfacing might take place in Lapstone Lane and Nant-y Derry Road from Goytre Hall to Chainbridge?

The Cabinet Member advised that neither road is currently included within the 2026/27 resurfacing programme. However, both roads will continue to be inspected, maintained and repaired as necessary to ensure they remain safe for highway users. Officers are currently reviewing condition survey data to develop the 2027/28 forward works programme.

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In a supplementary question, Councillor Butler stressed the importance of providing councillors and residents with clearer information regarding highway maintenance programmes. Whilst recognising budget pressures, she noted that residents would welcome greater clarity on where roads sit within the planned programme of works.

In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged the importance of communication and advised that members can obtain updates on individual roads from highways officers. She noted that major resurfacing schemes are reported annually to members, whilst smaller maintenance works are often identified and prioritised throughout the year. The Cabinet Member further advised that, following the recent highways and pothole review, work is underway to improve access to information and communications for members, with proposals expected to be reported in September.

11. Date of next meeting - 24th September 2026

The meeting ended at 19:00