



Minutes of the meeting of Darran Valley Community Council on Thursday, 8th May 2025, at 6.30 pm (Deri Library)

This is the Annual General Meeting

Attendance

Present

Cllr M Gibbings (Chair)

Cllr J Gibbings

Cllr E Blanche

Cllr D Johnson

Cllr T Johnson

Cllr D Roberts

Cllr J Roberts

Absent and Apologies

Cllr D Nicholas

Cllr R Chapman

In Attendance

Ms. A Pallister (Clerk)

10 - Members of the public

No members of the public attended.

11 - Declarations of interest

There were none.

12 - To approve and confirm the April 2025 minutes of the meeting

The minutes of the meeting were approved as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

13 - Matters arising from the April 2025 meeting

81.00 – Planning for Christmas events.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:

- Cllr J Gibbings would like four large posters for both events next year.
- Councillors would like the Clerk and Cllr R Chapman to investigate the possibility of installing additional lights in Deri for 2024. The council has previously investigated adding further lights,

but the lampposts have been deemed unsuitable. It was noted that other community councils with similar lampposts have added extra lighting.

- At the December 2023 meeting, there was also a discussion about ensuring the posters had been signed off on before being advertised to the general public.

UPDATE FROM THE JANUARY 2024 MEETING:

The Clerk has contacted the relevant agencies, requesting that they investigate the possibility of adding extra decorations in Deri for 2024. The Clerk will report back once there is news. Councillors reported the events were a big success yet again. The Santa on a Fire Engine event in Fochriw was not as well attended as last year, but this was due to a clash with another local event. The Deri events were exceptionally well-attended, and numbers were up from the previous year. The engagement and response were magnificent.

UPDATE FROM THE FEBRUARY 2024 MEETING:

Keep on matters arising until resolved.

UPDATE FROM THE MARCH 2024 MEETING:

This was discussed again. Upgrading street lampposts may be the only route to adding additional lighting, but it's doubtful Caerphilly CBC will have the budget to undertake this work. Cllr M Gibbings suggested planting a Christmas tree in Groesfaen and offered to look into where it could be placed. Cllr E Blanche suggested upgrading to LED lighting.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:

The Clerk will investigate the upgrade to LED lights in Deri. Cllr M Gibbings will look into putting up a Christmas Tree in Groesfaen. Cllr M Gibbings will send the Clerk the GPS location of the lamppost needing LED lights.

UPDATE FROM THE JUNE 2024 MEETING:

The Christmas 2024 Pantomimes have been booked as follows

- Saturday, 28th December 2024, 12:00 pm – Cinderella at Deri Community Centre.
- Sunday 29th December 2024, 1:00 pm – Rapunzel at Fochriw Community Centre

UPDATE FROM THE SEPTEMBER 2024 MEETING:

The Council voted to use the services of Elsbury Platforms again for the 2024

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:

- Christmas lighting. The Clerk was also asked to contact Elsbury as follows:
- Instruct them to switch the Christmas lights on at the end of November (Friday, 29th November 2024).
- Council would like to purchase some new, longer LED lights for the tree in Deri.
The Council is also planning to put up a Christmas tree in Groesfaen and would like to request a site visit with Elsbury and Cllr Mark Gibbings to plan the location of the tree. The lights in Deri, which LED is replacing, can be used on the new tree in Groesfaen.

UPDATE FROM THE OCTOBER 2024 MEETING:

- The Clerk is still waiting for a reply from Elsbury regarding the LED lights for the Groesfaen Christmas tree. Cllr Mark Gibbings has been looking at options for the tree in Groesfaen.
- The Clerk informed the Council that Rhymney Fire Station is unable to do 'Santa on a fire engine this year due to staff shortages.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:

The Clerk contacted Aberbargoed Fire Station to find out if they would consider visiting Fochriw and Deri with their Santa Sleigh instead. Cllr Mark Gibbings said if that's not a viable alternative, the Mountain Rescue Team may be able to organise something instead.

UPDATE FROM THE NOVEMBER 2024 MEETING:

- The Clerk is waiting for confirmation from Aberbargoed Fire Station regarding visits to the community centres in Deri and Fochriw on 3rd December (Santa on a sleigh). Once there is confirmation, posters and other activities will be organised.
- There won't be time to arrange lights for another Christmas tree in Groesfaen. This will be discussed again at the January 2025 meeting. The Clerk will obtain the costs for discussion and agreement thereafter.

