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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 4th December, 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, Tudor Thomas, Armand Watts and Ann Webb

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Peter Davies	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources
Jane Rodgers	Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Matthew Gatehouse	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.
James Williams	Chief Officer Law & Governance
Deb Hill-Howells	Chief Officer Infrastructure

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors Frances Taylor

1. Declarations of Interest

County Councillors John Crook, Armand Watts, Mary Ann Brocklesby, Jan Butler declared personal, non-prejudicial interests in relation to item 5 of the agenda.

County Councillor Sue Riley declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in relation to item 6a of the agenda.

2. Chair's Announcement

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The Chair referred to the tragic news of the fatal dog attack in Rogiet and paid tribute to the emergency services.

The Chair opened the meeting by inviting group leaders to speak on the impact the recent floods.

Council noted the Chair's announcement.

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3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd October 2025

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The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

4. Reports to Council:

5. Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2024/25

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The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement presented the 2024/25 annual report of the Council's Standards Committee.

Council resolved to accept the recommendation to note the report.

6. Gwent Regional Partnership Board (RPB) Annual Report 2024/25

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The Cabinet member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services presented the report to update Members on the work of the Gwent Regional Partnership Board (RPB) in fulfilling local authority statutory duties required under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. The report sought to ensure that Members had the opportunity to review the RPB Annual Report 2024/25 and the progress made against the objectives set out in the Area Plan 2023-2027.

Council resolved to accept the recommendation to receive and endorse the RPB Annual Report 2024/25.

7. Appointment of the Chief Executive as an Executive Director of CCR Energy Ltd

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The Chief Executive presented the report for Council to consider the appointment of the Chief Executive as an Executive Director of CCR Energy Ltd.

Council resolved to accept the recommendation that the Council appoints the Chief Executive, Paul Matthews, as an Executive Director of CCR Energy Ltd for a period up to the next Annual General Meeting of Council in 2026.

8. Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report 2024/25 (Self-Assessment)

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The Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services presented the report, the purpose being:

- To evaluate the progress of Monmouthshire County Council's key safeguarding priorities during 2024 / 2025 through self-assessment, highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2025 – 2026.

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- To inform Members about the effectiveness of safeguarding in Monmouthshire and the work that is in progress to support the Council's aims in protecting children and adults at risk from harm and abuse.
- To inform Members about the progress made towards meeting the standards in the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy approved by Council in July 2017, amended July 2022 and January 2024.

Council resolved to accept the recommendations:

To receive and endorse the Annual Safeguarding Report 2024 /2025.

To task the Strategic Director for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health to maintain focus on the priority actions as set out in the Whole Authority Safeguarding Action Plan.

9. Annual Director's Report 2024 / 2025, Social Care Safeguarding and Health

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The Chief Officer for Social Care and Health presented the Annual Director's Report for 2024/25.

Council resolved to accept the recommendations:

For Council to receive and endorse the Annual Director's Report 2024/25.

That Council tasks the Strategic Director of Social Care, Safeguarding and Health to maintain focus on the priority actions for 2025/26 as set out in the summary section.

10. Motions to Council:

11. Submitted by County Councillor Paul Pavia

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Council Tax relief for residents living with a terminal illness

This Council notes:

- *Marie Curie's UK-wide campaign to ensure residents living with a terminal illness receive appropriate Council Tax relief.*
- *That approaches differ across the UK: in England, the ask is for councils to adopt local discretionary schemes, and several authorities have already implemented such arrangements. In Wales, the ask is for Welsh Government to amend the national Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) regulations so that terminal illness is explicitly included, creating a consistent statutory route across all Welsh councils.*

This Council resolves:

- 1) To support, in principle, the aims of the Marie Curie campaign.*
- 2) To ask the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Finance to write to Welsh Government, urging inclusion of terminal illness within CTRS regulations and to work with WLGA to advocate for a consistent Wales-wide framework, ensuring that any regulatory change will be fully funded centrally and the costs passed down to local authorities via the Revenue Support Grant.*

Seconded by County Councillor Ian Chandler.

