MAELOR SOUTH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING

Date	Tuesday 14 April 2026	**Venue**	Madras Community Hub Penley
Time	7:00pm	**Chair**	Cllr Alwyn Reay

Clerk: John Gallanders (Clerk to the Council)

1.4 Present

Cllr Alwyn Reay (Chair)

Cllrs John Griffiths, Nick Ringrose, Keith Owen and John Blanchard

2.4 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Jackie Tomkinson, Jan Thompson and Rebecca Bettis

PCSO Lisa received apology during meeting due to operational issues

3.4 Police Update

The Chair noted that the meeting would normally begin with the Police update, however PCSO attendance was delayed.

Members recorded disappointment at the lack of a consistent Police presence at meetings and noted that this limited the Council's ability to raise recurring community safety issues directly.

Concern was expressed regarding the need for a Police view on the safety of Penley Bank Penley and whether the current road condition warrants stronger interim action.

Action: Clerk to seek a formal written Police view on the current road safety concerns and any relevant risk assessment.

(It was noted post the meeting an apology had been received during the meeting explaining PCSO called t a missing person incident)

4.4 County Councilor Update

The Clerk read out the written update received from County Councilor John. McCusker

The main points raised were ongoing concerns regarding Morris Homes, the unresolved condition of the road surface on Penley Bank and onward into Penley, and availability at forthcoming local meetings including Pride in Place related engagement.

Members noted that the matters raised closely reflected the concerns already being voiced by residents and by the Community Council itself.

5.4 Highways and Road Safety

Members held an extended discussion regarding the dangerous condition of Penley Bank. The surface was described as badly degraded, rough, lacking adequate anti-skid quality and presenting a clear risk to motorists, cyclists and motorcyclists. It was repeatedly stated that the road now represented an accident waiting to happen.

It was reported that Members had pursued the matter with the relevant officers and pressed for a formal safety audit from the Council. Members considered it unacceptable that resurfacing had previously been due to be completed in February(postponed) and rearranged for the Easter period (postponed) as the latest communication from WCBC suggested works might not be undertaken until the summer, with even the latest wording still appearing ambiguous.

The Council agreed that if the highway authority considers the road safe, it should confirm this in writing. If it does not consider it safe, it should immediately introduce appropriate mitigation, which could include warning signage, reduced speeds, traffic management or any other interim control measure necessary until resurfacing is completed.

Concern was also expressed about loose chippings and debris, and about the visible tendency of drivers to move across the carriageway to avoid the worst sections, thereby increasing collision risk.

Current projection for repairs from WCBC is end of May 2026

Further highways issues were also recorded. Members referred to an apparent water leak on the A525 near Penley and the need for associated drainage failures to be addressed before the surface deteriorates further. It was also noted that drainage issues and overgrown conifer hedge is affecting pedestrian safety along the locations including the footpath route from Cheshire Cheese to Penley Bank which Members believe should be reinstated and made usable at the time of resurfacing.

Action: Clerk to continue formal escalation with WCBC and request a written safety position, details of any condition survey undertaken, and confirmation of the timetable for resurfacing and interim mitigation.

6.4 Pavements and Public Access

Members discussed the condition of the pavement at Cadney Lane, including the fact that seasonal overgrowth and leaf fall can leave the path effectively obscured. It was noted that this creates a hazard for pedestrians and that a visual record should be obtained to support any complaint.

Action: Photograph the pavement and submit a formal request to WCBC for maintenance and clearance**.**

7.4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2026 were considered.

A minor amendment was identified, namely that the proposer and seconder relating to the finance section were not named and should be inserted.

Resolved: The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved subject to that amendment.

Proposed: Cllr John Griffiths

Seconded: Cllr Nick Ringrose

8.4 Matters Arising

The Clerk guided Members through outstanding matters arising from the previous Minutes.

8.4.1 Potholes

Members noted that photographs had been taken after pothole repairs were completed in Bettisfield. Although some patching had improved matters, there was concern that a number of repairs were already beginning to deteriorate at the edges.

Action: Continue to monitor and photograph the repaired areas over the coming weeks.

8.4.2 Bleed Kits and Defibrillators

Members considered the provision of public access bleed kits and the position of existing defibrillators in the community.

It was confirmed that the preferred approach would be for bleed kits to be installed in secure cabinets using the same access code principle as defibrillator cabinets, so that emergency services could direct the public to them when required.

Indicative costs discussed were approximately £330 for a locked cabinet and £75–£85 for a standard bleed kit. It was noted that the kits are basic but valuable, containing trauma dressings, hemostatic dressings, gloves, scissors and related emergency items.