UPDATE FROM THE DECEMBER 2024 MEETING:

- The feedback from the Santa on Sleigh events was exceptional. The Aberbargoed Fire Station and Police did an excellent job, as did the local community centres and Councillors. There was a big turnout, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Councillor Jan Gibbings said it was one of the best events they've ever had in Deri.
- ACTION: Councillors would like the clerk to thank Aberbargoed Fire Station formally.
- Councillor Eddy Blanche informed the Clerk that one of the lights in Fochriw, located by the shop, is not working. ACTION: The Clerk will inform Elsbury Platforms.
- Councillor Jan Gibbings also reported an issue with the Christmas tree lights in Deri, as he was informed that nothing could be fixed until after the adverse weather, and they are still erecting lights in other areas. Councillor Dennis Roberts believes this issue has been resolved, but Councillor Gibbings stated that a fault remains.
- Councillor Robert Chapman also reported an issue with the lights in Pentwyn (Fochriw end). ACTION: The Clerk will report to Elsbury.
- The clerk has designed the poster and tickets for the pantomimes. These were approved at the meeting: two large posters for both villages, as Cllr Duncan Johnson kindly offered to print for the schools, and most advertising is now done via social media.
- 180 tickets for Fochriw
- 120 tickets for Deri due to room size and fire regulations.
- There were issues with residents having tickets but not attending the previous year due to unforeseen circumstances, such as illness and weather.
- Councillor Chapman suggested asking for a £1 deposit, which will be returned at the pantomime. This will be discussed in January and considered for next year.
- Cllrs Dennis Roberts and David Nicholas will distribute the tickets in Deri.
(December 14th and 15th at Deri Community Centre).
- Cllrs Robert Chapman and Eddy Blanche will distribute tickets in Fochriw on Saturday.
- Cllrs Duncan and Tracey Johnson will distribute tickets in Fochriw on Sunday.
- There was a suggestion of distributing the tickets at the beginning of December next year.

UPDATE FROM THE JANUARY 2025 MEETING:

Pantomimes

- Cllr Robert Chapman recommended adding a warning re: strobe lighting to the pantomime tickets and posters.
- The pantomimes were a phenomenal success again. Community members commented on how expensive pantomimes are, and they wouldn't be able to afford to go without the free events provided by the community council.

- Cllr Dennis Roberts updated the Clerk on the number of tickets in line with fire regulations (100).

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

- The Clerk is to book the pantomimes for 2025 and ensure a warning re: strobe lighting is added to tickets and posters.
- Lights - Disappointment was expressed regarding the lights – WD24 wasn't working and requires a repair or replacement. The light by Groesfaen was also faulty.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

The Clerk is to contact the contractor, asking them to test and repair the item before returning it to storage. Ask them to advise regarding repair or replacement.

ACTIONS FROM THE FEBRUARY 2025 MEETING

Cllrs M Gibbings and R Chapman will contact Elsbury and arrange a site visit to discuss the above.

UPDATE FROM THE MARCH 2025 MEETING

Cllrs M Gibbings and R Chapman are in the process of arranging.

UPDATE FROM THE MAY 2025 MEETING

- This is currently on hold, as the contractor has received hospital treatment. The company will contact the Clerk when there is an update.
Pantomimes:
 - ❖ **The Little Mermaid on Saturday 20th December 1 pm at Deri Community Centre.**
 - ❖ **Snow White on Sunday 28th December at 4.30 pm at Fochriw Community Centre.**
- Councillors would like the pantomime tickets printed and ready by the beginning of December.

71.2 Potential closure of Deri Library

Councillors are highly concerned about the potential closure. The County Councillor (R Chapman) is in close discussions with Caerphilly CBC regarding this and will provide an update as soon as there is news. In the meantime, the other Councillors asked the Clerk to send a response from all Darran Valley Community Councillors expressing concern and objection to the proposal.

UPDATE FROM THE DECEMBER 2024 MEETING:

As mentioned above, Councillor Rob Chapman stated that the consultation on the potential closure of the Deri Library has now concluded, and a decision is expected sometime in January or February 2025.

UPDATE FROM THE JANUARY 2025 MEETING:

Cllr Chapman informed the council that there is no decision or update yet, as the consultation period has only just finished.

UPDATE FROM THE FEBRUARY 2025 MEETING

Cllr R Chapman noted it's in the second stage of the consultation period.

