

Ponthir Community Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

Held on 11th May 2026 at Ponthir Village Hall at 7pm

Present: Cllr M Leighton (Chair), Cllr P Buffrey, Cllr A Lang and Cllr I Danaher, Cllr P Matthews, Cllr L Ryan-Scales, Cllr R Morgan and Cllr P Mathews

Officer(s): Clerk Mrs L McMail

Also present: Dr Simon Read - HDRC, Vicki Ware - Ground Works Wales, Adele Mellon, Residents of Oaklands: Dr Eric Hewinson and Cheryl Bassett.

1. Apologies – all present

2. Declaration of Interests - Cllr I Danaher declared a personal interest in the Oaklands matter raised during the public session.

3. To consider matters raised by Councillors of the public - The Chair welcomed the public to the meeting, the residents of Oaklands Dr Eric Humanson and Cheryl Bassett were asked that they outline their concerns. Dr EH raised their concern in relation to the latest position from BT/Openreach after receiving holding letters promising an update by 21 May. The Chair provided an update with the most recent communication from Torfaen CBC to the Community Council confirmed that the recently installed pole had been removed. BT/Openreach confirmed no further apparatus will be installed at that location. Due to cost and complexity of underground provision, it is unlikely BT/Openreach will return as part of this scheme. Residents in the affected area are therefore are unlikely to receive BT broadband services.

Council advised residents that they should raise a formal complaint directly with BT/Openreach and Ofcom, as the Council cannot act on their behalf. Formal complaints should be submitted now rather than waiting for further delays.

4. To welcome Dr Simon Read (HDRC) and Vicki Ware (Groundworks Wales) to discuss Flood Preparedness & Community Emergency Planning. Vicki (Groundwork Wales) outlined the Communities Prepared Pilot programme - focusing on flooding. The Programme includes community needs assessment/identifying existing resources and gaps/Training for flood wardens, volunteers, and residents/First aid and mental-health first aid (via British Red Cross).

There would be support to develop emergency hubs, equipment storage, and community plans. Practical household preparedness (grab bags, drains, neighbour checks). The aim is to build a local volunteer base and provide clear information on responsibilities during flooding.

The Council discussed the scope, governance and expectations and raised questions relating to resources, budget, and what expertise Groundwork Wales can provide and whether HDRC project can link in with this and deliver independent flood-risk assessment for the area and how the project links to wider issues such as the possible solar farm and potential increased flood risk.

Both HDRC and Groundwork Wales clarified that they have limited budget, but can provide staff time, research skills, and access to academic expertise.

The Council highlighted the priority must be supporting residents currently at risk of flooding. Recent drainage works in the village were a direct result of earlier discussions with TCBC.

Groundwork Wales confirmed that funding and expertise were available to support the programme, and that a community-led approach would be taken. A smaller working group was proposed to progress the detailed planning work and liaise with relevant agencies.

The Council agreed that a wider public meeting should be arranged to introduce the initiative, encourage volunteers, and begin shaping the community response. It was noted that engagement should take place before the summer period to maintain momentum ahead of the autumn/winter flood season and that a simple, practical community flood plan is needed (WhatsApp group, sandbags, vulnerable residents list, signage, etc.)

Actions:

- i. Community Council will set up a Working Group with local knowledge to support the HRDC Project to commence work on the development of a basic flood plan. This meeting would be held on Monday 8 June at 6:30pm, ahead of the Council meeting at 7pm.
- ii. Clerk to arrange a convenient time with PVH to set up a community meeting to be led by Groundworks Wales to bring the community into the discussions. Details of the Community meeting to be shared via social media/advertising and leaflets.
- iii. Groundwork Wales to bring a clear implementation plan, including timeline and expected outcomes to the next meeting.

5. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13th April 2026. Proposed by Cllr Lang and seconded by Cllr Danaher.

6. Matters arising

- a) Oaklands Residents – covered until public participation
- b) Planters and benches – no update on maintenance. **ACTION:** Clerk to chase Chris Mellons
- c) Christmas lights – three lights were sent back in March **ACTION:** Clerk to provide update at next meeting
- d) Update on Bank Mandate Changes – The bank mandate has been updated and the Clerk is awaiting written confirmation.
- e) Proposed Solar Farm Development (*Standing Item*) - Councillors discussed the ongoing concerns raised by residents regarding the proposed solar farm development. It was noted that several residents had contacted the Community Council seeking clarity on the Council’s position. Following discussion, Cllr PB proposed that “*Ponthir Community Council formally records its opposition to the proposed solar farm development and expresses its support for residents and local groups who are objecting to the proposal, within the legal powers and limitations of the Council.*” The motion was seconded by Cllr PM. The motion was carried with 6 votes and 1 abstaining.

ACTION: It was agreed that the Clerk will seek legal advice on the scope of pre planning advice the Council may lawfully take and report back to Council.

f) **Caerleon Community Times 2026/27:** The Chairs Annual Report was summarised and published in the May edition of the Caerleon Community Times.

g) **Events 2026 (Standing item)**

Village Events Summer Fair and Christmas event

Councillors discussed the possibility of PVH holding two community events:

- A summer event (initial idea: a Sunday in July, but concerns raised that July may be too soon).
- The annual Christmas event, which the Council agreed should definitely proceed.
- For the summer event, it was noted:
 - July may be too close to organise effectively; planning for next year may be more realistic.
- For the Christmas event, it was noted:
 - The traditional timing is the first Friday in December.
 - Costs discussed included hall hire, Father Christmas, decorations, music, and selection boxes for children.
 - It was noted that Father Christmas costs have increased significantly in recent years.
 - Stalls could be charged at £20 for one or £30 for two, with income helping offset hall hire.
 - Councillors agreed the event should focus on community benefit, not fundraising for external charities.
- Councillors discussed the need to ensure:
 - A clear budget is set (initial suggestion: £500, with the option to return to Council if more is required).
 - Other village groups should be asked about their planned events to avoid clashes and encourage coordination.

