

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 24th September, 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:

Peter Davies	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources
James Williams	Chief Officer Law & Governance
Jane Rodgers	Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Craig O'Connor	Chief Officer, Place and Community Well-being
Deb Hill-Howells	Chief Officer Infrastructure
Matthew Gatehouse	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Geraint Edwards	Head of Litigation and Deputy Monitoring Officer

1. Declarations of interest

None.

2. Public Questions

None.

3. Chair's announcement

Noted.

4. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2026 were approved as an accurate record.

5. Appointment to South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement presented the report for Council to appoint a member of the executive to represent the Council on the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

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Upon being put to a vote Council rejected the recommendation:

That Council approve the appointment of Councillor Angela Sandles to the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

6. Self-Assessment Report 2025/26

The Leader presented the report to seek Council approval of the Self-Assessment Report 2025/26 to ensure that members have a clear and transparent assessment of the authority's performance during the year ending 31 March 2026 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 2025/26 be approved.

7. Maintenance of Highways - Motion to review pothole repair techniques

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment presented the report feedback to Council on the work undertaken to address the highways reactive maintenance motion agreed by Council on 5th March 2026. The motion called for a review of alternative methods of road repairs; a full cost analysis; action plan and production of performance data.

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

To agree to allocate resources to fund the creation of two additional highways inspector posts.

To consider the allocation of additional revenue funding through the 27/28 budget setting cycle, to secure the long-term position of the two additional pothole teams.

To agree the adoption of the Bobcat Skid Steer as the preferred delivery mechanism for planned maintenance.

To agree the acquisition of a Bobcat Skid Steer.

To agree the reporting and communication methodology as set out in the report.

To agree to direct all reporting of potholes and other highways issues through My Council Services (My Monmouthshire) to improve data collection and reporting capability.

To undertake a review of reactive highways maintenance in 24 months to assess the effectiveness of the agreed changes implemented following this review.

8. Motions to Council

8.1. Submitted by County Councillor Alistair Neill

Notes that overspending in the schools' budget was reported last week by officers to be a 'major financial risk'. It is also a major education risk. The cumulative deficit was reported in June to have increased by £2.8million to £6.9million. Officers have advised that action is belatedly being taken to reduce this unprecedented level of overspend.

Resolves that:

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A report is brought back to Council in advance of the 2027/28 budget being set, in which the cabinet member explains how this overspend will be managed downwards without impacting school staffing levels which are critical for our schools.

Seconded by County Councillor Maureen Powell.

Upon being put to a vote Council resolved to accept the motion.

8.2. Submitted by County Councillor Richard John

This Council:

Notes that the legal maximum Fixed Penalty Notice a local authority can issue for littering or dog fouling was set at £150 in the Environmental Offences (Fixed Penalties) (Misc. Provisions) (Wales) Regulations 2007 and has not been increased.

Calls on the Cabinet Member to propose amendments to Monmouthshire's enforcement policies to increase Fixed Penalty Notices for littering and dog fouling to the maximum currently permitted under the above regulations.

Resolves to write to the Welsh Government to offer support for proposals to increase fines for fly-tipping but request additional measures to increase the maximum fines for littering and dog fouling.

Seconded by County Councillor Martin Newell.

Upon being put to a vote Council resolved to accept the motion.

9. Members Questions

9.1. From County Councillor Tomos Davies to County Councillor Sara Burch, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing & Tourism

To ask the Cabinet Member what consideration is being given to improving pedestrian and active travel connections between Llanellen and Abergavenny.

The Cabinet Member advised that there are currently no plans by Monmouthshire County Council to improve pedestrian or active travel routes within Llanellen itself, and noted that the A4042, which is managed by the Welsh Government, does not have a continuous footway. It was explained that active travel legislation and associated funding are primarily focused on routes within towns, where there is greater potential to encourage a shift from car use to walking and cycling for shorter everyday journeys.

As a supplementary Councillor Davies asked whether the Cabinet Member would reconsider her response and work with him and the local community to explore future funding opportunities that could support the development and scoping of a viable long-term pedestrian solution for Llanellen residents.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that she would be very happy to meet with Councillor Davies

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and discuss what opportunities may be available, including exploring potential options and future funding streams to support improved pedestrian connectivity for Llanellen.

9.2. From County Councillor Tomos Davies to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

To ask the Cabinet Member what progress has been made in utilising covert surveillance and enforcement measures to tackle littering and fly-tipping across Monmouthshire.

County Councillor Angela Sandles, the Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement advised that enforcement and surveillance measures are used where appropriate and lawful, particularly in relation to fly-tipping. However, Monmouthshire's predominantly rural nature and extensive network of remote locations present challenges in identifying persistent hotspot areas suitable for surveillance activity. Members were informed that the Council continues to work to improve this aspect of enforcement and has previously worked closely with Fly-tipping Action Wales in the deployment of surveillance cameras, with further collaboration anticipated where appropriate.

