

# Public Document Pack

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

**PRESENT:** County Councillor Peter Strong (Chair)  
County Councillor Martyn Groucutt (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, 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, 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:**

Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Peter Davies	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
James Williams	Chief Officer Law & Governance
Geraint Edwards	Head of Litigation and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Deb Hill-Howells	Head of Decarbonisation, Transport and Support Services

#### **1. Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **2. Chair's Announcement**

Noted.

#### **3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on the 15th May 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2025 were approved as an accurate record, with the following amendments noted:

County Councillor John referred to item 7. Appointments to Committees and made the following amendment:

The Chair invited nominations for the post of Chair of Democratic Services. There were two nominations for Cllr Lisa Dymock and Cllr Meirion Howells. After considerable discussion and officer intervention, it was ruled that Cllr Howells' nomination was invalid as a member of the executive group is ineligible to hold the position under section 14 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

County Councillor Lisa Dymock referred to item 19. From County Councillor Lisa Dymock to the Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement and made the following amendment:

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

As a supplementary Councillor Dymock referred to the condition of Caldicot Skate Park and Chepstow Skate Park.

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#### **4. Reports to Council**

#### **5. Licensing Act 2025 Policy Statement**

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement presented the report for Council to consider the proposed 'Licensing Act 2003 Policy Statement 2025', as previously debated by the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

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

**Members approve the updated Licensing Policy statement for adoption by Monmouthshire County Council, to come into force on 1st July 2025 (Attached as Appendix A).**

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#### **6. Separation of licensing functions**

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement presented the report to provide Council with details of the proposed arrangements to reconfigure the functions of the existing Licensing and Regulatory Committee as set out in the report.

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

- a) approve that the existing Licensing and Regulatory Committee be abolished.**
- b) approve the establishment of two new Committees, each comprising of the same members and the same Chair and Vice-Chair as each other, to be titled the Licensing and Gambling Committee and the Taxi and Regulatory Committee ("the Committees") respectively.**
- c) approve that the functions of the existing Licensing and Regulatory Committee be divided between two newly constituted Committees, such functions and delegations being as set out in the terms of reference for each Committee, attached to this report at Appendices 1 and 2.**
- d) instruct the Monitoring Officer to amend the Constitution to reflect the above changes.**

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#### **7. Appointments to Outside Bodies**

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement presented the report to appoint representatives to serve on outside bodies.

County Councillor Richard John expressed frustrations that the changes to the appointment list had not been made when the original paper was presented at the AGM in May 2025.

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

**That Council notes the new appointments highlighted below and included in the full list of appointments at appendix A.**

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#### **8. Shape and Leadership Structure of Monmouthshire County Council**

The Chief Executive presented the report to set out a refreshed permanent Strategic Leadership Team design and organisation structure for the Council. The report sought to improve the operational and delivery capability of the organisation through a clear permanent design that aligns accountability and responsibility within balanced directorate portfolios that lend themselves well to officer development opportunity across the Council without compromising current delivery.

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

- a) **Notes the revised strategic leadership team design and organisation structure proposed by the Chief Executive set out in sections 4 and 5 below and supplemented at Appendix 1 in accordance with paragraphs 14.2.1 – 14.2.3 of the Council Constitution.**
- b) **Agrees to the creation of the permanent positions of Chief Officer Infrastructure and Chief Officer Place and Community Wellbeing.**
- c) **Agrees to the deletion of the posts Chief Officer Communities and Place, and Chief Officer Customer, Culture and Wellbeing.**
- d) **Agrees to the positions set out in paragraph 2.2 above, being advertised within the Council to all officers on Head of Service grades, as Tier 4 positions with a pay grade up to £93k. This approach satisfies paragraph 36.1.3 of the Council Constitution.**
- e) **Authorises the Monitoring Officer to update the Council's Constitution to reflect changes to Chief Officer delegations brought about by agreeing to the above recommendations.**

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#### **9. Motions to Council**

