

BURTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the monthly meeting held in the Jubilee Hall, Houghton, and online via the Zoom videoconferencing platform, on Friday May 9th 2025, 7pm.

Present: Cllrs Robin Howells, Fiona Hart, Laurence Price, Scott Sinclair, John Evans; Peter Horton (Clerk).
Apologies: C’llrs. Derek Jones, Vicky White, Paddy McNamara, Michelle Campbell, Ian Thomas, Danny Young.

Also present – Henry Tufnell, M.P.

The meeting was chaired by the vice-Chairman C’llr Robin Howells.

Declarations of known interests

None.

Opportunity for public representation on tabled agenda items

There were no members of the public in attendance who wished to make representations.

Discussion with Henry Tufnell, M.P., concerning healthcare provision in County, issues surrounding supposed replacement hospital plans, and knock-on effect on current services at Withybush Hospital

[NOTE - Chairmanship of the meeting was transferred to C’llr Scott Sinclair for the duration of this agenda item, as formally agreed in the April 2025 monthly meeting.]

Members welcomed to the meeting the local M.P. Mr Henry Tufnell.

C’llr Scott Sinclair opened the discussion with a brief summary of the events and concerns that had given rise to the decision to table this agenda item. He mentioned the 2018 report published by the Hywel Dda Health Board into proposed long terms plans for the health service in their area of responsibility, and the fact that progress on implementation of this plan appeared to be more or less totally stalled. A number of questions had been prepared by Members for discussion in the meeting, C’llr Scott Sinclair stressed that Mr. Tufnell was being asked for his advice and recommendations on how to inject serious momentum into the Welsh Government / Health Board plans, and assistance in any way possible to achieve meaningful progress.

The questions prepared by Members were used as the basis for the main part of the discussion, as follows :

Q. 1 - Are present services provided by Withybush Hospital being maintained for the future or until new Hospital becomes fully operational (noting that some surgical procedures are at the present time being moved to Aberystwyth)?

Mr Tufnell commented that based on comments made to him by local residents during and since the last election campaign, health was the number one issue of concern affecting Pembrokeshire residents. As a result, it was also a top priority for him as their M.P. He had attempted as far as possible up until that time to drive progress towards improvement in dentistry, G.P. services, community care, etc. While recognising that responsibility for health-related matters was not within his jurisdiction, he had carried on raising awareness of these issues, due to the concerns of his constituents. He commented that he had held meetings with Health Board officials, but only after much pressure and raising the matter publicly. He commented that his interactions with the Health Board had been ‘difficult’. Although the Health Board business plan for the future of hospital care in its area (including the future / replacement of Withybush Hospital) had been

submitted two years previously, there appeared to have been no subsequent progress on its delivery.

C’lfr Laurence Price mentioned a number of specific areas of concern, including appointment waiting times, full bed occupancy in hospitals, ambulance blocking, etc. Concerns about ambulances blue-lighting emergency patients to Carmarthen, with all the attendant risks to patient safety, were also mentioned. He felt that there was a real need to protect and maintain services at Withybush Hospital, given the non-action by the Health Board on implementing their plan.

Mr Tufnell commented that there was some evidence that the Health Board could currently be at the stage of altering its stance, and considering investing in / upgrading Withybush, given the lack of funding and progress towards building a new hospital.

C’lfr Fiona Hart raised the issue of timescale for any funding to be directed to Withybush Hospital. She had been informed that the Heath Hospital in Cardiff, and then hospital services in North Wales, were a higher priority than Withybush Hospital, and would receive funding first. Mr Tufnell responded that funding into Withybush Hospital was currently for dealing with the R.A.A.C. problems, but not into basic health services themselves. He completely agreed that the current situation was totally unacceptable. He also commented that, in his view, there was insufficient accountability and scrutiny of senior management in the Health Board.

C’lfr Scott Sinclair commented that the Health Board and Welsh Government were basically blaming each other for the lack of progress, and neither was taking ownership of the issue.

Q. 2 – Has a site been finally established and agreed for New Hospital? Response from Mr. Tufnell was that, based on his information, no it had not.