Members agreed in principle that two bleed kits should be purchased: one in Penley, to be in the phone box, and one in Bettisfield, to be located in the bus shelter – Cadney Lane.

The position of defibrillator at the Chapel (Bettisfield) was also discussed. As the Chapel is being sold, Members agreed that the defibrillator and cabinet should be removed. Before any relocation, the current unit should be checked to confirm whether it remains fit for purposes. If viable, it could potentially be relocated; if not, a replacement cabinet and, if necessary, replacement unit would need to be considered.

Resolved: Proceed to purchase a bleed kit for Penley and a bleed kit for Bettisfield; remove the Chapel defibrillator installation and assess the existing defibrillator for possible relocation.

Action: Cllr NR to inspect the Chapel defibrillator. Clerk to prepare public notice once relocation arrangements are confirmed.

9.4 Village Projects and Maintenance

Members received updates on local maintenance issues in both communities.

9.4.1 Bettisfield

Grass cutting by the new contractor in Bettisfield has been completed and was considered satisfactory overall, particularly given the wet ground conditions at the time of cutting.

Tree planting had not yet been undertaken because the ground remained waterlogged. Members noted that the trees were currently heeled in and still viable, with planting to proceed when conditions improve.

It was also reported that the small gate off Cagney Lane has suffered further damage, with the latch assembly having been pulled away again. Members considered that repeated swelling of the timber frame and post in wet weather may be causing the gate to bind, with force then being used to open or close it.

Action: Inspect and repair the gate and assess whether minor planning or adjustment is required**.**

9.4.2 Penley – Grass Cutting and Maintenance

Members discussed the position regarding grass cutting in Penley, particularly areas where WCBC had confirmed only a limited verge cutting obligation.

MSCC had received confirmation that certain land falls under WCBC responsibility but is not included in the regular grass cutting schedule, beyond a minimum highway strip cut. Members considered this inadequate where the area in question forms a visible part of the village environment.

After discussion, the Council agreed that, where necessary, grass cutting should continue to be undertaken locally until the Council is instructed otherwise. Members considered it preferable to maintain the appearance and safety of the area than allow it to deteriorate while waiting for a further response.

Resolved: Proceed with local cutting of the relevant area pending any instruction to the contrary**.**

Action: Clerk to notify WCBC of the Council’s position.

9.4.3 Demolished Building Site / Dymocks

Members discussed the site known locally as the Dymocks. The existing fencing was described as failing and increasingly ineffective, leaving the site open to access and creating a clear hazard, particularly to children.

It was noted that the previous temporary barriers had not been properly maintained and that the site should now be considered insecure. Members considered that this creates obvious risk from unstable material, open access and the attraction of the site to trespassers, especially as the evenings become lighter.

Resolved: The matter should be escalated urgently.

Action: Clerk to write to WCBC and Cadw requesting urgent enforcement action to secure the site boundary properly.

9.4.4 Play Area / Litter / School Liaison

Members reported that litter and inappropriate use of the play area had increased after the school holidays, with older pupils entering the area during lunchtime periods.

While the matter did not lend itself to formal enforcement by the Community Council, Members agreed that a practical conversation with the school would be the most sensible first step.

Action: Cllr JG to raise the issue with school leadership.

10.4 Housing and Estate Issues

Members considered updates relating to Morris Homes and Big Green Court re adoption of the site and issues with Management Companies. Cllr JM is pursuing issues with WCBC officers.

10.4.1 Morris Homes

Members discussed the continued lack of progress on the long-standing Morris Homes estate adoption issue, which has now been unresolved for 21 years.

It was noted that residents have written to WCBC seeking an update and have received no response. Members reiterated the understanding that the principal obstacle remains unresolved drainage and the establishment of the emergency access route in and out of the estate The estate will not be adopted until the necessary work has been completed to the required standard.

Members were clear that the matter now needs to be escalated further, with residents entitled to a proper explanation of what remains outstanding and what action, if any, the Council intends to take.

Resolved: Residents escalate the matter through senior officers and continue to press for clarity**.**

Action: Members and Clerk to support residents with further escalation of the issue.

10.4.2 Big Green Court

Members noted that a resident had approached the County Councilor asking how the estate could be adopted by WCBC.

Following discussion, Members considered that the likely position is that adoption was not intended within the planning framework and that this should be explained clearly rather than leaving residents in uncertainty.

Action: The County Councilor should be encouraged to provide a clear written response to residents setting out the position.

11.4 Penley Hospital Update

Members noted that there had been no substantive progress update through the channels previously used to discuss Penley Hospital.

