

Public Document Pack

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of County Council held
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Thursday, 6th March, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor Su McConnel (Chairman)
County Councillor Peter Strong (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: Rachel Buckler, Laura Wright, Tony Kear, Catrin Maby, Jan Butler, Ian Chandler, Sara Burch, Alistair Neill, Mary Ann Brocklesby, Fay Bromfield, Jane Lucas, Emma Bryn, Meirion Howells, Paul Griffiths, Jackie Strong, Rachel Garrick, Maria Stevens, Steven Garratt, Angela Sandles, Ben Callard, John Crook, Tomos Davies, Dale Rooke, Jayne McKenna, Jill Bond, Louise Brown, Lisa Dymock, Tony Easson, Christopher Edwards, Martyn Groucutt, Simon Howarth, Richard John, David Jones, Penny Jones, Malcolm Lane, Phil Murphy, M. Newell, Paul Pavia, Maureen Powell, Frances Taylor, Tudor Thomas, Armand Watts and Ann Webb

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Jonathan Davies | Head of Finance |
| Paul Matthews | Chief Executive |
| Peter Davies | Acting Chief Executive |
| Jane Rodgers | Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health |
| Will McLean | Chief Officer for Children and Young People |
| Wendy Barnard | Democratic Services Officer |
| James Williams | Chief Officer Law & Governance |
| Deb Hill-Howells | Head of Decarbonisation, Transport and Support Services |
| Craig O'Connor | Chief Officer, Place |
| Philippa Green | Head of HR |

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors Sue Riley

1. Declarations of Interest

Item 7.1 Motion submitted by CC Richard John: County Councillor Peter Strong declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as Chair of the Friends of Caldicot Library.

Item 9 Council Pay Policy: Members of the Senior Leadership Team declared a personal interest and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the report.

2. Chair's Announcement

<https://www.youtube.com/live/xcaRDOigYcU?si=u0zPPGr2zzCvRj3U&t=104>

The Chair's Announcement was noted.

The Chair invited Group Leaders and the Chief Executive to lead tributes to Ian Saunders, Chief Officer, Customer, Culture and Wellbeing who is retiring from Monmouthshire County Council at the end of March.

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3. Receipt of Petitions

<https://www.youtube.com/live/xcaRDOigYcU?si=g1KSpu9Le5BnxhTI&t=935>

County Councillor Penny Jones presented a petition from residents of Gwehelog objecting to the proposed planning application of a traveller's site at Wainfield Lane, Gwehelog.

4. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on the 23 January 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/live/xcaRDOigYcU?si=DmzCGePr46C07TFN&t=1074>

5. Reports To Council

6. Council Tax Resolution

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5WI99lCh0M?si=blmyLdbPiAy9V37S>

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the Council Tax Resolution Report in order to comply with specific timescales for Council Tax setting and to make certain defined resolutions.

The recommended resolutions also draw together the Council Tax implications of precepts proposed by the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent and Town and Community Councils, thereby enabling the County Council to establish its headline Council Tax levels at the various property bands within each Town or Community area.

Upon being put to a recorded vote Council resolved to accept the recommendations as set out in the report.

For 22
Against 21
Abstentions 1

| NAME | For | Against | Abstain |
|---------------------------|-----|---------|---------|
| Councillor J BOND | X | | |
| Councillor M A BROCKLESBY | X | | |
| Councillor F BROMFIELD | | X | |
| Councillor L BROWN | | X | |
| Councillor E BRYN | | | X |
| Councillor R BUCKLER | | X | |
| Councillor S BURCH | X | | |
| Councillor J BUTLER | | X | |
| Councillor B CALLARD | X | | |
| Councillor I CHANDLER | X | | |
| Councillor J CROOK | X | | |
| Councillor T DAVIES | | | |
| Councillor L DYMOCK | | X | |
| Councillor A EASSON | X | | |
| Councillor C EDWARDS | | X | |
| Councillor S GARRATT | X | | |
| Councillor R GARRICK | X | | |

