



**Minutes of Full Council held at 6:30pm on 29 June 2026 at the Caldicot Town Council Building, Sandy Lane, Caldicot NP26 4NA**

**Present:** Cllr IR Shillabeer – Mayor  
Cllr P Strong – Deputy Mayor  
Cllr M Mitchell – Assistant Deputy Mayor  
Cllr B Barrett  
Cllr J Harris  
Cllr RJ Higginson  
Cllr C Jones  
Cllr A McIntyre  
Cllr G McIntyre  
Cllr M Peters

**Also present:** Alice Vaughan Locum Town Clerk

County Councillor and Members of the Public x 10

**1 Welcome**

Confirmation of hybrid participation and reminder about the recording policy.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2 Apologies for Absence**

**RESOLVED** to receive apologies for absence from Cllr Cochrane, Cllr Owen, Cllr Mayo, Cllr Rowberry and Cllr Lewis

**3 Declarations of Interest - None**

**4. Public Question Time and Participation**

**i) Flag Poles**

- Member of the public requested replacement of torn/tattered flags as a sign of respect. Council agreed to look into this.

**ii) Allotments – Tap Work and Safety**

- Complaint about unfinished work at allotment taps (metal spike left exposed).
- Contractor stated ground was too hard to complete work quickly; council staff to inspect (referenced plot 11).
- Ongoing work at Sandy Lane, Council staff to follow up.

### iii) Finance Committee Activity

- Query why finance committee meetings were not held. Council noted none had taken place and stated this was due to staff shortages; challenged by a County Councillor that in December 2024 staffing was at full complement.

### iv) Auditing Issues and Qualified Audit Opinion

- Detailed questions regarding the council's appointment of IAC Audit and Consultancy Limited and whether mandated reviews had been undertaken (answer: will follow up).
- Query on internal auditor's recommendations:
  - Former Clerk's CILCA qualification (status unclear)
  - Recommendations on level of detail in financial payments
  - Absence of finance committee meetings broadly acknowledged.

## 5. External Audit from Audit Wales 2024-2025

The External Audit report for the financial year 2024-2025 by Wales Audit Office has been completed and received by Council.

A qualified audit - qualified opinion indicates there are issues to address and there is a need to improve.

### Section-by-Section Review of Audit Wales Qualifications

- **Annual Governance Statement:** Noted discrepancies—minutes indicated 'no' but annual return signed 'yes' for Statement 3, leading to audit comment.
- **Assertion 4 (VAT Compliance Issues):**
  - Council had not submitted timely VAT information to HMRC; incurred penalty points.
  - £32,352.50 in VAT to be reclaimed for 2025/26 (from Edge software report) could be in a similar situation in the previous year; action being taken to remedy and claim quarterly or biannually going forward.
  - Consensus that missed finance committee meetings contributed to lack of oversight on this issue.
- **Assertion 4 (Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015):**
  - Council failed to publish a required annual report on how activities contributed to area well-being objectives - needs urgent attention for future compliance.
- **Assertion 9 (Public Inspection):**
  - Did not provide the required 20 working day inspection period for public; dates on notice of inspection were incorrect or not properly published.
- **Other Recommendations (Professional Conduct and Documentation Issues):**
  - Need for discipline/professionalism in meetings—recent tension and interruptions noted.
  - Typographical errors in accounting statements; need to improve arithmetic accuracy.
  - Audit notice requirements for public inspection not always met; clearer timelines and compliance needed.
  - No fees to be charged for access to annual report return printouts for 2024-2025 External Audit, copies will be provided for free this year.

Audit Report and Conclusion of audit will be put on website and noticeboards.

## 6. Internal Audit & Annual Governance and Accounts Return-Year Ending 31 March 2026

- i) To receive Internal Audit Report from IAC Audit and Consultancy Ltd and consider any recommendations

### Internal Audit and Implementation of Recommendations Toolkit and Compliance with Annual Governance Statement

- Discussion led by Cllr Barrett on details of the Toolkit, code references (e.g., A1, B5, D2) and widespread non-compliance:
  - No vision/purpose statement, biodiversity plan, annual report, community engagement strategy or up-to-date policies in place.
  - Council's electronic publication of information is incomplete/out-of-date.
  - Training records and code of conduct compliance are not current or fully documented.
- Agreement that all relevant 'yes/no' questions on the annual governance statement must be voted on, with agreed supporting reasons - All 'No' due to lack of compliance.

### Standing Orders, Internal Control Policy and Risk Register

- Standing orders due for update in line with new One Voice Wales guidance by September 2026.
- No current risk registers in place; Health & Safety committee scheduled for July 9th to begin this work.
  - Discussion of need for competent (internal or external) health & safety advice.
  - Recent actions (e.g., equipment replacement in children's play park) cited as responses to H&S risks.
- Absence of formal documented internal controls; council to implement a new policy and regular reviews.
- Reserves and earmarked funds to be clarified and regularly reviewed with breakdowns to be shared in meetings.

### Finance Management and Transparency

- Past failure to hold finance committee meetings acknowledged; moving forward, monthly financial reporting and checklists will be mandatory and attached to Full Town Council meeting agenda for approval.
  - Retrospective approval for payments from April to July; ongoing regular (smaller) monthly lists thereafter.
- **Approved:** Monthly finance sheets to council which will be attached to the minutes and published for transparency and compliance with regulations.
- **Finance Committee Structure:** Suggestion to dissolve committee and bring finance oversight into full council.

## Staffing, Training, Delegation, and Record-Keeping

- **Increases in Staffing Costs:** Staffing costs increased. Attributed to additional hours, pay inflation, revised roles (including building facilitator) and settlement payment.
  - Concerns expressed about value and oversight, especially given previous absence of regular finance meetings.
- **Personnel Committee Accountability:** Discussion over the confidentiality of committee proceedings, discussions where responsibility rests within council.
- **Record-Keeping Issues:**
  - Missing or incomplete documentation for several areas (members' allowances, contracts, legal compliance, risk, policies).
  - Bank reconciliation: Quarterly/Biannual independent checks to be implemented.
  - No current formal trustee meetings (George V playing fields); plans to hold at least one per year and record minutes separately.

**Resolved:** To adopt the Internal Audits section of the Annual Return. Council reviewed the recommendations above and agreed actions, which will be sent to the auditor.

ii) To receive Annual Accounts return for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

**Resolved:** To adopt the Annual Accounts Return for the year ended 31 March 2026.

iii) To consider Annual Governance Statement (Parts 1/2) of Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

- Systematic review and vote on all points with all of answers 'No' for non-compliance, accompanied by documented rationales, e.g.:
  - No formal vision, annual reports, engagement policies or biodiversity plan.
  - Insufficient training plan and records.
  - Website and public document publication out of date or missing.
  - Lapses in legal/regulatory financial management, inspection periods.
  - Deficiencies in risk management, data protection, IT, continuity and documented controls.
  - Absence of evidence of appropriate action on past audit recommendations.
  - Council cannot yet adopt the general power of competence due to governance history, lack of fully qualified and CILCA-certified clerk (locum Clerk is CILCA qualified) and not enough elected members.
- Additional disclosures highlight lack of section 137 payment reporting (to be rectified in records for 26/27).
- Statement for auditor: Council accepts responsibility, acknowledges code of conduct issues and recognises staff issues as factors in non-compliance.

**Cllr Mitchell** requested that the Council's appreciation of former Clerk be recorded in the minutes, noting that this meeting illustrated the level of stress experienced.

**Resolved:** To adopt the Annual Governance statement (Parts1/2). Council reviewed and agreed each action.

iv) To approve Annual Accounts, Return and Annual Governance Statement for submission to Wales Audit Office

**Resolved:** To approve the Annual Account Return and Annual Governance Statement for submission to Wales Audit Office.

v) Chair to sign the Annual Return and Annual Governance Statement.  
**Resolved:** Chair signed the Annual Accounts Return and Annual Governance statement.

vi) Notice of appointment of the date for the exercise of electors' rights  
15 July 2026 to 11 August 2026  
(not - 6 July 2026 - 31 July 2026 as stated on agenda, 14 days' notice needs to be given)

**Approved:** Clerk to put on website and noticeboards

Cllr R J Higginson left meeting 8:33pm

## 7. Date of Next Meeting (s)

**Health & Safety Committee:** 9 July 2026.

**Personal Committee:** 10 July 2026

**Full Town Council (P& R):** 14 July 2026

**Extraordinary Meeting of Council:** 21 July 2026

**Full Council Meeting:** 29 July 2026

## 8. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS - NONE

**RECOMMENDED** That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded, and they are instructed to withdraw, due to the nature of the business about to be transacted which is considered to be prejudicial to the public interest.

### COMMITTEE IN PRIVATE SESSION

Meeting ended at 8:38 pm

Signed ..... Date .....

Mayor/Chair