##### **10. Submitted by County Councillor Meirion Howells**

*This Council notes the growing problem of roadside litter across Monmouthshire, much of which is the result of litter being discarded from Public Document Pack moving vehicles.*

*Therefore, this Council resolves that the Cabinet Member for Climate Change :*

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

- *Formally write to the Welsh Government, specifically the Minister for Climate Change, requesting that legislation be introduced to enable the prosecution or fining of the registered keeper when litter is thrown from a vehicle.*
- *Request that the Welsh Government provide appropriate guidance and resources to local authorities to support effective enforcement of such measures.*

Seconded by County Councillor Emma Bryn.

County Councillor Paul Pavia proposed an amendment, seconded by County Councillor Tony Kear:

*This Council notes the growing problem of roadside litter across Monmouthshire, much of which is the result of litter being discarded from moving vehicles.*

***It reaffirms the longstanding and cross-party concern regarding the persistent issue of roadside litter and resolves to work collaboratively across all parties to deliver effective enforcement, comprehensive public education, and sustained initiatives that promote long-term behavioural change***

***It acknowledges the recent publication of the manifesto by the Senedd Cross Party Group on Littering, Fly-tipping and Waste Reduction, which focuses on developing effective and sustainable public policies around the four 'Ds' of deterrence, detection, disposal, and duty-of-care.***

Therefore, this Council resolves that the Cabinet Member for Climate Change:

- *Formally write to the Welsh Government, specifically the ~~Minister for~~ **Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs**, requesting that legislation be introduced to enable the prosecution or fining of the registered keeper when litter is thrown from a vehicle.*
- ***Urges the Cabinet Secretary to urgently implement the long-delayed Wales 'all-in' Deposit Return Scheme and publish its long-awaited National Litter and Fly-tipping strategy.***
- *Request that the Welsh Government provide appropriate guidance and resources to local authorities to support effective enforcement of such measures.*
- ***Makes use of existing powers that this Council already has to properly detect, pursue and prosecute offenders and publicise outcomes to boost deterrence.***

County Councillor Howells accepted the amendment and debate ensued.

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

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#### **11. Submitted by County Councillor Frances Taylor**

*Following the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement which does not appear to include the relief lines upgrade, that this Council utilise its position as a key stakeholder in the Burn's Southeast Wales sustainable travel prospectus to ensure that all partners are clear that Magor station is not only unique, but also cost effective, offers mitigation to the climate emergency and can be delivered now, as it is not dependent on the relief lines upgrade.*

*That this council urgently writes formally and steps up its lobbying of all relevant decision makers, Department for Transport, Welsh Government, Transport for Wales, and Network Rail*

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

*to ensure that Magor Station is recognised as a quick win and is delivered immediately and without delay with the CSR funding.*

County Councillor Catrin Maby proposed an amendment, seconded by County Councillor Jill Bond.

County Councillor Taylor declared a non-prejudicial interest as a founder member of the Magor Group.

*Following the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement which does not appear to include the relief lines upgrade, that this Council utilise its position as a key stakeholder in the Burn's Southeast Wales sustainable travel prospectus to ensure that all partners are clear that Magor station is not only unique, but also cost effective, offers mitigation to the climate emergency and can be delivered now, as **it's construction** is not dependent on the relief lines upgrade.*

***That this council writes formally and steps up its lobbying of all relevant decision makers, to ensure that Magor Station is recognised as a quick win and is delivered as soon as possible with the CSR funding, and that a timeframe for the relief lines upgrade is clarified.*** ~~*That this council urgently writes formally, and steps up its lobbying of all relevant decision makers, Department for Transport, Welsh Government, Transport for Wales, and Network Rail to ensure that Magor Station is recognised as a quick win and is delivered immediately and without delay with the CSR funding.*~~

Upon being put to a vote the amendment was defeated.