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|---------------------------|----|----|---|
| Councillor P GRIFFITHS | X | | |
| Councillor M GROUCUTT | X | | |
| Councillor S.G.M. Howarth | | X | |
| Councillor M HOWELLS | X | | |
| Councillor R JOHN | | X | |
| Councillor D. W. H. Jones | | X | |
| Councillor P. Jones | | X | |
| Councillor T KEAR | | X | |
| Councillor M LANE | | X | |
| Councillor J LUCAS | | X | |
| Councillor C MABY | X | | |
| Councillor S MCCONNEL | X | | |
| Councillor J MCKENNA | | X | |
| Councillor P MURPHY | | X | |
| Councillor A NEILL | | X | |
| Councillor M NEWELL | | X | |
| Councillor P PAVIA | | X | |
| Councillor M POWELL | | X | |
| Councillor S RILEY | | | |
| Councillor D ROOKE | X | | |
| Councillor A SANDLES | X | | |
| Councillor M STEVENS | X | | |
| Councillor J STRONG | X | | |
| Councillor P STRONG | X | | |
| Councillor F TAYLOR | | X | |
| Councillor T THOMAS | X | | |
| Councillor A WATTS | X | | |
| Councillor A WEBB | | X | |
| Councillor L WRIGHT | X | | |
| TOTAL | 22 | 21 | 1 |

7. Capital Strategy and Treasury Management

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5WI99lCh0M?si=uNPIJh5rgcNYjrQj&t=9565>

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report to approve the Council's 2025/26 Capital and Treasury Management Strategies, including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy.

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

- 1. That Council approves the Capital strategy for 2025/26 as found at *Appendix 1***
- 2. That Council approves the Treasury management strategy for 2025/26 as found at *Appendix 2*, including the:**

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- **2025/26 Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement**
- **2025/26 Investment & Borrowing Strategies**
- **That Council agrees that Governance & Audit Committee should continue to review the Council's treasury activities for 2025/26 on behalf of the Council by receiving and considering quarterly treasury update reports and a year-end report.**

8. Updated Contract Procedure Rules

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5WI99lCh0M?si=7qn67Sm23cn2UHCg&t=10064>

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report to seek approval of the Council's updated Contract Procedure Rules (CPR's). Such updates have been made to incorporate the requirements of the following forthcoming legislation:

- The new Procurement Act 2023 and the Procurement (Wales) Regulations due to come into force on 24 February 2025 and
- The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act due to come into force late 2025

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

1. **That Council approve the updated Contract Procedure Rules.**
2. **To delegate authority to the Strategic Procurement Lead in consultation with the S151 Officer or their nominated officers to amend the CPR's to accord with any changes to legislation and to make any other amendments that may be required from time to time, which do not serve to materially alter the CPR's.**

9. Councillor Motions

10. Submitted by County Councillor Richard John

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5WI99lCh0M?si=01FgT7EBH0f114zU&t=10451>

County Councillor Richard John presented the motion:

That this Council recognises the valuable role that our libraries and community hubs play in community life across Monmouthshire.

Regrets the administration's recent aborted attempt to downgrade Monmouth Library and Community Hub.

Calls on the administration to pause its plans for the 'realignment of community hubs' until the public have been properly consulted.

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Upon being put to a vote, it was resolved to accept an alteration to the motion to remove the following: Calls on the administration to pause its plans for the 'realignment of community hubs' until the public have been properly consulted.

The altered motion is as follows:

That this Council recognises the valuable role that our libraries and community hubs play in community life across Monmouthshire.

Regrets the administration's recent aborted attempt to downgrade Monmouth Library and Community Hub.

The motion was seconded by County Councillor Tony Kear.

Upon being put to the vote, the following votes were recorded:

In favour of the motion: 23

Against the Motion: 22

Abstentions: 0

The motion was carried.

