



Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council

Annual Report
2022-23



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About This Report

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 introduced a new measure requiring local Council authorities in Wales to publish an Annual Report detailing the Council's priorities, activities and achievements from the year. This new legislation came into place as of April 1st 2022. This report is intended to increase transparency and give an insight into the work done by the Council throughout the 2022-2023 financial year.

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About Council

ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) is your local elected Council, representing people of the local area at the grass roots level, from Swffryd in the South, through Llanhilleth, Brynithel, Aberbeeg, Six Bells, Abertillery and Cwmtillery, to Bournville in the North.

What does the Council do?

- Represents the views of local people and makes decisions on their behalf.
- Distributes grants to a wide range of local organisations, supporting them for the benefit of the wider community.
- Funds detached youth workers, whose engagement with young people has brought about a steep fall in anti-social behaviour in the area.
- Provides and maintains life-saving defibrillators throughout the area.
- Arranges local events, such as the Christmas Carol Concert, St David's Day Concert and Party in the Park.
- Provides financial support to Ffrindiau Tyleri to host town centre events like Winterfest and Aberfest.
- Provides Christmas Lights, flower tubs and hanging baskets throughout the area.
- Looks after the Abertillery War Memorial.
- Makes its views on local issues (e.g. planning applications, parking, crime, health services etc) known to other agencies such as Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, the Police and the NHS.
- Is represented on local school governing bodies and other organisations.
- Is committed to improving community well-being and engaging with local communities.

Full Council meetings are generally held on the last Wednesday of each month, with the exceptions of August when Council does not meet, and December when Council meets earlier in the month. ALCC also uses a Committee system, where certain responsibilities are delegated into relevant committees to allow more in-depth discussion and open Council up to more projects. Committee meetings do not have a set schedule. Meetings take place in the Council Offices on Mitre Street, Abertillery, but also have the option of joining remotely via Zoom.

Funding

This year, Council had a budget of £339,533.66. Council requested that £289,000 of this budget be funded by precept, paid in four quarters. This funding comes directly from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, who collect it via council tax throughout the year. The rest of the budget is funded via previous years underspend.

Accounts

This year's annual return, financial statements and internal audit opinion can be found on our [website](#).

Staff

The Council Offices on Mitre Street were staffed by a Clerk (Mr David Cartwright) and a Deputy Clerk (Mr Stephen Edwards). The Clerks are responsible for implementing Council decisions, ensuring decisions are made lawfully, taking minutes from Council meetings and performing many other duties for the Council.

ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
CYNGOR CYMUNED ABERTYLERI A LLANHILEDD

Councillors

ALCC is comprised of 19 seats split across 5 different Wards. At the Annual Meeting on May 11th 2022, Cllr Nick Simmons took over from Cllr Gary Oakley as Chair of the Council, and Cllr Tracey Dyson became Vice Chair of the Council.

Abertillery Ward 5 seats	Llanhilleth Ward 3 seats	Aberbeeg Ward 3 seats	Cwmtillery Ward 5 seats	Six Bells Ward 3 seats
Nick Simmons Tracey Dyson Rob Phillips Mariola Walters (elected May 11 th 2022) Chris Hill (co-opted Nov 30 th 2022)	Ben-Owen Jones Barrie Page Jaqueline Ledbury (resigned May 2022) Deborah Pitt (co-opted Nov 30 th 2022)	Graham White Michaela Assiratti Gary Oakley (resigned May 2022) Joshua Rawcliffe (elected May 11 th 2022)	<i>Roger Clark</i> Glyn Smith Bernard Wall Mark Lewis Thomas Langley-Noel (co-opted Nov 30 th 2022, resigned Feb 2023)	Peter Adamson Beverley Lucas (resigned July 2022) Steve Bard (co-opted Nov 30 th 2022) Allen Rees (co-opted Nov 30 th 2022)

Roger Clark

March 2023

‘It is with deep sadness that we have heard of the sudden passing of Cllr Roger Clark of Cwmtillery.

Although he had served on the community council for more than eight years, Roger had been a familiar figure in the Ebbw Fach valley throughout his life. He came to prominence as an athletic back row forward with Abertillery RFC in the early eighties, the start of a long association that culminated in his becoming the club’s Chair.

Trained by the National Coal Board, Roger was an industrial electrician who worked in environments as varied as paper mills, steelworks and chemical plants and, in recent years, the food industry.

His presence will be sorely missed.

Our profound condolences go to Gill – his wife of more than forty years – and their family.’

A Message from the Chair

“During my term as Chair, I have strived to unite the Council and I feel that the growth of our work in the local community shows what we can achieve when we co-operate. Although they haven’t totally disappeared; internal distractions have reduced significantly.