For the amendment: 21

Against the amendment: 23

**Debate on the original motion ensued.**

**Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.**

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#### **12. Member Questions**

#### **13. From County Councillor Meirion Howells to County Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services**

*Can the Cabinet Member give an update on progress made to implement the recommendations from the review into My Day My Life, and the associated accessibility improvements that were to be made to the Melville Centre for the Arts in Abergavenny and the Overmonnow Learning Centre in Monmouth?*

The Cabinet Member welcomed the opportunity to provide an update on the implementation of the remodelling of the service which has been completed with a new staffing structure. This has merged the form of My Day My Life with the individual support service team to create one integrated service which is called My Support Service, and this provides a range of support to adults with a learning disability and to people with other disabilities and mental health needs. The service now offers support during evenings and weekends instead of the traditional 9-to-5

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

schedule and an adjustment to employment terms and conditions, hiring new staff under updated contracts.

The support offered by this new service is individually tailored to deliver the outcomes agreed within people's social work assessments and would either be short-term with a reablement focus or longer term where people are supported to gain independence, develop skills and to enable their participation in meaningful activities that help achieve their personal goals and development. The support may be solely community-based or within one of the service bases. The My Support Service has reinstated the original principle of person-centred planning that was recommended in the review, and it incorporates approaches that support people in expressing their needs and desires including methods such as easy read materials, sign language, creative activities and photo symbols. There is a robust referral pathway and assessment to ensure that the person is part of identifying outcomes. The proposals for the new bases for the service gained much attention last year and both buildings are now fully accessible with accessible toilet facilities and changing facilities having been installed for the benefit of all members of the community and not just service users. Both are conveniently located near to the town centres ensuring easy access and within each of the venues comfortable and attractive rooms have been set up for the exclusive use of the My Support Service so that those individuals that are supported by the service have secure and personal spaces to meet up with friends and to undertake activities. The venues also offer various other spaces for different activities.

As a supplementary Councillor Howells asked how those being supported by My Day My Life will be affected by the closure of Abergavenny Leisure Centre over the summer. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the closure of Abergavenny Leisure Centre impacts on three individuals who are part of the My Support Service and those individuals will be supported to travel to alternative leisure facilities.

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

*Could the administration please provide an update on the implementation of the HGV weight restrictions on the M48 Severn Bridge?*

The Cabinet Member reminded Members that from the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025 restrictions were placed for vehicles over 7.12 tons except for emergency services and timetable public transport and at present there are no arrangements for any other discretionary use, for example, based on geographical location; ease of use; or volumes of company traffic. It was understood that number plate recognition technology has now been installed and how useful that is will depend a lot on police back-office capacity to enforce it. National Highways and County Council officers are meeting on a weekly basis, and had planning meetings in advance to ensure things were implemented correctly. National Highways came to our Public Service Scrutiny Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and attended MCC Transport Forum on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025. The Deputy Leader has met with local businesses and taken their concerns to the decision makers, as had Councillor Maby, Leader and MP who have emphasized the impact on the local economy and the job losses that may occur with over 2,500 jobs at risk at New House. They have also highlighted the impact on the local road network and our concerns about the motorway junction roundabout. These concerns have also been communicated to Welsh Government and with the Cabinet Secretary last week where they again emphasized the importance of the M48 link road. A letter has been received from the Minister for Future Roads at Westminster dated 24<sup>th</sup> June 2025 indicating that the concerns have been taken on board and they aim to find solutions to enable normal traffic movements to resume in late 2026.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

As a supplementary Councillor Pavia sought to capture the air quality management monitoring evidence as there are concerns around residents who live in that area, noting the possibility of increased nitrate and oxide levels.

The Cabinet Member did not have the information at hand and agreed to share the information if it is available.