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Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.

12. Submitted by County Councillor Martin Newell

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This Council:

- *Shares the shock felt by residents in communities across Monmouthshire devastated by Storm Claudia, in Monmouth, Skenfrith, Abergavenny and other areas in the north of the county.*
- *Pays tribute to the emergency services, MCC officers and staff, partner organisations and volunteers who helped ensure there was no loss of life.*
- *Welcomes the financial relief announced so far, including household grants, non-domestic rate relief and council tax reductions.*

Calls on the Cabinet Member to:

- *Urgently review the major incidences of flooding to determine lessons that can be learned that may assist prevention, or response and recovery in any future flood event.*
- *Explain why sandbags weren't provided to homes and businesses in areas expecting high rainfall.*
- *Provide an update on regular drain maintenance to prevent flooding.*
- *Set out a plan to invest in more resilient flood prevention measures.*
- *Confirm that the Wonastow pumping station was in fully operational and when it was last inspected.*
- *Return to Full Council with a report with precise details and review on the above points.*

Seconded by County Councillor Jane Lucas.

Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.

County Councillor Maureen Powell left the meeting at 17:27pm.

County Councillor Phil Murphy left the meeting at 17:44pm.

County Councillor Tony Easson left the meeting at 18:28pm.

13. Submitted by County Councillor Tomos Davies

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This Council:

- *Notes the Chancellor's Budget Statement of 26th November.*
- *Recognises the UK Government faced difficult and unpalatable choices.*
- *Calls upon this authority, where possible, to protect and support those families and businesses which may be adversely impacted by the Budget statement.*
- *Urges the Leader and the wider administration to press Welsh Government colleagues to deliver a fair funding settlement for Monmouthshire County Council.*

Seconded by County Councillor Alistair Neill.

Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.

14. Member Questions

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

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On 23rd November, the Grade Two listed Usk Bridge was hit and damaged for a third time since it was repaired yet again in the summer. Can the Cabinet member advise what proactive steps are in motion to bring a solution to this longstanding and increasingly occurring issue to this historic structure?

The Cabinet Member responded that highways colleagues have reported that the carriageway markings have recently been refreshed. There is a meeting booked with officers to discuss what further steps can be taken and they will be contacting Gwent Police commercial HGV vehicle unit regarding support for more targeted enforcement.

As a supplementary Councillor Kear asked for a site meeting to be held with officers to discuss the issues with local members. He added that the road markings had not been re-marked.

The Cabinet Member apologised as she had been informed that the markings had been refreshed. She agreed to a site, or teams meeting, to talk through possibilities.

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

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On 24th November, a pupil, on his journey to school in Little Mill was struck by a car near one of the school transport pick-up points. Parents have raised with me serious concerns that the bus stops are in appropriately situated particularly give the continue issues of speeding on Berthon Road through to Alexander Terrace. Can the cabinet member undertake a review of the school transport pick up points on safety grounds and advise what further measures can be undertaken by Highways to tackle speeding in Little Mill?

The Cabinet Member was sorry to hear of the accident and explained that measures to improve issue of speeding in Little Mill could involve the location of the transport pick up points, the potential for another pedestrian crossing and speed enforcement traffic calming. I think we need to talk through how these interact together. Speed surveys had been undertaken in August and had not seemed to indicate an issue, but there was the average speed issue. She added that she wanted to talk to the traffic team to discuss how to look at the whole situation in the village and what could be done.

As a supplementary Councillor Kear referred to the results of the survey and asked that the Cabinet Member meet with the Llanbadoc Community Councillors for further discussion. She agreed to look at the issue further.

County Councillor Su McConnel left the meeting at 19:33pm.
County Councillor Dale Rooke left the meeting at 19:47pm.