| NAME | For | Against | Abstain |
|---------------------------|-----|---------|---------|
| Councillor J BOND | | X | |
| Councillor M A BROCKLESBY | | X | |
| Councillor F BROMFIELD | X | | |
| Councillor L BROWN | X | | |
| Councillor E BRYN | X | | |
| Councillor R BUCKLER | X | | |
| Councillor S BURCH | | X | |
| Councillor J BUTLER | X | | |
| Councillor B CALLARD | | X | |
| Councillor I CHANDLER | | X | |
| Councillor J CROOK | | X | |
| Councillor T DAVIES | X | | |
| Councillor L DYMOCK | X | | |
| Councillor A EASSON | | X | |
| Councillor C EDWARDS | X | | |
| Councillor S GARRATT | | X | |
| Councillor R GARRICK | | X | |
| Councillor P GRIFFITHS | | X | |
| Councillor M GROUCUTT | | X | |
| Councillor S.G.M. Howarth | X | | |
| Councillor M HOWELLS | | X | |
| Councillor R JOHN | X | | |
| Councillor D. W. H. Jones | X | | |

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| Councillor P. Jones | X | | |
| Councillor T KEAR | X | | |
| Councillor M LANE | X | | |
| Councillor J LUCAS | X | | |
| Councillor C MABY | | X | |
| Councillor S MCCONNEL | | X | |
| Councillor J MCKENNA | X | | |
| Councillor P MURPHY | X | | |
| Councillor A NEILL | X | | |
| Councillor M NEWELL | X | | |
| Councillor P PAVIA | X | | |
| Councillor M POWELL | X | | |
| Councillor S RILEY | | | |
| Councillor D ROOKE | | X | |
| Councillor A SANDLES | | X | |
| Councillor M STEVENS | | X | |
| Councillor J STRONG | | X | |
| Councillor P STRONG | | X | |
| Councillor F TAYLOR | X | | |
| Councillor T THOMAS | | X | |
| Councillor A WATTS | | X | |
| Councillor A WEBB | X | | |
| Councillor L WRIGHT | | X | |
| TOTAL | 23 | 22 | |

11. Submitted by County Councillor Richard John

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5Wl99lCh0M?si=zmAGvS72bmb79GFM&t=13410>

County Councillor Richard John presented the motion:

*That this Council notes the administration's recent 20mph speed limit consultation.
Instructs the administration to publish the redacted consultation responses in full.
Requests the Democratic Services Committee to consider and make recommendations to the administration following several recent badly-run consultations.*

The motion was seconded by County Councillor Rachel Buckler.

Upon being put to the vote, the following votes were recorded:

In favour of the motion: 22

Against the motion: 23 (includes Chair's casting vote)

Abstentions: 0

The motion was rejected.

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| NAME | For | Against | Abstain |
|---------------------------|-----|---------|---------|
| Councillor J BOND | | X | |
| Councillor M A BROCKLESBY | | X | |
| Councillor F BROMFIELD | X | | |
| Councillor L BROWN | X | | |
| Councillor E BRYN | | | |
| Councillor R BUCKLER | X | | |
| Councillor S BURCH | | X | |
| Councillor J BUTLER | X | | |
| Councillor B CALLARD | | X | |
| Councillor I CHANDLER | | X | |
| Councillor J CROOK | | X | |
| Councillor T DAVIES | | | |
| Councillor L DYMOCK | X | | |
| Councillor A EASSON | | X | |
| Councillor C EDWARDS | X | | |
| Councillor S GARRATT | | X | |
| Councillor R GARRICK | | X | |
| Councillor P GRIFFITHS | | X | |
| Councillor M GROUCUTT | | X | |
| Councillor S.G.M. Howarth | X | | |
| Councillor M HOWELLS | | X | |
| Councillor R JOHN | X | | |
| Councillor D. W. H. Jones | X | | |
| Councillor P. Jones | X | | |
| Councillor T KEAR | X | | |
| Councillor M LANE | X | | |
| Councillor J LUCAS | X | | |
| Councillor C MABY | | X | |
| Councillor S MCCONNEL | | X X* | |
| Councillor J MCKENNA | X | | |
| Councillor P MURPHY | X | | |
| Councillor A NEILL | X | | |
| Councillor M NEWELL | X | | |
| Councillor P PAVIA | X | | |
| Councillor M POWELL | X | | |
| Councillor S RILEY | | | |
| Councillor D ROOKE | | X | |
| Councillor A SANDLES | | X | |
| Councillor M STEVENS | | | |
| Councillor J STRONG | | X | |
| Councillor P STRONG | | X | |
| Councillor F TAYLOR | X | | |

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|-----------------------|----|----|--|
| Councillor T THOMAS | | X | |
| Councillor A WATTS | | | |
| Councillor A WEBB | | | |
| Councillor L WRIGHT | | X | |
| TOTAL | 22 | 23 | |
| *Chair's Casting Vote | | | |

12. Members Questions

13. County Councillor Louise Brown to County Councillor Ben Callard, Cabinet Member for Resources

Can the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the future of Mounton House School Site in Pwllmeyric?