“The budget we set for this year was not one for growth but maintains the improvements that this Council has made over recent years. It seems to be a trend that the UK Government and, in turn, the Welsh Government, will provide less and less in the immediate future. The burden is being passed down to our level of local government, which will saddle the public in this area with topping-up declining funding through the Council Tax.

“I can tell you that it is an honour to serve as Chair of the Council. The role involves a lot more than simply chairing meetings. You get to see much more of the operation of the Council and you appreciate the support of good staff.

“We have a reasonable structure of committees that elect their own chairs. This creates a healthy platform for debate and aids transparency in the workings of the Council. I found it beneficial to revert to being an ordinary member in committee, with the title of Chair of the Council giving me no greater influence over day-to-day decision-making than any other member.

“I hope the incoming Chair receives full support from what has become a group of members who are now much more united by the desire to keep the interests of the local community at the heart of what they do.”

- **Nick Simmons, Chair of Council 2022-2023**

(Taken from the Out-Going Chair’s Address at the [May 24th 2023 Annual Meeting](#))

Training Plan

In the Full Council meeting on June 29th 2022, Council agreed the following training plan. To view the full training policy please see our [website](#).

Councillor training plan

Section 67 of The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires community councils to make and publish a plan by November 2022 for training provision for its members (even though, as noted above, is still not mandatory for community councillors to undertake any training).

The adoption of the proposed Training Policy would mean, *perforce*, that Members agreed to the training plan shown below.

All Members would be offered the opportunity to complete all of the training modules shown below. Some Members have undertaken training in the past (the date when the training was last completed is shown).

	New Councillor Induction	Code of Conduct	Local Govt Finance	Local Govt Finance - advanced	Chairing Skills	The Council Meeting	The Council as an Employer	Understanding the Law	Planning	Health and Safety	Diversity and Inclusion
Ben Owen-Jones		Nov 2021									
Barrie Page		Nov 2021									
Beverley Lucas		Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Sep 2020			Sep 2020				
Glyn Smith	Jul 2017	Aug 2017									
Graham White	Jul 2017	Aug 2017									
Joshua Rawcliffe											
Mariola Walters											
Michaela Assiratti			Nov 2019								
Nick Simmons	Jul 2017	Aug 2017	Nov 2019	Dec 2019							
Peter Adamson		Nov 2017									
Rob Phillips		Nov 2021	Nov 2019								
Roger Clark	July 2017	Aug 2017	Nov 2019								
Tracey Dyson	July 2017	Sep 2017	Nov 2019		Nov 2019						
Bernard Wall	July 2017	Aug 2017									



Members will be expected to undertake and complete this training module by 10 May 2023



Members completed this training module in the twelve months before the start of the Council term



A motion to deselect Members from their appointment would be tabled if they fail to undertake and complete this training module by 10 November 2022



The Chair of Council cannot be deselected if they fail to undertake and complete this training module

Budget

	Budget 2021/2022	Budget 2022/2023
Salaries: Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk		
	Total Council Cost	
1 Town Clerk NJC Spine Point 33 (25 Hours per week)	£31,700.00	NJC rates
1 Deputy Town Clerk NJC Spine Point 2 (23 Hours per week)	£21,185.23	NJC rates
TOTALS	£52,885.23	£54,452.66
Training and Subscriptions		
2 Memberships to Society of Local Council Clerks	£180.00	£400.00
Training budget for Officers (including conference attendance)	£400	£500
Training budget for Members	£500	£2,000
TOTALS	£1,080.00	£2,900.00
Administration		
IT equipment - Councillors	£0	£13,900
Zoom	£168	£175
Vimeo (video hosting)	£0	£70
Rialtas accounting system	£200	£250
Hosting of Cloud-based accounting system (3 users)	£360	£360
Bank charges	£400	£400
Insurance	£800	£800
Professional fees	£0	£10,000
One Voice Wales membership	£2,700	£0
Printing and photocopying usage	£700	£700
Internet and phone (BT)	£250	£500
Web Hosting - Vision ICT	£250	£250
Upgrade of website	£0	£10,000
Stationery and postage	£750	£750
Accountants (payroll)	£600	£600
Information Commissioner	£50	£50
Internal audit	£1,000	£1,000
Travel and mileage	£250	£250
External audit 2019/2020	£1,000	£1,000
Welsh Water (factory unit)	£150	£155
Marketing and publicity (Well Being, leaflets)	£2,000	£0
Elections costs	£0	£5,000
TOTALS	£11,628	£46,210
Grants and Members Allowances		
£200 per Member - Ward Grants	£3,800	£3,800
Chairman's Allowance (IRP Determination 49)	£1,500	£1,500
Deputy Chair's Allowance (IRP Determination 50)	£500	£500
Council Grants	£10,000	£10,000
Specific Responsibilities Allowance (IRP Determination 43) 5 @ £500	£2,500	£2,500
Members Allowance (19 @ £150)	£2,850	£2,850

**ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
CYNGOR CYMUNED ABERTYLERI A LLANHILEDD**

Attendance Allowance £30 per member per meeting	£0	£11,400
TOTALS	£21,150	£32,550
Previous Council Decisions/Ongoing Commitments		
Christmas lights - central contract	£30,000	£30,000
Christmas Lights - Llanhilleth Tenants and Residents	£3,000	£3,000
Christmas Lights - Brynithel Community Centre	£1,500	£1,500
Christmas Lights - Swffryd Community Centre	£1,500	£1,500
Christmas Lights - Bournville	£1,500	£1,500
WinterFest (ALCC Activities)	£2,000	£2,000
Ffrindiau Tyleri (WinterFest/Aberfest)	£2,000	£2,000
Abertillery Rock & Blues Festival	£1,000	£1,000
Allotments	£600	£600
War Memorial Maintenance	£1,500	£1,500
SWALEC costs for Christmas lights	£1,500	£1,800
TOTALS	£46,100	£46,400
Elective Spending Proposals		
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT		
BGCBC - Youth Workers	£54,000	£35,000
Off the Streets - Youth Services/Food Project	£40,000	£44,000
LEISURE AND TOURISM COMMITTEE		
Party in the Park	£13,000	£15,000
Fun Run	£3,000	£0
Installation of benches at War Memorial	£1,000	£0
Drive-in Cinema	£0	£10,021
Install archway behind War Memorial	£0	£5,000
Loneliness Project	£0	£5,000
Concert Costs	£0	£500
Somerset Street - Christmas lights extension	£0	£1,500
Wreaths/Poppies/Remembrance Day	£500	£2,500
PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (Including Wellbeing & Shop Local)		
In Bloom	£5,000	£14,500
Defibrillator maintenance and additional units	£1,000	£6,000
Halloween Event	£0	£5,000
Car Boot Sale (once a month)	£0	£5,000
Fun Run	£0	£5,000
Shop Local events	£10,000	£3,000
TOTALS	£127,500	£157,021
Total Budget Spend	£260,343.23	£339,533.66
Projected Underspend	£53,622.40	

Grants

Groups Supported This Year (via Grants)		
Aberbeeg TRA	Brynithel RFC	Pentref Tyleri
Abertillery BG RFC	Clwb Llan	Six Bells Bowls Club
Abertillery Excelsiors Junior FC	Ebbw Fach Community Group	Six Bells Community Centre
Abertillery Piranhas Swimming Club	Ebbw Fach Men's Well-being Group	Six Bells Crafts
Abertillery Rock and Blues Festival	The Food Cupboard - Ebenezer Baptist Church	Six Bells Tennis Club
Allsorts Parent and Toddler Group	Ffrindiau Tyleri	Swffryd Community Centre
Bournville Social Institute	Friends of Six Bells Park	Welsh Air Ambulance
Brynithel Community Centre	Llanhilleth TRA	Zion Miners Chapel
	National Childbirth Trust - Gwent Valleys (Llanhilleth) 'Bumps and Babies' Group	

Solar Farm Grants

Each year ALCC receives £35,000 from Luxcara (Hafod-y-Dafal Solar Farm) to distribute as grants to community groups. Council decides which groups to award these grants to, and how they wish to divide the amount. In the Full Council Meeting on the 14th of December 2022, the Council considered seven Solar Farm Grant applications, totaling to £80,000. The Council resolved to award the following grants:

Six Bells Tennis Club <i>Requested: £22,000</i> <i>Awarded: £20,000</i>	Abertillery BG RFC <i>Requested: £19,051</i> <i>Awarded: £15,000</i>
For the restoration of a building beside the restored tennis courts at Six Bells Park. The building will be used for storage and hosting teams or community groups (friends of the park and pensioner groups were given as examples) and could even be a Warm Hub or social area to combat loneliness.	For the provision of a safe and accessible outdoor area for players, spectators and visitors. This will involve an area of decked flooring, a sheltered area, outdoor lighting, and a food shack for refreshments. The main aim is to provide an area for parents and guardians to watch the Mini and Junior rugby teams, as well as an area for the teams to rest and warm up. This project will also benefit other teams that play on the pitch, as well as community groups and visitors of the park.

To read the full grant applications and the decision-making process, please see the [minutes on our website](#).

Projects

Community Empowerment Committee

The Community Empowerment Committee, formed on November 28th 2022, undertakes decision making regarding the Council's engagement schemes. This year, a £35,000 budget funded three Blaenau Gwent detached youth workers for the community. Another £44,000 supported Off The Streets, a group supporting young people in the area, covering wages for three youth workers, insurance costs and a Food Project.