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

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The recent storm Claudia caused flooding in Little Mill affecting residents in Cae Melin and Berthon Road as well as the Little Jockey pub which was due to reopen on 1st December with new Landlords after being closed for over 12 months. The brook and culvert along Ty-Draw lane as well as blocked drains appear to have contributed to the issues. Given this is a repeat of the

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same matters 12 months ago, what review measures will now be taken to proactively clear and alleviate these hot spots?’

The Cabinet Member was sorry to hear about the pub and households affected and understood the issue to be a culvert that runs through private land which was not sufficient to deal with such extreme storm conditions. There is a growing list of hotspots to be checked and cleared whenever there are storm warnings, and it was recognised that many culverts were cleared prior to storms but still block during the storm because of the way detritus is washed off fields. It was noted that many culverts and water courses were on private property, and the importance of raise awareness about keeping water courses clear so that they don't impact people further downstream.

As a supplementary Councillor Kear asked that officers liaise with himself, County Councillor Howells and the Llanbadoc Community Council to resolve these long-standing issues.

18. County Councillor Richard John to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

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Why have the council and Welsh Government failed to deliver the 'quick wins' cited in the A40 Raglan crossings road safety audit within 12 months of publication back in June 2024?

The Cabinet Member understood this to be a road safety study rather than a road safety audit. Several options have been identified, including the permanent 50mph along the section of the A40A, no right turn out of Monmouth Road and no right turn into Croesenon Road from the A-40. Work is being undertaken with Welsh Government colleagues on these options to ensure that implementation does not negatively impact or create a worse position for all road users, including cyclists.

She added that the term quick wins is probably not reflective of the actual timelines needed to undertake the design, consultation and construction. The joint initial designs have been submitted to independent road safety auditors to ensure both works do complement each other. Councillors will be updated on progress in the New year once the road safety audits been completed.

The Cabinet Member thanked Raglan Community Council for sending minutes of a meeting held 10 days which provided further detail around the options.

As a supplementary Councillor John sought further information on timescales. The Cabinet Member reiterated that Members would be updated in the New Year on the outcome of the road safety audit.

19. County Councillor Richard John to County Councillor Paul Griffiths, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Deputy Leader

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What is the view of the administration on the series of planning applications by Natural Resources Wales to set up fast food vans at car parks in the Wye Valley?

The Cabinet Member stated that he, or his Cabinet colleagues did not have a view on this.

As a supplementary Councillor John asked if the Cabinet Member was prepared to meet with

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either the Cabinet Secretary or WLGA to raise this as it is at odds with the role of NRW, particularly in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

In response the Cabinet Member explained that the process of making decisions on individual planning applications in this authority is that our planning officers will consider the manner in which this application is or is not consistent with the local development plan and will consider its economic impacts, its impact on the environment and will make a recommendation to the Planning Committee.

The Planning Committee will decide whether these applications should be supported or not. Any views should be shared with the Planning Committee in the normal way.

20. County Councillor Louise Brown to County Councillor Laura Wright, Cabinet Member for Education

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Please can the Cabinet Member provide details of the following costs to the Council: 1. The WSP reports on home to school walking route assessments (how many reports written, which routes and at what cost?)

2. The cost of the footpath improvements in the Haysgate area of the A48 Pwllmeyric?

3. The cost to the Council of the land surveyors on the A48 Pwllmeyric?

4. The cost of a feasibility study for a potential pedestrian crossing and the loops analysis?

5. The cost of the traffic measures monitoring and for how long?

6. The cost of a potential pedestrian crossing on the A48 Pwllmeyric (including the cost of full engagement and consultation on any potential proposals)?