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

*Could the administration please provide an update on the discussions held with national governments and Network Rail regarding investments in improvements to Chepstow Railway Station?*

The Cabinet Member explained that the bid to the levelling up fund was prepared during 2020 to 22. It was limited to providing an opportunity for buses to turn around at Chepstow Station and it included a consequential loss of car parking since the allocation was announced by the UK government in 2024. The Cabinet Member has been in close dialogue with UK Government seeking to expand the remit of the original allocation which could lead to Chepstow Station moving towards its full potential as a hub which attracts travellers and businesses to Chepstow. Since the time of the allocation, we have been working on a further agreement with UK Government which would allow the expenditure to be flexed so that it can include an enhanced station environment potentially including public toilets and waiting facilities, improved walking and wheeling routes from the station into town and further afield, with enhanced signage. It is the intention to bring a full report to the July meeting of Council where approval will be sought for the required match funding and providing further details of this investment in advance. He also advised that he was looking to provide a briefing note to members and to arrange a meeting for members to fully explain how the bid has developed, how the project is developing and the funding implications of it.

As a supplementary Councillor Pavia asked if the Cabinet Member would confirm that making the land adjacent to the westbound platform into additional accessible car parking would be part of the bid's consideration, and there would be accessibility to the westbound platform from that side of the track.

The Cabinet Member was unable to give that commitment and was also shocked that over the past two decades Network Rail has been able to operate stations without disabled access. He concluded that it would not be possible to get agreement from Network Rail on the same timetable as we need an agreement with UK Government on the use of the levelling-up fund so we will make best use of that money in the here and now. He added that they will continue over the next decade to put every pressure on Network Rail to release, and make best use of, the land on that westbound platform and to provide the disabled access which residents and visitors of Chepstow desperately need.

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#### **16. From County Councillor Alistair Neill to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment**



## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

*Would the Cabinet Member please provide an update on plans for the permanent engineering works required to restore the chain bridge at Kemeys Commander to full working order including removal of the temporary 7.5T weight restriction.*

The Cabinet Member explained that the County Council are working with consultants on the detailed design for repairing this bridge. At the moment the work has been complicated by the major landslip on the adjacent road at Chainbridge. The aim is for the contractors to undertake both schemes at the same time and for design and planning to be completed to allow construction phase to commence in spring next year, with completion Spring 2027. It was hoped that the bridge can remain as a 7 and 1 half ton weight restriction until that construction phase starts. During construction the bridge will be closed and an official diversion signed via the A472, A449, R64 and A4042 is required. Improvements will be carried out during the autumn of 2025 to facilitate local traffic.

As a supplementary Councillor Neill requested that information and experience is put to good use and that speed warnings and speed checks are also introduced and that the signage is appropriately located at an early enough stage to allow drivers to divert more appropriately.

The Cabinet Member made a note of the points raised and would discuss them with officers.

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#### **17. From County Councillor Rachel Buckler to County Councillor Laura Wright, Cabinet Member for Education**

*Would the cabinet member make a statement on the breadth of choice in subjects for key stage 5 pupils at Chepstow School?*

The Cabinet Member welcomed the opportunity to state that she recognised the importance of our post 16 education and sustaining as broad an offer as we can across all four of our secondary phase schools. She explained that the key stage five provision in Chepstow is affected by several different factors which includes the number of pupils enrolled in the statutory age school and the ability for students to access other post 16 options nearby in both England and Wales. At a recent meeting with Chepstow school, the headteacher shared that the school has had to pause a number of its post 16 courses due to low take-up. This had been planned for a number of months, and it was shared with parents and students as early as possible. The school is in a significant deficit at the moment and unfortunately it is not economical to run those very low number of enrolment courses because it has a detrimental impact on the whole school budget. On a more positive note, the school is going to retain the skills to teach the courses that are currently paused and as pupil numbers increase it is the intention of the school to restart those courses as soon as possible. The headteacher does understand that some parents and students were disappointed, but the school is continuing to support all students and offer a range of courses as much as possible to support the offering in Chepstow. MCC secondary schools have a collaborative post16 network that is now approaching the end of its first year and that has seen the successful delivery of four different courses through the innovative ESOL remote learning platform, being computer science; economics; Welsh as a second language and Spanish.



## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

As a supplementary Councillor Buckler asked what message this sends about our commitment to academic breadth and ambitions for our young people, and if the Cabinet Member believes it acceptable that because of this narrowing of subject choice, a growing number of students are now considering leaving Monmouthshire at attend sixth forms.

The Cabinet Member responded that she did not have specific information, but this is a decision that lies with the headteacher and the governors. She would be happy to discuss this further with the headteacher at a meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

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#### **18. From County Councillor Fay Bromfield to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment**

*Can the cabinet member please provide me with an update on the issue of speeding Llanybi?*

The Cabinet Member understood the key problem areas to be at the entry and exit to the village, and, in particular, where children cross the road close to the new housing estate. She added that she took on board the comment about the timing of the speed monitoring and agreed this should be looked at again. In terms of additional physical measures, it was not fully clear what measures would help beyond the SIDS and road markings already in place but there was a meeting scheduled the traffic team to discuss and try to get some clarification.

As a supplementary Councillor Bromfield asked that the Cabinet Member supported her request for something permanent either side of the village at the meeting with highways.

The Cabinet Member responded that she took this on board, and it was important to identify what would work.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/nAo-bS-dUqg?si=3kO6RtcOuf3tBvto&t=9724>

#### **19. From County Councillor Jill Bond to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment**

*Mobility scooters are of great benefit to people with disabilities and mobility restrictions in Monmouthshire. Please can you set out how the Council is helping mobility scooter users to stay safe within our communities?*

The Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing & Tourism noted the importance of the issue and how mobility scooters are of great assistance to older people and people with disabilities in keeping their independence. Active Travel are very conscious with dropped kerb crossings, shared use paths and any of the active travel interventions designed for everybody from pushchair users to mobility scooter users and everybody in between. It was noted that the issue of training in mobility scooters had been raised at a recent member seminar and it was hoped that this would be looked at alongside the cycle training provided in schools and to young people, as well as to adults. There are two shop mobility schemes in Monmouthshire provide the opportunity to try out a mobility scooter and to receive instruction on its use.

As a supplementary Councillor Bond referred to the ongoing suffering of a resident in her ward who has sustained life-changing injuries from an incident in February in a Caldicot supermarket with a mobility scooter. She asked that the Council writes to our MP and MS to ask them to raise the issues around scooter safety for drivers and pedestrians and for consideration to be given to whether the incident should be investigated by the police; consider whether there

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

should be clear guidance for establishments to share if they are liable for incidents on their premises and the need for to risk assess and offer alternatives; consider whether public liability insurance should be extended to class two and three pathway scooters as compulsory as it is for heavier and roadworthy scooters; consider whether more regulation and capability checks especially after an incident and ongoing periodic checks would be relevant for all users of motorised vehicles.

The Cabinet Member agreed to work with Councillor Bond to raise those concerns to the senate and to the MP.

[Click here to view on YouTube](#)

#### **20. From County Councillor Christopher Edwards to County Councillor Laura Wright, Cabinet Member for Education**

*Can the Cabinet Member for Education inform council of any proposed future investment the current administration intends to make in both Chepstow School and The Dell Primary School (in their current form), which has remained an unanswered question since full council met in January 2025.*

The Cabinet Member apologised for the delay and reassured Councillor Edwards that the Council has continued to invest in both Chepstow School and the Dell Primary School. Despite the inevitable limitations of a maintenance budget, both schools will continue to be maintained as they have previously. She also confirmed that improvement works to the demountable classrooms at the Dell and the ongoing replacement of cladding in Chepstow School will continue during the summer holidays this year. In relation to future capital investment in the Chepstow cluster, Chepstow School has been included in the draft 9-year rolling program which has been submitted to Welsh Government, and the work has been undertaken by the Sustainable Communities for Learning Team to redline the Chepstow School site to determine its development potential. This provides a range of options for the redevelopment of education provision in the north of Chepstow and officers will be meeting councillors from Chepstow on the 14<sup>th</sup> July to share the projections and the work that's been undertaken to date.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/nAo-bS-dUgg?si=uHZqGFzS1JlgyAJL&t=10288>

#### **21. From County Councillor Christopher Edwards to County Councillor Paul Griffiths, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development**

*Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) Study that was commissioned to look at the potential design for improvements at High Beech roundabout in Chepstow.*

The Cabinet Member explained that the WelTAG study has progressed according to the nationally set out methodology. All possible options for improving the movement of people and of goods through Chepstow are being identified and appraised. When the study results are received, there will be a local public consultation and he has assured members in each part of Chepstow and the surrounding areas, including Shirenewton and St. Arvans, that they will be included in the consideration of any proposals for change.

As a supplementary Councillor Edwards asked for a date when local councillors will be briefed on what has been going on, and to be able to contribute on that important issue. Also for a date when councillors will be provided with existing documentation or, any relevant reports or analysis.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

Councillor Griffiths responded that the WelTAG study is commissioned by Welsh Government and there is a client and contractor relationship between Welsh Government and a consultancy undertaking the appraisal of options. The consultant reports back to Welsh Government and Welsh Government shares those reports with himself and officers. The work is ongoing we have not reached the stage where there is a report that makes proposals. When that stage is reached those proposals will be published and subject to public consultation.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/nAo-bS-dUgg?si=WKNeLw2T5HgcirCg&t=10438>

#### **22. From County Councillor Martin Newell to County Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services**

*What discussions have you had about plans for a new ambulance station in Monmouth?*

The Cabinet Member agreed that the future of Monmouth Ambulance Station is an important issue of concern for residents in Monmouth and the surrounding areas. Last November the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust signed off a proposal for rebuilding the ambulance station and that news was very welcome at the time. Since then MCC planning officers have been in discussions with WAST (Welsh Ambulance Services Trust) and provided them with pre-application advice to inform a detailed planning application. Options have been assessed they have decided to press ahead with the repair and refurbishment of the existing building. They are currently scoping out what can be done with the internal structure with the design team and when the final design is ready, they will look at developing the specifications and going out to tender for the work. The project board is very supportive of the refurbishment option will continue to work closely with planning and building control colleagues as required and it was hoped that the necessary refurbishment work could begin in the early autumn with an ambition to complete the project by the end of this financial year. Councillor Chandler planned to keep in close contact with the trust on their plans and timelines and considered it very positive that we should have a newly refurbished and fully functional ambulance station in Monmouth within the next 9 months.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/nAo-bS-dUgg?si=qDVq71abZYSC9llg&t=10701>

#### **23. From County Councillor Richard John to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment**

*By the end of 2025, how much will the council have spent on fencing above Clydach?*

The Cabinet Member advised that when the road collapse occurred to the extent that it was unsafe the County Council installed locked gates and herea fencing to ensure the safety of residents and visitors. That initial work cost less than £2,000, however it was repeatedly vandalized. This led to the installation of the metal fence to make the area safe. We have an obligation to ensure safety it's not optional. This work will have cost around £42,000 and the changes that will then be made to make it more visually acceptable, given the understandable upset about the way it looked, are expected to cost around £22,000. However, the steel fence will be stored and reused so in effect some of the cost will be recovered. She explained that the need to fully secure the area was in order to avoid the risk of serious injury and death given the condition of this road since parts of it had collapsed into the quarry below, people had been seen on the road unaware that the ground beneath it had been eroded. If further collapse occurred while they were on that road they would have fallen to their deaths and this should be considered when assessing the expenditure.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

As a supplementary Councillor John asked how to quantify the amount of spending as there was clearly wastage; how much money was thought to be unnecessary on this and what steps is the cabinet taking to ensure that we would not going to see huge scales of money wasted on this scale again.