Actions: Council to commit to supporting the Christmas event on the usual date (first Friday in December) with an initial budget of £500 approved in principle, subject to a detailed plan being brought back if costs exceed this.

h) **PSCC** – It was agreed at the Annual Meeting to invite the Chair of PSCC to Ponthir CC September Council meeting.

i) **Drains – Ponthir** – Some Councillors expressed concern about the drainage works: poor communication from TCBC, unclear start dates, lack of notice etc.

ACTION: Clerk to contact TCBC and seek clarification of the points raised.

j) **PVH room hire 2026/27** – The meeting room has been booked for the next year and the invoice has been paid.

k) **Salary budget recalculated for 2026/27** - Salary budget for 2026–27 updated as requested by £2500 to include pension contributions.

l) **Internal Auditor 2026/27** – Terms of Engagement were agreed by Councillors

ACTION: TOE to be emailed to the internal auditor Nicola Lewis.

m) **Chairs Annual Report 2025/26** – This had been circulated to all Councillors and published in the May edition of the Caerleon Community Times. All Councillors were happy that this was an accurate account of the last year.

ACTION: The report to be uploaded on the Councils website and included in the notice boards during August.

To consider and discuss items

- a) **Insurance renewal** - The insurance renewal has been received from Zurich at a cost of £666, this has been paid.
- b) **Website and IT hosting** - The current website host has withdrawn from managing the domain, meaning the Council must urgently commission a new, compliant website; two quotes have been received (£499 for a basic English-only site, £850 for a bilingual 8-page site), with a third quote pending.
Councillors agreed the immediate priority is securing a functioning, compliant website, with consensus toward the £499 option as a solution, adding Welsh language and additional pages later if required.
Email hosting issues were noted, but as the Council owns the Microsoft 365 licences, emails can continue for now; councillors agreed to focus first on getting the new website operational before addressing wider IT and domain matters.
RESOLVED: Council resolved to commission a new compliant website as a matter of urgency and agreed to proceed with the £499 provider to ensure continuity of service, with additional pages and Welsh-language functionality to be added at a later stage if required.
- c) **Community Flood Plan** – covered earlier in the speaker section.
- d) **Working Group arrangements for Community Flood Plan** – covered earlier in the speaker section
- e) **Local Government Pension Scheme Councillorship** – The Council formally resolved to confirm participation in the LGPS scheme and for the Clerk to join the scheme. It was clarified by Cllr ID that previous clerks had opted out; resolution proposed and approved by Cllrs Ryan Scales and Cllr Peter Mathews. **RESOLVED** to formally confirm the Councils participation in the Local Government Pension Scheme and for the Clerk to join the scheme.
- f) **Councillor expenses 26/27** - The Clerk reported that the annual remuneration report confirms a mandatory allowance of £156 per member per year (equivalent to £3 per week) and a mandatory £52 annual payment towards office consumables required for carrying out the role.
Councillors may formally decline either payment. Declination forms have been shared and should be returned no later than 30 June.
ACTION: The Clerk will issue an email to Councillors regarding the process and include the forms if required.
- g) **Training Plan Councillors and staff 26/27** - All councillors completed the required training for the previous year, and the training plan will be updated to reflect this. Councillors were invited to express interest in further optional training, **ACTION:** Dates will be circulated to all Councillors for training provided by OVW.
- h) **Grant Application(s)**
 - i. Raging Bullseye Junior Dart Academy – evidence that this was a not-for-profit organisation was requested - Defer grant application to June meeting subject to information being supplied.

- ii. A late application had been received for the Ponthir Recorder Society, Council awarded £200 for uniform and other costs.
- i) **Grant Application Criteria** – all Cllrs reviewed the current criteria and agreed it was adequate.
- j) **Police Report - March 2026** - PCSO James Llewellyn will attend the Councils June meeting. **ACTION:** Clerk to ask for a trend report to be presented.
- k) **Council Chains of Office** – the Chains had been sent for review, and the Council are awaiting costs to refurbish and add a new logo plate to the jewel. **ACTION:** Clerk to advise Councillors when costings received.

7.Finance and Accounts

Balance and transaction noted.

8.Planning – none received

9.Committee Reports

Ponthir Church in Wales Primary School: No report, Cllr R-S advised that the School has had an Estyn inspection.

Torfaen Community Transport: No meeting held.

Gwent Valleys Partnership: Due to the meeting being held face to face in Tredegar no Councillors were available to attend.

Ponthir Village Hall: held a topic debate for the BBC Radio 4 ‘any questions’ last Friday after the Senedd election results which was well attended.

PSCC: No update

Local Council Partnership Committee: Meeting cancelled

The date of the next meeting is the 8th June at 7pm

Meeting closed at 20:30

This document is available on the Council's website. A copy of this document can be made available in Welsh. Please contact the Clerk on 07454 988250 or email clerk@ponthircommunitycouncil.gov.uk