The Cabinet Member provided the following response:

1. Route Assessments

- WSP assessed three routes:
 - Mathern → Chepstow Secondary School
 - St. Arvan's → Dell Primary School
 - Caldicot → Archbishop Rowan Williams Church in Wales Primary School
- Reports shared with ward members and parents; cost: £13,152.
- Later, three more routes assessed:
 - Portskewett → Caldicot Comprehensive
 - Two routes from Bulwark and Thornwell → Chepstow School
- Additional cost: £8,040. All routes found available. Reports received this week and will be shared.

2. Haysgate Footway

- Refers to footway along A48 from Haysgate Junction towards Garden Centre.
- £67,000 funding identified for approx. 800m resurfacing.
- Additional traffic management and temporary suspension mean costs and scope will be reviewed in the new year.

3. Survey and Feasibility Costs

- Pedestrian/cycle counters: £4,900
- Automatic traffic counters: £250
- Topographical surveys: £2,250
- Feasibility study: £10,000 (includes project management, options, crossing assessment, design, safety audit).
- Detailed design: £15,000–£20,000 (e.g., pelican crossing hardware).
- Construction costs not included.

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4. Crossing Monitoring
 - Monitoring not required now but can be done if needed.
 - Crossing will have a one-year liability period, then maintained by MCC Street Lighting and Operations.
5. Design and Construction Costs
 - Design not finalized; consultation will guide options.
 - Zebra crossing: £25,000–£35,000
 - Pelican crossing: £55,000–£70,000
 - Costs include curb/footpath adjustments, markings, lighting, and signals for pelican crossings.
 - Funded through Chepstow Levelling Up Fund.
 - Public consultation via MCC teams and “Let’s Talk Monmouthshire”.

As a supplementary Councillor Brown asked why the Cabinet Member has refused to walk the route with parents. In response the Cabinet Member explained that the decision had been made as the WSP report had been available.

21. County Councillor Rachel Buckler to County Councillor Ben Callard, Cabinet Member for Resources

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Will Cllr Ben Callard, Cabinet Member for Resources and Cllr Laura Wright, Councillor for Grofield Ward, explain why no parking impact assessment or mitigation plan was prepared before granting the 30-year lease on the Abergavenny Carnegie Library, despite concerns, and what steps Monmouthshire County Council will now take to ensure residents are not financially penalised through the introduction of an £83 residents' permit scheme?

The Cabinet Member explained that no parking impact assessment was required for the proposed community centre as its use was considered similar or less demanding than the building's previous use as a library. The occupier's business plan indicates that most regular users live and work in the town centre, meaning they are already part of existing parking patterns. The new use is expected to increase footfall, which is seen as positive for the town's vitality and ensures productive use of a vacant building. The occupier has also agreed to encourage visitors to use any of the four public car parks within 200 metres of the property to help manage parking demand.

The Cabinet Member clarified that discussions about a resident parking permit scheme are separate from the lease issue. These discussions have been ongoing for several years, with Cllr Wright supporting residents who wish to see such a scheme introduced. Parking on Victoria Street has long been affected by town centre visitors, and a consultation on a potential scheme is currently underway. Residents are encouraged to respond to the consultation.

In response to a supplementary question about the proposed annual cost of £83 compared to £35 in Cardiff and Newport, and whether the scheme could be paused for a full area-wide assessment including options that do not require payment, the Cabinet Member stated that parking does not fall within their portfolio and they cannot commit to pausing the scheme. He reiterated the importance of residents engaging with the consultation and noted that the council has incurred legal costs from previous challenges related to the lease process.

22. County Councillor Alistair Neill to County Councillor Laura Wright, Cabinet Member for Education

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The overall school reserves deficit is now forecast to increase by a further £3 million, to over £7 million by the end of 2025/26. This is an extremely serious, unprecedented situation. Each school with a deficit is required to deliver a recovery plan. Would the cabinet member please outline the expected real impact on schools of these recovery plans requiring them to take £7 million out of their current expenditure?