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Economy responded that the portion of Mounton House site was declared surplus to requirements by Cabinet in January and has been advertised for sale. The deadline for tenders has passed and the Council has received several offers that are currently being considered.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Brown asked which tender was going to be accepted and if the capital funds from the disposal could they go to schools in the Shirenewton and Chepstow area as Shirenewton School needs improvements in its active travel route, The Dell School has had a demountable classroom for 20 to 25 years, and Chepstow School requires maintenance. The leadership funding review will reduce funding to Chepstow School.

The Cabinet Member replied that the capital receipt for the portion of the Mounton House site will go into the capital receipts reserve to support the capital programme. The point was taken that investment is required in local schools. The Cabinet Member added that while the leadership funding review altered the allocation to Chepstow in this budget round, the overall funding to Chepstow has increased.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5Wl99lCh0M?si=7ZAIQPhJIFru9NhQ&t=19172>

14. County Councillor Meirion Howells to County Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Service

As we approach the fifth anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic this Sunday 9th March, I would like to ask what plans the Council has to mark this significant milestone? It is an opportunity not only to remember those we lost — including my own father — but also to recognise the invaluable contributions of our essential key workers and the many volunteers who stepped forward to support our communities during such a challenging time. Their dedication, compassion, and resilience made a profound difference when it was needed most.

Could you please share any initiatives or events being considered to commemorate this anniversary and to honour the sacrifices and efforts made by individuals, volunteers, and organisations across the county?

The Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services responded by acknowledging the personal loss shared and expressed their deepest sympathies to Councillor Howells and to everyone in our communities who lost loved ones during the pandemic.

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The Council fully recognises the importance of COVID Memorial Day on 9th March as a time for reflection, remembrance and gratitude. They drew attention to the memorial quilt created by the Caldicot Stitched Together Group that includes County Councillor Jackie Strong. The quilt represents the collective grief, strength and compassion of our community during one of the most challenging periods in recent history.

The Council also wants to recognise the extraordinary efforts of our key workers and volunteers, those who cared for the sick, who kept essential services running, who delivered food and medicine, and sewed scrubs and PPE for frontline staff. Their dedication and selflessness embody the very best of Monmouthshire and we are immensely grateful. This anniversary is a reminder of our responsibility to continue supporting those who are still affected by the long-term impacts of COVID-19.

Residents are encouraged to take a moment on March the 9th to remember and show appreciation for all those who made a difference when it mattered most. Members were asked to share details of any related community events to publicise further.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Howells asked if the Council considering a permanent tribute, such as a memorial or a dedicated space, to ensure future generations remember both the lives lost and the contributions of key workers and volunteers who supported our communities during the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member agreed with the suggestion and welcomes ideas from elected members, members of the public and others. They agreed to speak to officers in the Council about options.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5W199lCh0M?si=mbxawpkuE8uz2F8c&t=19322>

15. From County Councillor Jayne McKenna to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

Why is the council encouraging littering and fly-tipping by dumping tarmac, soil and other materials in lay-bys?

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment noted the examples of laybys at Skewbridge near Dingestow and Greenway Lane near Trellech. She agreed this is an issue that needs to be addressed but , following investigation, it has been clarified that Monmouthshire County Council Highways has a large number of historical old roadside depots that are not laybys. They are used as operational depots for running the highways maintenance teams and are still used for storing tarmac etc.

They would have stored material, plant, surface dressing, chippings, equipment and facilities for roadworkers. The Council has continued to use them for operational purposes, and they are registered with NRW as storage or transfer sites. They are an invaluable asset to the highways team, but highways operations are slowly removing their reliance on them.

