



Minutes of the meeting of Darran Valley Community Council on
Thursday, 8th January 2026, at 6.30 pm
Meeting held online due to weather

Attendance

Present

Cllr E Blanche
Cllr R Chapman
Cllr J Gibbings
Cllr M Gibbings
Cllr D Johnson (Chair)
Cllr T Johnson
Cllr D Nicholas
Cllr D Roberts
Cllr J Roberts

Absent - none

Apologies – none

In Attendance

Ms. A Pallister (Clerk)

86 - Members of the public

No members of the public attended.

87 - Declarations of interest

There were none.

88 - To approve and confirm the December 2025 minutes of the meeting

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

89 – Matters arising from the December 2025 meeting

52 – Library Closures

At the last meeting there was some uncertainty around the legal challenge of the Deri library closure. Cllr R Chapman clarified an appeal is in progress; and the library remains open. However, there are staffing shortages caused by staff moving to other roles.

December 2025 meeting – no update to report.

January 2026 meeting - no update yet on the library legal challenge

90 -To receive Community Council Correspondence

90.1. Invitation to Nominate a Councillor for the King's Garden Party (2026)

What the Council Received

Clerk reported receiving an email from the County Council inviting Darran Valley Community Council to nominate one councillor (plus a guest) to attend the King's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

Available Dates

Councillors could be nominated for any of the following:

- Wednesday 6 May
- Friday 8 May
- Tuesday 12 May

The Council must submit a nomination by 13 February 2026.

Discussion & Nominations

- Clerk stressed that nominees must consent — no “surprise” nominations.
- The following councillors expressed interest:
 - Cllr Eddy Blanche
 - Cllr Duncan Johnson and Cllr Tracey Johnson jointly (shared interest)

Decision Method

Due to multiple candidates, councillors agreed to use a coin toss:

- Heads = Cllr Eddy Blanche
- Tails = Cllr Duncan Johnson and Cllr Tracey Johnson

The coin landed on Heads, meaning Cllr Eddy Blanche was selected.

Outcome

- Cllr Eddy Blanche will be put forward as the Council's nominee.
- Final attendance depends on selection through the ballot.

90.2. EPR “Cleaner and Greener” Initiative – Community Cleansing Visit

Summary of the Letter Received

The Council received official notice that, under the EPR Cleaner and Greener Initiative, a dedicated Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) Community Cleansing Team would be deployed in the Darran Valley area during the week beginning 12 January 2026.

What the County Council Requested

Councillors were asked to identify and submit a prioritised list of areas needing additional cleansing, with guidance that:

- Only CCBC-owned land qualifies.
- Fly-tipping cases must be reported directly to Environmental Health, not listed for the cleansing team.

Councillor Suggestions & Discussion

- Cllr Jan Gibbings suggested the main road corridors are consistently litter-prone:
 - Pentwyn → Parc Cwm Darran
 - Parc Cwm Darren → Fochriw
 - Deri → Crosshands

People frequently throw rubbish from cars along these stretches.
- Question raised about whether country parks fall within CCBC cleansing responsibility (uncertain).
- Cllr Duncan Johnson proposed checking with Cllr Rob Chapman (County Councillor) for additional local hotspots.

- Clerk asked councillors to email or text her after the meeting with further suggestions.

Outcome

Clerk will collate and submit the prioritised list to CCBC ahead of the cleansing team's visit.

90. 3. One Voice Wales – Annual General Meeting (AGM) Representative Needed

Correspondence Received

- One Voice Wales (the national body for community councils) invited Darran Valley Community Council to send one representative to their Online AGM.
- Meeting details:
 - Wednesday 21 January
 - 6:00 – 8:00 pm
 - Held via Zoom

Discussion & Outcome

- Clerk requested a volunteer, noting that councillors may have missed the earlier email due to the Christmas period.
- Cllr Duncan Johnson (Chair) volunteered to attend, stating that, as chair, he would take responsibility for representing the Council.
- Clerk will notify One Voice Wales of his attendance.

91 - Planning Applications

During the meeting, the Planning Applications item covered **three main points**:

1. No New Applications Received via the Planning Portal

Clerk confirmed that she had:

- Checked the Caerphilly County Borough Council planning portal thoroughly.
- Received **no new emails or notifications** regarding applications in the Darran Valley area.
- Concluded that planning activity was "**very quiet**", which was expected due to the Christmas period.

This means **no formal applications** requiring discussion or comment were brought forward through official channels.

2. Planning Application Raised Informally – Extension of Use at the Disposal Point

Although nothing came via the portal, Cllr **Eddy Blanche** raised an application he was aware of:

What was reported

- A planning application had been submitted relating to the **Cwmbargoed Disposal Point**
- The application involved an **extension of use** of the site.
- Cllr Eddy Blanche believed it concerned:
 - Keeping the **wash plant** running,
 - For up to five more years.

Initial Confusion About Jurisdiction

- Cllr Duncan Johnson initially thought this might fall under **Merthyr Council**, not Caerphilly.
- Cllr Eddy Blanche clarified that the disposal point **is within Caerphilly**, and the planning application is with Caerphilly County Borough Council.

3. Clarification from County Councillor Robert Chapman

Later in the meeting, when Cllr. Chapman joined, he was asked for clarification.

Cllr. Chapman's Update

He confirmed:

- He had already queried the application with the Planning Department.
- The application is not related to coal extraction.
- The purpose is solely to allow extended time for reclamation and tidying up of the site.
- The work is taking longer than originally planned, hence the request for an extension.

92 - Darran Valley Community Council Crime Update

Police Officer were unable to attend but kindly submitted a written crime report.

1. Overall Crime Levels

The police report covered crime recorded in **December 2025** and highlighted a **significant reduction** in incidents compared to the previous month:

- **November 2025:** 12 recorded crimes
- **December 2025:** 3 recorded crimes
- **Change:** 9 fewer crimes, indicating a **substantial month-on-month decrease**.

This was viewed positively by councillors, who noted the quiet nature of the period.

2. Antisocial Behaviour (ASB)

- The police reported **zero ASB incidents** in the Darran Valley during December.
- This included:
 - No youth disorder
 - No neighbour disputes
 - No noise complaints
 - No public disorder reports

This is a strong indicator of community stability during the festive period.

3. Police Activity & Targeted Operations

The Neighbourhood Policing Team undertook several activities in December based on community intelligence.

3.1 Drug Enforcement Activity

- Officers conducted **two drug warrants** during December.
- These were described as being supported by **community-supplied intelligence**.
- The warrants resulted in:
 - **Class A drugs seized**
 - **Devices and cash confiscated**

 The report noted that these particular warrants **took place in the Rumney area**, not within Darran Valley itself.

They were included because they formed part of wider regional operations.

3.2 Other Targeted Policing

- No Darran Valley-specific operations of concern were highlighted.

4. Police Involvement in Community Events

The report also acknowledged police attendance at several community events:

4.1 Attendance at the Darran Valley Community Council Santa Event

- Officers joined the Christmas Santa event organised by the Community Council.
- The policing team included a few **photographs of the event** in their report.

4.2 Support for Holiday Engagement

- Their presence at events contributed to community reassurance and visibility.
- Councillors did not raise concerns about police involvement.

5. Missing Issues or No Additional Concerns

- The police report **did not identify any significant incidents**, worrying trends, or patterns of note.
- Councillors were invited to raise any crime they were aware of:
 - No new issues were brought to the meeting.

Optional: Extra Notes Not Included in the Official Police Report

Several residents had informally reported **car thefts** in the weeks leading up to the meeting:

- A Range Rover taken from the top of the village.
- Two other cars reportedly stolen.

These incidents **were not** in the December report because:

- They occurred **after the report period**.
- They will likely appear in the **next month's** figures.

These reports triggered a discussion later in the meeting about CCTV and enforcement options.

93 - Community Council Payments

Item	Cost
Elsbury Access Platforms	£593.52
Extra Figurines	£372
]Total	£965.52

94 – Review of 2026 Christmas Events

1. Pantomimes

General Feedback

Across the three villages, the pantomime programme was considered a **strong success**, with very positive feedback from families. Councillors described the events as “excellent” and noted that children and parents clearly enjoyed the performances.

Distribution of Tickets

There were **notable differences** in how successful the ticket distribution was across villages:

Deri & Pentwyn

- Initial weekend distribution was very slow due to **heavy rain**, meaning only around *60 tickets* were issued on the Saturday.
- Councillors then canvassed locally, knocking on doors and speaking to families at the Santa Party to ensure residents were aware of the pantomime.
- This resulted in a **full house** on the day — only *around 5–6 tickets* were returned, and a few extra families were accommodated on the door.

Fochriw

- Tickets were fully allocated, but approximately **47 people failed to attend**, despite having collected tickets.
- This resulted in an actual attendance of **around 130 out of the 180 seats**, lower than expected.
- Fochriw residents fed back that they **prefer pantomimes between Christmas and New Year**.

Year, as families value having an activity during the quiet period.

Issues Identified

- Some residents were picking up **tickets on behalf of others** but not passing them on.
 - Those unused tickets were handed back on the night, making planning difficult.
- Councillors agreed this needs to be reviewed when ticketing is discussed later in the year (around September).

Changes Proposed for 2026

Deri & Pentwyn prefer:

- One ticket-pickup day only (Saturday rather than Saturday + Sunday).
- Earlier scheduling (pre-Christmas).

Fochriw prefers:

- A pantomime **between Christmas and New Year**.

For 2026:

- Deri/Pentwyn selected **Sleeping Beauty**, Sunday **20 December** (evening).
- Fochriw selected **Peter Pan**, with Amanda seeking additional post-Christmas dates.

2. Santa & Sleigh Events

Overall Impression

The Santa events were described as **chaotic in the best possible way**, full of energy and excitement, with a special highlight being the comedic “Grinch” interactions that the children loved.

Fire Service Involvement

The **Fire Service** team delivered a standout contribution:

- Engaged brilliantly with children.
- Allowed supervised access to the fire engine.
- Created memorable moments such as “locking up” the Grinch and playful water-spraying (which the children loved, though councillors weren’t sure if it was *technically* permitted!).

Councillors strongly praised the fire crew, calling them **amazing**, committed, and enthusiastic.

Police Involvement

Police also held a smaller event, but attendance was **much lower** due to:

- Very short notice.
- Poor weather.

Feedback was shared with the police, who intend to **give more notice next year** to increase participation.

3. Selection Boxes

- Councillors felt the number ordered was **just enough**, but only because:
 - Some were provided to police for their event.
 - Distribution was carefully managed toward the end.
- In both Deri and Fochriw, the supply was “**touch and go**”, with councillors agreeing that **numbers should be increased next year** to prevent shortfalls.

4. Community Feedback

- Families strongly appreciated:

- The timing and accessibility of events.
- The sense of tradition and the festive “buzz”.
- Free activities during a financially difficult period.
- Councillors noted that such community events are becoming **even more important** given the cost-of-living pressures families face. This informed the decision to **maintain or increase** the scale of events for 2026, supported by the agreed precept rise.

95 – Precept Decision 2026-27

During the January 2026 Darran Valley Community Council meeting, councillors discussed whether to keep the precept at **£17,000** or increase it. After reviewing the budget pressures for the coming year, **the council unanimously voted to increase the precept to £20,000**

1. Why the increase was proposed

The Clerk/Proper Officer had reviewed the finances and identified several pressures:

Rising costs

- **Pantomimes have become more expensive** – rising from approx. £723–£750 to **£850** each.
- **Summer scheme costs increased**, partly due to rises in **national insurance, minimum wage**, and staffing costs.
- Other community events have also increased in cost.