The Cabinet Member acknowledged the serious financial challenges facing schools and confirmed that schools in deficit must produce recovery plans. These plans are agreed either by the Strategic Director or, in cases of significant deficits, by the Cabinet Member alongside the Cabinet Member for Resources. Governing bodies are responsible for identifying savings and agreeing recovery plans, which typically focus on balancing budgets over time without negatively impacting learning standards. Staffing is the largest cost for schools, so savings often involve staffing changes, but schools are given flexibility and time to avoid harm to educational outcomes. Recovery plans are tailored to each school's needs, and some may take several years to deliver. The Cabinet Member welcomed further discussion at scrutiny committee.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Neill suggested the council should consider reducing its own structure to pass on savings to schools and avoid staff reductions in schools. The Cabinet Member sought clarification on what this would look like in practice and stated they could not provide an answer without further detail.

23. County Councillor Alistair Neill to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

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With investigatory works on the B4598 Chainbridge scheduled for w/c 8th December, and the full engineering work to repair the bridge expected next year closing the bridge for 12-18 months, businesses and residents are very concerned about the impact of this prolonged closure of a critical north-route through the county. It is clear there will be major impact on the businesses/farms for many miles at both ends of the bridge, involving significant reductions in trade/customers and problems for staff reaching work, transport of goods and suppliers reaching businesses affected. These business interruption/ reduction impacts are extremely serious – the very least that needs to be done is for MCC to understand and mitigate them by working closely with all the businesses likely to be affected. Is MCC conducting an impact assessment on those businesses before full works begin, and as those full works are drawing so close, would the cabinet member please now share the project plan for these works that will have such serious impact for a prolonged period?

The Cabinet Member explained that officers will work with the contractor through an early involvement process to minimize disruption for residents and businesses during the bridge repair project. The primary focus is to fix the bridge while reducing disruption as much as possible. Works on Porthycarne Street have been completed, and new signage for increased HGV height restrictions is in progress. Designs for passing places through Bettws Newydd have been consulted on with the community council, and work on the first passing place will begin in the coming weeks. Communication with businesses has started, and a meeting is planned before Christmas. The Cabinet Member noted that dates for closures were changed from weekends to weekdays following feedback from businesses to reduce impact.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Neill emphasized the importance of clear project plans and dedicated project managers for major projects, noting concerns about workload on senior officers. The Cabinet Member agreed with this point.

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

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To ask the Cabinet Member to review the effectiveness of speed calming measures through the villages of Llanellen and Govilon.

The Cabinet Member explained that speed and traffic volume surveys were carried out in Govilon village in July, and officers will share these results if not already provided. A review of Llanellen, particularly Gypsy Lane, will be considered in the new financial year, noting that the trunk road is not a county council asset.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Davies invited the Cabinet Member to attend a future community council meeting to discuss practical measures to improve safety for families and vulnerable residents. The Cabinet Member advised that residents could contact GoSafe directly regarding enforcement, as this covers both trunk and county roads, and confirmed they will follow up with the traffic team. The councillor was asked to provide specific details to assist with this process.

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

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To ask the Cabinet Member and the administration to prioritise urgent repair and clean-up work to the Tyla Road, Govilon.

The Cabinet Member explained that work has been carried out to cut back overgrown hedges and remove overhanging branches along Tyla Road. The stone walls in the area are mainly landowner boundary walls, but where possible, the team cleared vegetation back onto the walls. Weekly refuse collections continue, and recent inspections confirm the road is now passable. In a supplementary question, the councillor noted residents remain concerned about the road's poor condition, including broken surfaces and unmanaged verges, which have previously prevented emergency services from reaching a vulnerable resident and may affect home-to-school transport.

As a supplementary Councillor Davies asked for assurance that updates will be provided to both residents and the local ward councillor as repairs and cleanup progress. The Cabinet Member agreed and advised that any unsatisfactory works should be reported to Highways and Neighbourhood Services with precise details to ensure issues are addressed.

26. Date of next meeting - 22nd January 2026

Noted.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm