

**MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH
COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 25 February 2026 at 7.00 pm in the
Council Chamber at Council Offices, Mitre street, Abertillery.**

PRESENT

Councillors: Josh Rawcliffe (Chair), Lucy Harmer (Vice Chair), Frankie Baker, Steve Bard, Ivor Beynon, Richard Catlin, Ralph Henderson MBE, Chris Hill, Mark Lewis (via video-link), Bruno Góes Maciel, Ben Owen-Jones (via video-link), Barrie Page, Rob Phillips, Nick Simmons, and Mike Whatley

Absent: Peter Adamson, Tracey Dyson, Bernard Wall, Graham White, Riley Overton (Youth Rep) and Jackson Powell (Youth Rep)

Officers: Steve Edwards (Clerk) and Molly Jones (Deputy Clerk)

Others: Elle Brooks and Gareth Owen from Cartref Hydrogen Homes. Chris Ashman (Blueprint for Growth).

161. Apologies for Absence

Peter Adamson, Tracey Dyson, Riley Overton and Bernard Wall.

162. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Steve Bard agenda item 9 as he is a conductor for the choir – Grant request for Abertillery Orpheus Choir

Ivor Beynon agenda item 9 as he is a member of the church – Grant request for Ebenezer Baptist Church.

163. Minutes 17 December 2025 and 28 January 2026

Council **RESOLVED** to accept one amendment for the minutes of 17 December 2025, second page Brune Goes Maciel paragraph “abonnement” should be “abandonment”

Council **RESOLVED** that with the amendment the minutes for 17 December 2025 were a true and correct record.

Council **RESOLVED** that minutes for 28 January 2026 were a true and correct record.

164. Public Questions

There were no public questions.

Chris Ashman joined the meeting at 7:11.

165. Presentation from Elle Brooks and Gareth Owen - Cartref Hydrogen Homes

Elle Brooks gave some background to the project, converting a house in Six Bells from Natural Gas to 100% Hydrogen. The project is a UK first, exploring how hydrogen – a cleaner, greener energy source – could be used to heat our homes in the future. The project looks at how existing homes can be easily retrofitted with appliances powered by 100% hydrogen, with minimal cost and disruption. The house had a fabric retrofit (doors, windows, insulation) first before the conversion. The house is owned by CODI Housing Association and had previously been a void property.

There had been Community Engagement throughout 2024 before any conversion work had been carried out. The conversion work was completed in 2025, and community engagement has continued into 2026. This project has been funded by Welsh Governments Optimised Retrofit Programme (ORP 2.2.) as a test and learn project.

The Hydrogen is turned off from the house overnight due to the way the policies and procedures have been written. There are some storage tanks in place in Ashtree Terrace next to the house. Noone is living there as it is a 12-month unoccupied trial and is being used as a drop-in centre/education hub. At the end of the project the house will be converted back to Natural Gas and returned to Codi to rent out. There is an invite to Councillors to visit. The scheme is also testing various amount of pressure used and pipe diameters. The house is open to the public for visits, and these can be booked via the Cartrefi Hydrogen Homes email address ch2h@cartrefihydrogenhomes.cymru.

The main benefits for replacing Natural Gas with Hydrogen is that it is a cleaner alternative, and the only product of combustion when burnt is water vapour. Therefore, we are not using fossil fuels to heat our homes. The majority of Councillors thought this was a good scheme. At this point in time, it is expensive to produce hydrogen as there is little demand, it will be 20 to 30 years before a hydrogen rollout is complete on a national scale and at that point it is expected that the costs of Hydrogen will be equivalent to Natural Gas.

However, there were a couple of issues raised.

Bruno Góes Maciel was concerned about the safety of using Hydrogen

Mike Whatley was concerned about the material used in the production of the Hydrogen and the ethics of using the material from China.

Elle Brooks and Gareth Owen left the meeting at 7:35..

166. Presentation from Chris Ashman – Blueprint for Growth

Chris Ashman is an independent consultant who has been hired by Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Borough Councils to produce a report about a "Blueprint for inclusive and sustainable growth" in the federated Councils area. This will enable the two Councils to punch their combined weight at a regional level. It is a high level report that will show the direction of travel.

He showed that Blaenau Gwent is near the bottom, ranked 361 out of 362 in 2023, of a UK Competitiveness League (A Composite measure about economic activity, business start-ups, qualifications employment and pay rates among other things).

The Blueprint focuses on three issues, and is also looking at Place Planning, with some strategic objectives about growing tech industry through a vision of a Tech Valleys Growth Corridor, and establishing a better tourism economy.

This will involve creating thriving town centres, with high quality homes, evolving pathways into good work and delivering an interconnected metro system.