The Council is going to investigate concerns about attracting fly-tipping and littering and what can be done to prevent this and to make the purpose of these roadside depots clearer.

As a supplementary question, Councillor McKenna asked if there's any approved Council waste sites that should be used, if signage can be considered (because the public aren't aware that these sites are meant to be solely for the Council's use and they're not actually laybys) and the safety element of unloading and loading on a 60 mph road with very little space to do so.

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The Cabinet Member agreed with the concerns about safety and signage and the need to investigate the waste being dumped there to find out if it is fly tipping, littering etc.

https://www.youtube.com/live/E5W199ICh0M?si=SKUxD22pt3_Q4lga&t=19648

16. From County Councillor Lisa Dymock to County Councillor Martyn Groucutt, Cabinet Member for Education

Given the recent expansion of childcare support in England under the former Conservative government to include children from nine months old, what discussions has the cabinet member had with Welsh Government about the introduction of a similar offer for working families in Monmouthshire?

The Cabinet Member for Education said that, as far as he was aware, the Welsh Government has no plans to provide financial support for childcare below the age of 2. Flying Start Childcare is currently being rolled out across Wales and this provides 12 ½ hours of free childcare a week during term time for children from the term following their 2nd birthday until the term following their third birthday. This rollout has been slower than hoped and will take a few more years until fully rolled out.

The Council uses deprivation data to ensure the support is prioritised as Flying Start is connected to family financial background.

From the term following a child's third birthday, all children are entitled to a minimum of 10 hours a week early education during term-time, and this can be accessed in a school, nursery or one of the approved non maintained early education settings.

If both parents meet eligibility criteria, either in work earning at least the equivalent to the minimum wage for 16 hours a week, or in training, they can apply for the childcare offer, which is an additional 20 hours a week of childcare during term time and 30 hours a week for nine weeks of the school holidays.

The rate of pay for early education childcare will increase to £6 an hour from April 2025.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Dymock commented that doesn't help many women who want to return to the workplace and continue of their career with young children, so given the financial pressures on families and the tough barriers women must overcome to manage returning to work and managing caregiving, she asked the Cabinet Member to acknowledge the issue highlighted that women face in Wales, and across Monmouthshire, and accept it is holding women back from returning to work and add an increased pressure to those trying to manage work and caregiving?

The Cabinet Member responded that if a woman wishes to work, she should be allowed to work.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5W199ICh0M?si=SbhIDxtYJLT63MvL&t=19880>

17. From County Councillor Lisa Dymock to County Councillor Paul Griffiths, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Development

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As the council prepares to adopt the Mill Meadows site in Sudbrook from the developer, can you advise what steps will be taken to ensure that all complaints and outstanding issues in public spaces are fully resolved before the adoption process is completed? Residents are keen to see these matters addressed to avoid long-term maintenance issues falling on the council.

Councillor Dymock noted that since submitting the question, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development had met with her on site and had addressed some of the concerns. She thanked him for his time.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development responded that the land currently managed by the developer will be either transferred to the Council or will be transferred to a local management company. He added that residents and Councillor Dymock are absolutely right to want the land to be in as good condition as soon as possible at the point of transfer. On site a landscaped area with a wonderful view was pointed out that has been surrounded by builders, rubble etc.

The Cabinet Member has walked the site with officers who have established that the developers will return next week and remove the stones from the site (that will actually transfer to a local management committee). Other parts will transfer to the Council and work has been identified to remove some fly tipping and some redundant signage posts.

It was agreed to review the work done over the next week together and come to an understanding with everyone involved on the transfer of the land.

Councillor Dymock welcomed the opportunity for another site visit and asked for an introduction to the maintenance company who are going to be taking on the open areas.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5Wl99lCh0M?si=nXFdi-sSKgcmgm0t&t=20151>

18. From County Councillor Tony Kear to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

Could the Cabinet Member please advise: In each financial year since May 22, how many claims have been submitted by motorists in respect of damage to their vehicles caused by pot holes or defects in Monmouthshire's highways; how many of these claims have been paid out and how much that equates to in monetary terms?

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment provided a summary of recent years of vehicles insurance claims?

