

This year has been another sad one for the Community Council with the loss of our Chairperson, David Harris.

David had supported this council as Chair for many years, but also supporting the community via other groups and organisations.

I was very fortunate to gain from David's wisdom and experience as Chair and will be ever grateful for his support. David was a very special person to which I personally found to be a great sense of sounding. He will be greatly missed.

I thank Councillor Harris for taking on the role of vice Chairman after David's passing.

This year has proved to be a difficult one in terms of our interface and challenging of Monmouthshire County Council (MCC). We are all aware of the challenging times and that cutbacks must be made but with rising Council Tax, we believe the community should still be provided with a level of service one should reasonably expect.

I would like to thank Cllr Sylia Stevens, Cllr Gareth Page and Cllr Jayne Harris for their support in the last year.

This year we have been fortunate to fill the vacant positions within the committee recruiting replacement Councillors for both Mounton and Pwllmeyric

Welcome Cllr David Carne for Mounton, Cllr John McConnachie for Pwllmeyric and Cllr Andrew Crossley for Mathern, I welcome you all to the community council and I look forward to working with you in the interests of the community.

Communication appears to be an ongoing matter with MCC shutting down established communication routes in 2023/24 and still not putting in place alternatives. If only life were so simple!

This has in particular made it difficult for us to be aware of Planning and Enforcement issues with no feedback from MCC on any matters reported by a member of the public or us. We continue to challenge MCC on these matters.

We have also been pressing MCC on longer term issues such as the flooding under the motorway bridge in Mathern and the rebuilding of the pedestrian bridge crossing Mounton Brook by the lakes.

On the former we are pressing for an agreed emergency plan with MCC in the absence of MCC enforcing or maintaining road clearing standards. On the latter we are seeking a shorter-term solution in the absence of capital funding.

2024/25 has been a challenging year for the community council to get a number of initiatives actioned by MCC and to ensure the villages are to the highest standard expected. We will continue to push MCC in 2025 to get these issues resolved.

We have seen a challenge with the police reporting process in 2024 due to a change in personnel at Gwent Police Force, something we are working with the force to resolve.

I would like to wish PC Andrew Jones all the best for retirement and thank him for his services to our community as a PCSO.

Our finances remain in good order and have been passed by Wales Audit as such.

This current year sees us engaging further on the development of the Replacement Local Development Plan. This has now been changed to low growth plan (as supported by Welsh Government) but does present risks to our villages and their unique environments. We will continue to study the plan and hopefully hold an open session in Mathern to inform residents on proposals and the process of approval.

We will also continue to make representations at the Welsh Water meetings in relation to the failing water drainage system from Shirenewton to Mathern and continue to push for an acceptable resolution to this issue.

It would be remiss of me to not thank Jane Kelley our Clerk for her help, support and guidance to all Councillors during the past year, particularly following the loss of her brother David. Jane's professional and proactive support is really appreciated by all, and she is a great ambassador for our Council.

I would like to thank County Councillor Louise Brown for all her hard work looking after the interests of the community at County Council level. We have worked collaboratively with Councillor Brown, who has worked tirelessly hard to pursue matters with us and has been a tremendous support throughout.

All within the Community have enjoyed the respectful way in which the War Memorial has been lovingly presented and cared for, and I must thank Chris and Carol Wheeler for their continued hard work and dedication to this valuable and respected memorial.

I look forward to 2025-26 and working with my fellow Councillors, ensuring we protect, support and enhance our community as best we can.

Regards

Matt

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