Q. 3 – Is Funding fully in place for a new hospital? No.

Q. 4 – Is a business plan completed, or if not, what is the timescale? It was understood that the business plan was complete. Mr Tufnell commented that he had been putting pressure on the Health Board, and seeking to get them to take ownership of the matter, so as to achieve progress towards a resolution. He understood that the Health Board now planned to do a 13-week consultation on various services. Members view of this was that it amounted to a further delaying tactic. Mr Tufnell mentioned that he was having meetings with Welsh Government Ministers and Health Board officials as often as possible, and was attempting to inject momentum into the process. He felt that the forthcoming Senedd election was likely to be important in terms of the overall debate on this subject. He further commented that he felt there needed to be a big conversation on this overall subject, and would continue to raise it at every opportunity, given its importance to his constituents.

C’lfr John Evans expressed the view that no further services should be removed from Withybush Hospital. This prompted a discussion about specialist services, with some Members expressing the view that travelling further to obtain better specialist services may be acceptable, if the services on offer were better as a result of centralisation.

C’lfr Laurence Price mentioned that local industrial sites such as Dragon LNG, South Hook, Valero, held emergency exercises several times a year, to prepare for possible major incidents. He commented that there was no provision closer than Cardiff to treat major trauma, and it would be preferable for such facilities to be available more locally. One member of the public was present to observe the meeting, and was invited to express their view. They commented that the discussions within the Welsh Government and Health Board on this entire matter seemed to be going around in circles, without any resolution, and that this was very disappointing and unsatisfactory.

Following the discussion, Members thanked Mr Henry Tufnell for attending to discuss these matters, following which he left the meeting.

Members briefly discussed the matter after Mr Tufnell's departure. There was agreement that the Health Board did not appear to be shouldering their responsibility in this matter. Members felt that it might be appropriate to write a further letter to the Health Board on this subject. Agenda item to be tabled for discussion in June. In the meantime, C'llr Scott Sinclair and Clerk to liaise on a draft letter to the Health Board.

Approval of minutes of the April 2025 monthly meeting

The minutes were approved as written (proposer C'llr Robin Howells, seconder C'llr Laurence Price), and held for signature by the Chairman.

Matters arising

Burton Ferry Community Garden. No gardener had yet been appointed.

Road drain cover surrounds, Burton Hill. It was reported that the work to repair the surfacing around the covers had been completed.

Rhooseferry Lane potholes. Members reported that work was in hand to repair these.

Plans

Planning consents notified

24/1099/PA - Variation of condition 2 (Approved plans & Documents) & Discharge of Conditions 3 (Drainage) and 4 (Window detail) of planning permission 21/0943/PA (Erection of a single detached dwelling and garage (revision to extant permission 12/1204/PA); Site Address: Plot Adjacent to Wood Hollow, Houghton, Milford Haven, SA73 1NN

Correspondence

01) Paul Cleaver – Reminder of work needed to trees covered in recent inspection report – noted.

02) P.C.C. – Response to message sent in about surfacing around road drain gullies, Burton Hill – dealt with in 'Matters Arising' above.

03) Denise Mayr – Internal audit report, 2024/25 accounts – covered in 'Accounts' below.

04) P.C.C. – Lease offer for land at Barnlake – Members noted that a number of aspects needed clarification before the lease could potentially be accepted. This included aspects such as agreements on necessary preliminary works to the land in advance of the lease being taken, litter bin provision, clarification of public right of way boundaries, exact extent of land to be included, as depicted on the plans accompanying the lease documentation, etc. It was agreed that C'llrs Paddy McNamara, Laurence Price and Scott Sinclair would examine these aspects. Agenda item to be tabled for further discussion in June 2025.

05) C'llr Michael John – Update on situation with car parking around Cleddau Reach School – noted. Clerk to thank him for keeping the council updated.

Accounts

Payments for approval

Easy Websites (direct debit for website provision) : £ 36-96

Denise Mayr (internal audit of 2024/25 accounts) : £105-00

F.J. Groundworks (grass-cutting) : £300-00

Wales Audit Office (audit of 2022/23 accounts) : £360-00

Zurich (insurance renewal) : £613-74

St. David's Diocesan Board of Finance (lease of Playing Field) : £200-00

The above payments were approved by Members (proposer C'llr Fiona Hart, seconder C'llr Robin Howells).

Internal audit of 2024/25 accounts.

The internal audit had been completed, and a report circulated to all Members.

Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25

This was completed by Members, and approved by the council (proposer C’llr Robin Howells, seconder C’llr Laurence Price).

Any other business

There was no other business to report.

The meeting ended at 8pm. Next meeting to be held at 7pm on Wednesday 4th June 2025.