In 2022/23: From May, there were 51 claims, of which 9 have been paid, which came to a sum of £3724

In 2023/24: There were 98 claims, 29 of which have been paid to a value of £10,689 In 2024/25: So far in this financial year, there were 51 claims of which 9 have been paid and the value is £1742.

(In trying to identify trends, the two years before that were looked at but they were partly COVID years.)

In 2019/20: There were 87 claims, of which 71 were refused and 16 paid to a value of £4902.

Caution was advised as some claims are still open, so it will be some time until final figures for e.g. the last two years will be available.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Kear asked, given that today we've learnt of and the budget has approved additional funding for roads, will the Council be taking a different

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approach to the repairing of potholes as repairs only last a few weeks. He asked if the Cabinet Member would engage with Flintshire County Council about its use of pothole machinery?

The Cabinet Member agreed that assessing equipment is something we should continually be doing and looking at improvements, and the suggestion had been raised with the operations managers in detail about that and they didn't feel the problem we had was about our equipment and that investment wasn't totally warranted recognising that every area is slightly different.

Regarding repair of potholes, residents ask for swift action if a pothole is dangerous and the cold fill is easily pushed out, particularly when large heavy traffic goes over it. Quick fill is for the meantime and that comes out of revenue funds.

Urgent repair work is not what we want to be doing. We want to be doing the more fundamental, long-lasting work. Chasing as much of the bigger capital funds as possible is to enable us to be packaging works together so we can do more major works which last much longer. The amount remains very small compared to what we need to do around the County, and the money is not just for potholes but carriageway works, streetlighting, drainage works etc.

It is proposed to hold a Members' Workshop to provide a detailed briefing and discuss ideas.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5Wl99lCh0M?si=2YfhmrVH7MXt3hQW&t=20394>

19. From County Councillor Jane Lucas to County Councillor Paul Griffiths, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development

Why were residents in Osbaston ward denied the opportunity to share their views on the siting of the new health centre during the RLDP consultation?

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development responded that there is a proposal from the Health Board to site a new primary care centre in Osbaston which will be developed within the existing local development plan not in the replacement local development plan, and that is the reason why it has not been part of the consultation. The proposal will require a planning application with all the normal public consultation associated with that.

As a supplementary question County Councillor Lucas recalled that Cabinet Members visited after the flooding and asked what happens to the traffic should the health centre be sited there, commenting that the proposal needs a lot more thought and care than what we're appearing to be giving it now. She asked if the Cabinet Member if he would meet with residents.

The Cabinet Member replied that the proposal, should it result in an actual planning application, would be part of all the consultation with all the appraisals that you would expect with an individual planning application, and residents will have every opportunity to contribute to the consideration of that.

He agreed to take advice about concerns of predetermining a view on a planning application should it arise and will come back to Councillor Lucas on the question of engaging with residents accordingly.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5Wl99lCh0M?si=TTuQVc2pXjxokZSY&t=20820>

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

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Could the Cabinet Member give an update on the administration's plans for better road traffic safety along Welsh Street, Chepstow.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment responded that this question might have been raised due to a recent accident involving pedestrian a goods vehicle. It is possible that the incident was attributed to driver behaviour rather than highway characteristics but was not in any way ignoring any other concerns about safety on this road.

The Cabinet Member explained that new speed indicator displays will be installed at either end of Welsh Street over the next few weeks. Monitoring of casualty statistics will continue to determine patterns and cluster sites across the authority.

As a supplementary question, County Councillor Edwards thanked the Cabinet Member for her correspondence on the recent accident and agreement for a road safety review and asked that the review looks further up Welsh Street and at road markings, requesting that the location of the school is taken into consideration noting that there are no speed humps or prominent signage outside. He added that minor accidents happen and don't get reported.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged that often local knowledge about near misses doesn't feature in the statistics. She agreed to speak to the Traffic Team about a site visit.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5WI99ICh0M?si=RjN7p6kHENB5GsFj&t=21012>

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

Could the Cabinet Member inform council of any progress with grant funding bids to Welsh Government for road safety improvement works for St Lawrence Road (between Kingsmark Lane/Barnets Wood and the Racecourse roundabout), Chepstow.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment replied that there are no submitted grant bids for this road with Welsh Government. There was a safer routes and communities bid submitted in 2022 for works to be done in the following year but that bid was unsuccessful.