No financial cushion left

After covering:

- Two pantomimes
- Summer schemes
- Christmas events

... the council is “down to the wire”. There was **no contingency money** left at all.

This means if anything unexpected happened, the council would have **no reserves** to fall back on.

Community expectations

The council agreed that residents have come to rely on:

- Pantomimes
- Christmas events
- Summer schemes

... and they did *not* want to cut these.

Cllr Jan Gibbings particularly argued that when times are hard, the council should **do more, not less**, to support the community.

2. What the increase means for households

The precept rise is **£3,000 in total** for the year across the whole Darran Valley area.

The Clerk calculated that for a **Band D property**, the increase would be:

→ **About 25p extra per month**

(or **£2.50 per year**)

3. The final decision

After discussion, the council held a vote.

✓ **All councillors present voted YES**

The vote was **unanimous**.

The clerk will now inform Caerphilly CBC before the January deadline.

4. Summary in one sentence

The council increased the precept from £17,000 to £20,000 to keep community events running and cover rising costs, costing households roughly **25p more per month**

96 - CCTV in Deri

- Residents requested CCTV due to recent vehicle thefts.
- CCTV installation and monitoring are County Council responsibilities, not Community Council duties.
- Previous CCTV in the same area was removed due to low activity and high operational cost.
- Community Council cannot fund CCTV equipment or monitoring.
- County Cllr. Chapman to:
 - Raise concerns with CCBC.
 - Request mobile CCTV van deployment.
- Cllr Jan Gibbings will advise residents to contact County Council, not the Community Council.

97 - Storage of Darran Valley Community Council files at Parc Cwm Darran

Cllr Mark Gibbings informed members of an urgent issue regarding the current storage of the Community Council's archived documents. The new operator of the visitor centre and campsite (is clearing the building as she prepares to take over management and undertake alterations. As part of this, she has advised that the Community Council's files, which have been stored in the Ogilvie Room, must be removed as soon as possible.

It was noted that the stored materials include multiple steel filing cabinets containing historic documentation such as planning applications, minutes, grant information, correspondence and financial records accumulated over many years—considerably predating several current members' terms of office. Many of the cabinets no longer have working keys, raising concerns over security and transport. The Clerk emphasised that it would not be appropriate or GDPR-compliant to relocate confidential documents to her home address, and that the Community Council currently has no dedicated premises following the loss of the Park Cwm Darren office space. Members highlighted the need for a secure, long-term, and legally compliant storage solution.

Cllr. Mark suggested that storage might be possible within the Bargoed archives area, currently used by Countryside Services, Bereavement Services and Electoral Services. The Clerk additionally referenced the Local Government Act 1972, which places a duty on the principal authority to provide a proper depository where a Community Council has no suitable place of its own.

Members further discussed the need to review the archived material, as retention requirements vary:

- Minutes – permanent record
- Financial records – 6 years plus current year
- Planning applications – 5 years or until completion
- General correspondence – 1 to 3 years

This indicates that a substantial proportion of the historical paperwork may now be eligible for secure disposal, reducing ongoing storage needs.

RESOLVED:

1. Cllr. Robert Chapman will make enquiries with Caerphilly County Borough Council regarding suitable secure storage provision, including possible use of Bargoed archives.
2. Once a location is identified, members may need to organise a joint session to review, categorise and securely dispose of non-retained documents.
3. The Clerk offered to take leave from her main employment, with notice, to assist in the sorting and transfer process.
4. The matter will be brought back to Council once further information is received.

98 - Date of the next meeting

- The next meeting will be on Thursday, 5th February 2026, at 6.30 pm (Deri Library or Teams).