Reference was made to recent correspondence indicating that the Health Board expects to take an update to its May meeting, followed by a summer consultation period and local engagement in September.

Members expressed frustration that this effectively pushes any meaningful progress even further back and gives the appearance of the matter being repeatedly deferred.

The Council noted that continued delay risks undermining public confidence and prolonging uncertainty for residents.

12.4. Payments for Approval

The following payments were presented and approved:

Ecotricity – £499.13

One Voice Wales Membership – £164

Defibrillator pads – £112

Resolved: Cllr NR proposed and Cllr KO seconded Payments approved.

12.4.1 Financial Position

The Clerk reported that, following receipt of the first precept payment, the current balance stood at £46,751.

It was noted that this figure includes sums effectively committed or earmarked, including the long-held Zebra Crossing allocation, a Noticeboard budget and Website budget provision (total £17,000. Members were reminded that while the gross balance appears high, the truly free reserve is materially lower. (£19,887)

The Clerk nevertheless advised that reserves remain comparatively high for a council of this size and should continue to be monitored carefully.

Audit Wales – the 2024 -25 report received with a Qualified Opinion – various points that are highlighted have been queried by the Clerk in particular approval of invoices for payment.

Actions to be addressed by June

12.4.2 Transfer to Savings

In view of the current balance position, the Clerk requested authority to move surplus funds into the Council's savings account so that interest can be earned while maintaining sufficient working cash in the current account.

Resolved: Authority granted for the Clerk to transfer surplus funds into savings.

13.4 Pride in Place Funding

The Clerk provided a further update on the Pride in Place funding allocation, confirming that the available amount for the Council is £44,117 and that the scheme is capital only.

It was emphasised that all expenditure must be completed within the programmed timescale (1st March 2027) and that the Community Council is expected to demonstrate local engagement and clear justification for its chosen projects.

A wide-ranging discussion took place on possible projects. These included replacement speed indicator devices, improved village signage, potential lighting enhancements, possible upgrading of the zebra crossing arrangements, replacement or improvement of playground equipment, bins, benches, noticeboards and website improvements.

Members noted that initial public feedback through social media had been limited, despite frequent informal comment in the community. It was therefore agreed that local drop-in engagement should take place in both communities so that residents have an opportunity to view the broad ideas and comment on priorities.

Resolved: Continue developing potential project options and proceed with local engagement sessions in Bettisfield (Friday 17th April and Penley 21st April).

Action: Members to support community engagement sessions and gather feedback for the funding application**.**

14.4 Audit and Governance

The Clerk updated Members on both the internal and external audit positions.

14.4.1 Internal Audit

A new internal auditor has been engaged and a more detailed process is now underway. The Clerk advised that the year-end accounts had balanced successfully and documentation was being uploaded for review.

14.4.2 External Audit (Audit Wales)

The Clerk reported that Audit Wales had issued a qualified opinion. Members discussed the stated reasons and expressed dissatisfaction at what appeared to be a lack of clarity and proportion in some of the points raised.

It was noted that some observations seemed to apply the expectations of larger councils to a council of Maelor South's scale and operating arrangements. Members considered that some matters could likely have been clarified quickly through direct dialogue rather than through a protracted audit process.

The Council agreed that the issues raised should continue to be challenged and clarified where appropriate.

14.4.3 Public Inspection Notice

The Clerk advised that the Council is required to publish a formal notice permitting public inspection of the accounts.

Resolved: Approval given for the statutory public inspection arrangements to be published.

15.4 Annual General Meeting

The Clerk proposed that the Annual General Meeting should be held on Tuesday 12 May 2026 at 6:30pm at Bettisfield Village Hall.

Resolved: AGM to be held on 12 May 2026 at 6:30pm, Bettisfield Village Hall.

16.4 Play Inspection Contract

Members considered the continuing use of WCBC for regular play area inspections. The annual cost of approximately £300 was considered good value, particularly given the combination of routine checks and practical attention to minor issues such as graffiti and loose fittings.

Resolved: Continue the WCBC play inspection contract.

17.4 Planning

No new planning applications had been received for consideration.

Members noted that decisions remained outstanding on earlier matters, including Big Green Court and Tudor Drive.

18.4 Meetings Attended

No meetings attended by Members were reported under this heading.

19.4 Any Other Business

No additional substantive business was raised.

20.4 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Tuesday 12 May 2026 at 6:30pm at Bettisfield Village Hall.

21.4 Close of Meeting

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 9:13pm.

Signed: *Alwyn Reay*

Name: Cllr Alwyn Reay (Chair)

Date: 12th May 2026

These minutes are submitted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of the meeting held on 14 April 2026.