County Councillor Edwards asked a supplementary question commenting that the entry and exit to the car park of a popular shop on the corner of one of the junctions can be extremely dangerous at times and whilst he and others have been working with the shop to try and improve this, some input from the Council is needed. Councillor Edwards asked if the junction can be reviewed, particularly the road-markings and signage.

The Cabinet Member asked Councillor Edwards to e mail her the points made so that she can raise them with the Traffic Team.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5WI99ICh0M?si=7kflYr8SZbDlly3v&t=21246>

22. From County Councillor Christopher Edwards to County Councillor Martyn Groucutt, Cabinet Member for Education

Following the recent announcement in the Senedd that almost a quarter of all Welsh schools require urgent maintenance work with a £93m backlog of urgent works and total maintenance bill of more than £500m; could the Cabinet Member inform council of how many of

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Monmouthshire's 35 schools fall into this urgent category and outline the administration's immediate plan of action for dealing with the backlog.

The Cabinet Member for Education responded that there has been a period of austerity which has led to tightening of capital budgets across the entire public sector and has resulted in a backlog of maintenance and repair across the Council's asset base.

This is being approached systematically through the strategic frameworks of the asset management strategy and of the capital strategy. The capital programme includes a yearly investment for property maintenance, highways maintenance, relevant specific capital grants, and the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. This helps to deal with the most urgent backlog issues focusing on worst condition first and taking account of related risk. Estate rationalisation programmes, closure disposal of assets, asset transfers and other capital projects to refurbish or replace operational properties will also be used to reduce the backlog funding needed. This will not immediately solve the total backlog but does help target the main issues in a reasonable and responsible way.

All our schools have been subject to condition surveys, which specify the estimated total backlog maintenance for these assets, as well as grading the conditions of the property to determine any urgent works that require addressing.
All our schools are classified as Grade C or above.

The number of those assets have been subject to investment already, for example, Caldicot and Monmouth Comprehensive Schools, the soon to be completed and handed over King Henry VIII 3-19 school, the development of the new nursery at Trellech Primary School and the completion of the Pupil Referral Service southern base at the former Mounton House School in Chepstow.

We've invested £532,000 of planned capital investment into our school estate in the financial year 2024/25. We're satisfied that any more urgent works are being addressed.

The estimated maintenance backlog in our schools now in primary is £3,400,000 and in secondary £2,120,000. None of those works are classified as urgent.

County Councillor Edwards asked if the Cabinet Member could make a statement sometime in the future if that changes and the backlog isn't being sorted out as residents and councillors need to be confident that Monmouthshire schools are safe environments for our children. He asked for reassurance regarding proposed future investment, the current planned maintenance and investment programme for both The Dell Primary School and Chepstow School.

The Cabinet Member agreed to respond separately to County Councillor Edwards, referring to the Freedom of Information request submitted by the Senedd Member resulting in the question and said there was some dispute about how the figures were arrived at and whether they are accurate.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/E5W199lCh0M?si=yn0wr957lyM1fwX9&t=21424>

23. Council Pay Policy

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report in order for Council to approve the publication of Monmouthshire County Council's Pay Policy, in compliance with the Localism Act.

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

That Council approves the Pay Policy for the year 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

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https://www.youtube.com/live/E5Wl99lCh0M?si=Ea2VFIO0jhXuLW_&t=21851

24. To consider whether to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, that it involves the information as defined in Paragraph 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act (proper officers view attached)

The Council resolved to exclude the Press and Public from the following item.

https://www.youtube.com/live/xcaRDOigYcU?si=HqCeiaB5lSvBOM2_&t=1117

25. Head of Service Appointments

Upon being put to the vote, Council resolved to confirm and appoint:

- a) Nicholas Tulp to the post of Head of Transport
- b) Paul Sullivan to the post of Head of Customer, Communications and Engagement;
- c) Nicholas John to the post of Head of Leisure and Wellbeing; and
- d) Tracey Thomas to the post of Head of Culture and Community Learning.

The meeting ended at 8.49 pm

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