UPDATE FROM THE MARCH 2025 MEETING

Still no update.

UPDATE FROM THE APRIL 2025 MEETING

Still no update.

UPDATE FROM THE MAY 2025 MEETING

Still no update.

14 - To receive Community Council Correspondence

14.1 Wales Tidy's Local Places for Nature grants are BACK 🌸

Do something amazing for your school, community group, or organisation by letting nature move in and transform your unused space with a free garden pack.

Whether you want to:

🥕 Grow your own fruit and veg

🌸 Create a green community space

🦋 Support local wildlife and biodiversity

We've got a variety of packages to choose from! Visit our website to find out more and to apply:

👉 2,314 gardens transformed. More packs to give away! - Keep Wales Tidy

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

Councillors are interested and would like the Clerk to explore.

15 – Planning Applications

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act')

The Developments of National Significance (Wales) Regulations 2016 (as amended) ('the DNS Regulations')

The Developments of National Significance (Procedure) (Wales) Order 2016 (as amended) ('the DNS Procedure Order')

Application by: Convatec Limited

Site address: Land east of Gelli Gaer Common and northeast of Bryn Pyllog Tips

Proposed development: Construction of three wind turbines (of approximately 150m tip height) with a combined capacity of around 15MW, and approximately 5MW of ground mounted solar PV, plus associated infrastructure.

The above application has been submitted to the Welsh Ministers for examination.

16 – Darran Valley Community Council Crime Update

Two police representatives attended the meeting, and the following update was received.

Recorded Crime

| Ward | March 25' | April 25' | +/- |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Moriah | 59 | 49 | -10 |
| New Tredegar | 46 | 33 | -13 |
| Twyn Carno | 24 | 27 | +3 |
| Pontlottyn | 14 | 9 | -5 |
| Darren Valley | 9 | 23 | +14 |
| Total | 152 | 141 | -11 |

Community concerns or patterns to note.

Continuing problems with off-road bikes across the section, causing noise nuisance and damage to green areas. Due to increased patrols by PCSOs, intelligence reports from the community and regular operations with the Police drone, call demand has decreased.

Recorded ASB (Nuisance)

| Ward | March 25' | April 25' | +/- |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Moriah | 11 | 6 | -5 |
| New Tredegar | 8 | 8 | - |
| Twyn Carno | 3 | 5 | +2 |
| Pontlloftyn | 4 | 4 | - |
| Darren Valley | 2 | 10 | +8 |
| Total | 28 | 33 | +5 |

Increase in number of ASB and crimes linked to current community tensions in Hillside, Fochriw. Inspector Thompson has provided updates to Nick Smith MP, Dawn Bowden MS and provided a general update to Councillors at the Police Inspector Surgery on 24.04.25.

Guidance has also been provided on the management of Registered Sexual Offenders in the community to provide reassurance as to how robustly policed Sexual Harm Prevention Orders are within the community through a dedicated Management of Sexual Offender and Violent Offender (MOSOVO) Team.

Inspector Thompson is keen to stress that individual cases, individual SHPO's and compliance cannot be discussed due to restrictions of GDPR.

It is hoped that the situation settles as soon as possible without the need for any further enforcement action or arrest.

Inspector Thompson will continue to meet with community representative to discuss any concerns.

Targeted Activity

At the beginning of the month the Neighbourhood Team, supported by the Roads Policing Team, conducted a traffic operation across Rhymney, Abertysswg and Pontlloftyn to deal with the on-going issues around off-road vehicles/bikes.

During the operation a Quad bike was seized by Officers and the rider was reported for driving with no insurance, and without due care and attention. A further two vehicles were seized on suspicion of being used in the commission of crime. Most of the seizures will result in the vehicles not being returned and ultimately crushed.

Due to the success of the operation further operations of this nature are planned for the future.

Unfortunately, a number of our recent operations have been cancelled as staff have been redeployed to the protests in Fochriw and therefore unable to respond to the reports of persons on the off-road bikes and quads.

Engaged Communities

CO430 attended Deri Community Centre for an over 55s group where she discussed crime prevention and signed 45 residents up to Smartwater.

17 – Community Council Payments

There were none.

18 – Declarations of interest

These were updated for those Councillors in attendance.