There are three main areas. Business and Employment Growth, Infrastructure and Investment and People and Skills, using a "honey-pot" approach across the 7 towns (Pontypool, Cwmbran, Ebbw Vale, Abertillery, Blaenavon, Tredegar and Brynmawr/Nantyglo). The key areas for Abertillery are being an Enterprise Centre, cultural anchors, active travel improvements and leisure routes)

He stated that the Town and Community Councils are key stakeholders in this work going forward and wanted their input into the future plans.

Richard Catlin was concerned that there were not enough skilled officers and Borough level to carry out this work.

Nick Simmons said that he had been involved in various Local development Plans going back over a number of years and wanted to know when the new revised plan, after the latest plan was rejected by Welsh government, would be made. He was also sceptical about Blaenau Gwent Borough Council actually working in partnership with Town councils has they have shown no inclination in the past in sharing information's and proposals, or listening to the Community councils concerns.

Steve Bard was concerned about the tech based approach, and how with having an aging population in our area who may not be able to contribute to any proposals or consultations because they did not have the skills or resources to do so.

Mark Lewis asked about the Completeness League Table, Chris replied that he thought paces like Oxford, Cambridge and some London Boroughs were at the top, Cardiff were around 47th.

Chris Hill mentioned the 20,000 people in the valley who did not have direct access to the railway, and the provision of a railway in Abertillery had been on the agenda for over 13 years.

Richard Catlin asked who the feedback from the meeting would go to, Chris Ashman said it will go to the Interim Director of Economy and Place
Chris Ashman left the meeting at 8:11.

167. One Voice Wales

Council **RESOLVED** to rejoin One Voice Wales for 2026-27

168. Ffrindiau Tyleri

Robert Phillips gave a brief history of Ffrindiau Tyleri and how they had tried to get more volunteers over the last few year without any success. A number of Councillors stated it would be a shame if we lost all the events that Ffrindiau Tyleri managed and that Council should be able to do something with £10k budget that had been allocated for events.

Council thanked Ffrindiau Tyleri for all their hard work over the years.

Council **RESOLVED** to delegate this to the Leisure and Tourism Committee

169. Council Grant Applications

Council **RESOLVED** the following:

Mitch's Kitchen – Agree £1,000 grant funding towards the provision of free meals (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19). There was some discussion about this being a private company but Council felt the social benefits outweighed that grant criteria prohibition and we would have to monitor the spending to ensure it went on providing meals.

Steve Bard left the meeting

Abertillery Orpheus Male Choir – Agree £750 grant funding towards costs of putting on a concert to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Aberfan Disaster. (Local Government Act 1972 s.145).

Steve Bard returned to the meeting and Ivor Beynon left the meeting

Ebenezer Baptist Church – Application rejected because of the uncertainty about future events in Abertillery, paying for church activities and the lack of funds remaining in the grant pot. The Officers will ask the Church to re-submit a grant application in the new financial year.

Ivor Beynon returned to the meeting

XS-Fest – Agree to fund £2,000 from the next financial year, which is in line with funding of other musical events, for the specific items of Marquee hire and Portaloo hire. (Local Government Act 1972, s.145).

Abertillery Piranhas Swimming Club – Agree to fund £1,000 towards upskilling of coaches and updating equipment. (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19).

170. Release of Funds

Council **RESOLVED** to delegate the payment authority to the officers of the following budgetary funding.

Up to £4k for the Six Bells Bi-Lingual Event (Local Government Act 1972, s.145)

Up to £8k for the Wales in Bloom Prepayments (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19).

Up to £2k for the Zion Miners Chapel Annual Grant (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19).

171. Ward Boundaries

Council **RESOLVED** to align the 5 Community Council Ward (Aberbeeg, Abertillery, Six Bells, Cwmtillery and Llanhilleth) areas to the 3 County Borough Ward Areas (Abertillery and Six Bells, Cwmtillery and Llanhilleth)

172. Polices

Council **RESOLVED** to agree the Welsh Language Policy and the Dignity at Work Policy, with an amendment to the Welsh Language Policy that would add “The Council also wishes to support and promote opportunities for the learning of Welsh within the community, recognising the importance of the language to the cultural heritage and future of Wales” to the aims and objectives. Also, that the Dignity at work Policy was checked for spelling errors before publishing.

173. Members Allowance

Council **RESOLVED** to agree and authorise payments of the annual members allowances for 2025-2026 mandated by the Democracy and Boundaries Commission Cymru of £208 (£156 members allowance + £52 for consumables) per member.

174. Derelict Buildings

Council **RESOLVED** to delegate this issue to the PlaCE Committee

175. Committee Minutes

Council noted the following Committee minutes

Finance and Governance 14 November 2025, Leisure and Tourism 5 December 2025

PlaCE 8 December 2025

176. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 25 March 2026 at 7pm

The meeting ended at 8:58 pm.

Minutes produced by Steve Edwards, Clerk.

Signed as a correct record by the Chair.....

Date.....