The Cabinet Member reiterated that had no vandalism occurred the cost would have been £2,000 and asked Councillor John how much he though saving a life was worth.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/nAo-bS-dUgg?si=jukrEwt32MSt7VCF&t=10930>

#### **24. From County Councillor Martin Newell to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment**

*How can we best help our residents that have overgrown trees from adjoining MHA properties overhanging and damaging their privately owned properties whilst staying within the rules set in MCCs tree policy?*

The Cabinet Member highlighted that residents were entitled to prune branches, or have them pruned, when they overhang their properties. If it overhangs your property you are entitled to trim what is overhanging your property. The County Council tree policy outlines the law and explains the need to balance the tree owner's right not to have the tree unduly damaged so it must be done carefully. The tree policy also explains that the County Council will prune council owned trees where they were causing damage to build infrastructure such as people's houses. MCC teams are contracted to undertake tree safety assessments of housing association trees and can make recommendations in line with our tree policy. If MHA trees are causing damage, then MCC inspections will pick that up and will make the appropriate recommendations. The housing association would then contact MCC and ask us to carry out the work, but as it is their property we can only do that with their approval. Councillor Maby advised that if there were any specific concerns that the best approach would be to contact the housing association in the first instance and to check the most recent assessment or to ask us to carry out a new assessment. Residents can raise an issue through the tree form on My Mon.

As a supplementary Councillor Newell asked if we could put something into the public domain to break down the rules. The Cabinet Member responded that the tree policy looks to explain what the current law is but would have another look at it, and to let her know if there were anything particularly unclear.

[https://www.youtube.com/live/nAo-bS-dUgg?si=wdt\\_W1Do1k0G9h\\_q&t=11129](https://www.youtube.com/live/nAo-bS-dUgg?si=wdt_W1Do1k0G9h_q&t=11129)

#### **25. From County Councillor Louise Brown to County Councillor Laura Wright, Cabinet Member for Education**

*Will the Home to School Transport Policy Consultation for 2026/7 be delayed, as not covered on the People Scrutiny Committee agenda of the 17th of June 2025?*

The Cabinet Member explained that Welsh Government is currently undertaking a consultation on proposed changes to the learner travel operational guidance, so MCC have decided not to make any changes to home to school transport policy for the academic year 2026/27 while that consultation is underway. When the new guidance is finalised the policy will be reviewed to ensure it aligns.

As a supplementary Councillor Brown asked when parents would be notified that there are going to be no changes to the policy for 2026/27 and in terms of parents notification sought reassurance that any appeals in relation to the 2025/26 policy would be expedited as some

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

have only just been notified for a September start. She asked if the People Scrutiny Committee would be looking at this consultation.

The Cabinet Member explained that it is up to councillors who are not part of the executive to set their own agenda for a scrutiny committee but could not see a reason why the chair would not be happy to include that on the agenda. In terms of when people would be notified of changes the Chief Officer advised that the website would be updated to demonstrate that the new policy has not changed and it was also being arranged for an email to be sent to all parents to confirm there would be no changes. With regards to the last question appeals would be expedited.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/nAo-bS-dUqg?si=haKbyCEAwUM0YPvk&t=11416>

#### **26. From County Councillor Louise Brown to County Councillor Laura Wright, Cabinet Member for Education**

*Will the administration comment on how effectively it feels it has supported the leadership and functioning of the Standing Advisory Council for RE/RVE(SACRE/SAC)?*

The Cabinet Member took the opportunity to reassure Council that she understood the importance of a vibrant and engaged SAC in Monmouthshire and how we need to recognize the breadth of religious and spiritual perspectives that we have in Monmouthshire and allow our schools to provide our young people with as comprehensive and compelling a curriculum as possible. She added regret that the last meeting of SAC, which would have been her first as chair, did have to be cancelled due to needing to participate in the People Scrutiny Committees review of the decision to provide a lease establishing a mosque in Abergavenny. She assured Councillor Brown that she would ensure that SAC will be the body we need it to be, particularly as the understanding and acceptance of a range of religious beliefs and spiritual perspectives has never been more important.