- Cllr Mark Gibbings – Member of SARDA South Wales.
- Cllr Jan Gibbings – Booking Officer for Deri Community Centre, Equipment Officer for SARDA South Wales, Member of the Darran Valley History Group and Treasurer of the Deri Pilates Group.
- Cllr Duncan Johnson – Treasurer of Fochriw Community Centre and Fochriw Primary School Caretaker.
- Cllr Tracey Johnson – member of the ‘Fruity Fridays’ Club and Governor of Fochriw Primary School.
- Cllr Rob Chapman – Governor of Fochriw and Deri Primary Schools, Chairperson for Fochriw Community Centre and the County Councillor for Darran Valley. **To be checked as not in attendance.**
- Cllr Dennis Roberts – Chairperson for Deri Community Centre and a member of Darran Valley History Group.
- Cllr David Nicholas – Committee member of Deri Community Centre. **To be checked as not in attendance.**
- Cllr Eddy Blanche – None to declare.
- Cllr Jill Roberts – Member of Deri Regeneration Group and Darran Valley History Group.

19 – Councillors processes, including appointment of new Councillors, training and meeting etiquette

A discussion was held to enhance the robustness of current procedures, and the following actions were agreed upon:

- **Councillor Recruitment:**
All new Councillors will be required to submit a curriculum vitae and attend a formal interview. A standard set of interview questions will be developed, including prompts such as, “What will you bring to the Council?”
- **Mandatory Induction Training:**
From May 2025 onwards, all newly appointed Councillors must complete both the Code of Conduct and New Councillor Induction Training within three months of their appointment. This requirement will be clearly communicated during the interview process.
- **Chairperson Training Requirement:**
Any Councillor wishing to stand for the role of Chairperson must complete Chairperson training if they have not already done so. This training must be completed within three months of assuming the role.
- **Inclusive Decision-Making:**
The Clerk recommended that the Chairperson actively seek input from quieter Councillors during discussions and voting on significant matters, to ensure all voices are heard.
- **Conduct of Married Councillors:**
It was agreed that married Councillors must act independently in their roles, making decisions and expressing views as individual members of the Council.

20 – Appointment of a Chairperson for the ensuing year

Councillor Duncan Johnson was voted Chairperson for 2025-26.

21 – Appointment of Vice-Chairperson for the ensuing year

Councillor Janet Gibbings was voted Vice-Chairperson for 2025-26.

22 – To determine the Council's representatives to the various bodies for 2025-26

- Caerphilly CBC & CC Liaison Sub-Committee x1 will be Cllr Robert Chapman.
- Town & Community Councils Liaison Committee x2 will be Cllrs Mark Gibbings and Robert Chapman.

23 – Community Council Budget update 2025-26

| Darran Valley Expenditure 2025-26 | Budget |
|---|---|
| Clerks Salary & on costs | 5,079.36 – due to minimum wage increase |
| Chairpersons allowance | 300 |
| Out of office | 250 |
| Telephone & broadband | 250 |
| Room hire | 200 |
| Insurance & subscriptions | 487.36 |
| One Voice Wales membership | 477 |
| Stationery & postage | 272 |
| Website hosting & maintenance | 200 |
| Section 19 - 137 grants | 2,000 |
| Wind Turbine Grants | 2,200 – tell GAVO to hold until news on Deri Library. |
| Section 137 – OAP trip | 1,800 – hold until news on Deri Library. |
| Christmas lighting / pantomimes / Santa on a sleigh | 2,500 |
| Audit | 500 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Cllr expenses / allowance | 1,350 |
| Town & Community Councils Meeting | 100 |
| Summer scheme | 7,262.40 |
| ICO Data protection | 35 |
| Remembrance Sunday | 100 |
| Deri Library Costs (estimated) | 4,500 |
| VE Day | 1,000 |
| Estimated Councillor training costs | 860 |

Some budget items were put on hold until there is news regarding the library, in case there are extra costs incurred than anticipated. These are indicated in the table above.

24 – Chairperson and Councillors payments to cover expenses 2025-26

£300 will be paid to Cllr D Johnson.

£150 will be paid to Cllrs M Gibbings, J Gibbings, E Blanche, D Roberts, J Roberts and T Johnson.

Cllr D Nicholas and R Chapman were not in attendance to decide whether to take expense payment.

25 – Appointment of Independent Auditor for financial period 2024-25

Council voted to continue with Harris Bassett Accountants.

26 – Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday, 5th June 2025, at 6.30 pm (Deri Library).