It was explained that covert surveillance is generally most effective in locations where there is persistent and repeat fly-tipping. In contrast, littering offences do not currently meet the legal threshold required for the use of covert surveillance powers. The Cabinet Member further noted that the Council does not presently have the power to issue fixed penalties to the registered keeper of a vehicle solely because litter has been discarded from it. Reference was made to the Welsh Government's consultation on the *Rural Proofing and Environmental Sustainability White Paper*, which includes proposals relating to littering from vehicles, and Members were encouraged to participate in the consultation before its closing date.

The Cabinet Member concluded by reaffirming the Council's commitment to exploring the effective and proportionate use of surveillance measures as part of its wider enforcement approach to tackling environmental crime.

As a supplementary Councillor Davis asked whether the Cabinet Member would bring forward a refreshed options appraisal setting out the resources required to further strengthen the Council's covert surveillance capabilities.

The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Davis for the suggestion and agreed to raise the matter with officers. She indicated that consideration would be given to providing an updated report outlining potential options and resource requirements for enhancing the Council's use of covert surveillance in addressing fly-tipping and related offences.

9.3. From County Councillor Richard John to County Councillor Laura Wright, Cabinet Member for Education

Why were parents informed of a change to the council's school attendance policy in July before that change has been discussed, consulted upon or formally approved by the council?

The Cabinet Member advised that fixed penalty notices for unauthorised school absence are not a new policy and have been available to councils and schools in Wales for many years. She stated that they have formed part of the Council's attendance policies under successive administrations, including when Councillor John held responsibility for education. T

The Cabinet Member emphasised that the letter issued to parents on 17th July did not announce a change in policy but was intended to inform families that preparatory work was underway to establish a clearer and more consistent county-wide approach to the application of fixed penalty notices, particularly in relation to unauthorised holidays during term time.

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Members were advised that headteachers had requested greater consistency in the application of the existing arrangements to ensure that families in similar circumstances were treated fairly across all schools in the county. The Cabinet Member stressed that the underlying policy position remained unchanged and that the work being undertaken related to the consistent implementation of an existing provision rather than the introduction of a new power or policy.

The Cabinet Member further confirmed that, prior to implementation, any revised arrangements would be required to align with Welsh Government guidance, be legally robust and be supported by clear procedures. Appropriate consultation and communication would form part of that process. She also reiterated that the Council's wider approach to attendance remains centred on early engagement and support for children, young people and families, and that the proposal relates specifically to unauthorised term-time holidays. Headteachers would continue to consider requests for leave on an individual basis, including where exceptional circumstances may apply.

As a supplementary Councillor John asked what would be consulted upon during the forthcoming consultation and why the proposal had been announced before completion of the democratic process.

In response, the Cabinet Member reiterated that no change of policy was being proposed and that the existing arrangements remained in place. She noted that parents would continue to have the opportunity to discuss absence requests with headteachers and that authorised absences could still be granted where considered appropriate. The Cabinet Member maintained that the matter did not represent a bypassing of the democratic process and advised that she had nothing further to add to her earlier response.

9.4. From County Councillor Tony Kear to County Councillor Ben Callard, Cabinet Member for Resources

Withdrawn.

9.5. From County Councillor Jackie Strong to County Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services

At the People Scrutiny meeting on 22nd September concern was raised about the way the Cabinet decision taken on the 16th of September re A Gwent Regional Workforce Development Team for Social care to move into a Gwent Regional Workforce Development Team.

The People Scrutiny meeting wanted to express their concerns about the timescale of this decision, which was only added to the Forward Work Plan on 12th August and agreed at Cabinet on 16th September. Not allowing time for the committee to have oversight of the report.

The scrutiny meeting also noted that other Gwent LAs had brought this decision to full council.

Whilst acknowledging that not all reports or decisions come directly to scrutiny. The committee has concerns that the short time of this proposal being added to the planner and the subsequent decision taken by Cabinet.

The question is will the cabinet member for social care and health explain why the decision was taken in this way?

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health advised that the decision was determined and approved by Cabinet in accordance with legal advice received from the Monitoring Officer, who

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confirmed that the matter constituted an executive function relating to social care workforce development.

It was further clarified that the equivalent decisions taken by the other Gwent local authorities were also approved by their respective Cabinets and were not referred to Full Council.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged that there had been a delay in placing the report on the Forward Work Programme, owing to staff leave and competing service pressures, and apologised that the matter had not been scheduled earlier. However, Members had approximately five weeks in which to raise questions or request pre-decision scrutiny prior to Cabinet's consideration of the report. Members were also advised that the workforce development team had been fully consulted during the development of the proposals and that the transfer of the function to a shared service arrangement would not result in any additional cost to the Council, with the majority of the service being funded through a grant from Social Care Wales.

10. Date of next meeting - 12th November 2026

Noted.

The meeting ended at 18:05pm