As a supplementary Councillor Brown asked if the administration would like to allow the opposition to chair SAC as allowed by paragraph 10.1 of the constitution. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that sometimes cancellations were unavoidable due to health reasons or unforeseen circumstances. She agreed to take the points away for discussion and would be happy to discuss further outside of this meeting.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/nAo-bS-dUqg?si=zPPsOX78uZj8AykY&t=11714>

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

*Usk bridge has had a grade 2 listing since 1954 having commenced construction in 1746 and now repeatedly hit by HGVs. Can the Cabinet Member please advise over the past 10 years how many times has the bridge been damaged, the cost of repairs, how many reparation claims were made by MCC against haulage firms and how much has been reclaimed?*

The Cabinet Member replied that the damage to the listed structure is a major concern and is a frequent occurrence. MCC seek to obtain vehicle ownership details from the police etc when damage occurs. The principal structural engineer assesses each incident before pursuing the vehicle owners for costs and consideration to the value of the repair of the vehicle is made before costs are attempted to be pursued. The average repair costs are between £8000 and £10,000, but some were as little as a few hundred pounds. Officers had said that in the past they haven't pursued the claims a great deal under the previous administration, but in most



## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm

recent years they've tried pursue more as there is recognition that by doing this we might impact on behaviours and make the hauliers more careful.

The Cabinet Member provided some data going back to about 2004: in last 10 years there were 15 recorded incidents where the wall had been damaged, and the total amount of repairs was around £57,000. There was no data on successful claims.

As a supplementary Councillor Kear asked that the Cabinet Member arrange a site visit with officers to Usk bridge and Primary School on Monmouth Road to assess the safety issues. The Cabinet Member agreed.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/nAo-bS-dUqg?si=iMt1AtlwzjoM5s2O&t=12013>

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

*In light of the recent announcement that Monmouthshire County Council will receive a share of £5million of Welsh Government funding to refurbish, improve and create play spaces across the county, what consideration has the Cabinet Member given to improving the play facilities at Usk Island which have been damaged by heavy flooding from the adjacent river Usk?*

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement advised that the funding is being spent wisely across the county. The fixed play park located near the river is known to experience seasonal flooding with significant incidents recorded during the storms Dennis and Bert. Any future development or investment at this site must be designed to withstand and accommodate the impacts of flooding so that we can ensure long-term resilience and usability.

In 2019, MCC undertook an independent play value assessment of all its fixed play areas revealing that many sites scored low in play value and would require significant investment to meet modern standards. Current financial pressures make large-scale investment in play facilities particularly challenging. There were notable successes where the council, in partnership with town and community councils, has successfully secured joint funding to upgrade play parks across the county. Any funding and decisions regarding investments in refurbishments of fixed play areas across the county must align with the MCC Play Sufficiency Assessment, focusing on providing for diverse needs ensuring that play opportunities are inclusive and encourage all children regardless of ability or background to play and interact together matter, and that there is space available for children to play. Audits would be undertaken of all designated play spaces to assess safety, accessibility and play value, and improvements implemented where needed.

In June 2025, People Scrutiny Committee received a presentation from officers representing the Monmouthshire Play Strategy Group outlining the Monmouthshire play opportunities for all report and the associated play spaces and playgrounds. Cabinet will review the committee's feedback and is expected to make a final decision on the approval of the report and associated investment in July. The Council, through their place sufficiency assessment, continue to provide children with better opportunities to play within their local communities as we know that promoting healthier and more active lifestyles and well-being is a priority for all of us.

As a supplementary Councillor Kear urged the Cabinet Member and officers to visit Usk Island to see what is concerning residents. The Cabinet member agreed.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/nAo-bS-dUqg?si=U4GFSWHAPWuLclbh&t=12312>

#### **29. Next Meeting - Thursday 17th July 2025**



**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting of County Council held  
on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

Noted.

**The meeting ended at 5.30 pm**

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