People and Communities Committee

(Formerly Leisure and Tourism Committee)

'Platinum' Party in the Park

Sunday 5th June 2022

ALCC revived its Party in the Park event this year, with a £15,000 budget. This was a family-friendly event with free entertainment in celebration of HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Held at Abertillery Park, it featured shopping stalls and performances by local groups like the Abertillery Ladies Orpheus Choir and Abertillery Amateur Dramatic and Musical Society. Activities included magic by Ashley Morris and a talent competition. A shuttle bus for Llanhilleth residents was provided but saw little use and will not return next year. Despite some poor weather, the event was successful and will be back in 2023 with an even bigger offering.



Drive-In Cinema

An outdoor drive-in cinema event was due to take place in August 2022, however, an appropriate venue could not be found. The Committee decided to propose a series of Summer cinema events for children in The Metropole Theatre, Abertillery, for next year.

Loneliness Project

A Loneliness Project Working Group was set up on May 25th 2022 to consider how Council could help with the issue of loneliness in the community. A £5,000 budget was allocated for this project. An initial meeting of potential partners and stakeholders in the project produced outline plans for over half-a-dozen initiatives. In a committee meeting on February 9th 2023, Cllr Josh Rawcliffe was assigned Project Lead for this initiative. On March 30th 2023, the £5,000 Loneliness Project budget was spent on awarding grants to four community groups (Ebbw Fach Men's Wellbeing Group, Gwent Valleys Llanhilleth Bumps and Babies Group, Zion Miner's Chapel Dementia-friendly and Living Alone Group, and Six Bells Community Centre).

Christmas Lights

ALCC provides seasonal Christmas lighting throughout the area every year. An annual budget line of £30,000 covers this central contract, and £1,800 was set aside for the electricity costs this year. An additional £1,500 was also budgeted for additional lighting in Abertillery town centre, on Somerset Street. ALCC also gives yearly grants to local communities for their own lighting – these go to Llanhilleth TRA and the Community Centres in Swffryd, Brynithel and Bournville for the provision of Christmas lights, and total up to £7,500.



Christmas Lights on Swffryd Community Centre

Community Christmas Carol Concert

Sunday 18th December 2022

This year's Christmas Carol Concert was held in The Metropole, Abertillery. £500 was budgeted for concert costs this year, which included the Christmas Concert. Tickets cost £5, raising £603.89 for the Chair's Charity (Valleys Life After Stroke Group, as part of the Stroke Association). A further £126.15 was also raised via a raffle. The line-up featured these local acts:

Abertillery Town Band	Abertillery Orpheus Male Choir
Abertillery Ladies Orpheus Choir	Ebbw Fach Choir
Abertillery Youth Drama and Music Society	Abertillery Amateur Dramatic and Musical Society

St. David's Day Concert

Wednesday 1st March 2023

The annual St. David's Day Celebration Concert was held in The Metropole Theatre, Abertillery. Proceeds were raised for the Valleys Life After Stroke Group. Ticket sales for the event raised £88.75 and a raffle raised an additional £120. The concert was comprised of the following local acts:

Abertillery Town Band	Abertillery Orpheus Male Choir
Abertillery Ladies Orpheus Choir	Ebbw Fach Choir
Abertillery Youth Drama and Music Society	Abertillery Amateur Dramatic and Musical Society
Millie Dyson	Ruby Meredith and Tegan Davies

Nick Simmons, Chair of the Council, said the following:

"How special it is to be able to mark our national day with our friends, family and members of our local community. My grateful thanks go to everyone providing the entertainment for us tonight. It is both a privilege and a pleasure to hear such wonderful music. "

It was also resolved in the Full Council meeting on the 23rd of February 2023 that Council staff be awarded an annual paid day of leave on St. David's Day.

War Memorial

This year, the Council budgeted £1,500 towards the maintenance of the Abertillery War Memorial, as well as £2,500 towards Remembrance Day (to cover costs for wreaths, road closures and staff

training). Along with regular maintenance work, replacement uplighters were installed in the War Memorial in 2022.

Although £5,000 was also budgeted to install a new archway behind the Abertillery War Memorial, this project was not completed this year.

Mural

In the Full Council meeting on October 26th 2022, a member of the public asked ALCC for permission to erect scaffolding in the Abertillery War Memorial site to facilitate the painting of a remembrance mural on the gable wall of the adjoining property. After receiving proper risk assessments, plans and confirmations of public liability insurance from all of the contractors involved, Council granted this permission on the grounds that there would be no scaffolding on the site for Remembrance events. The mural will be painted by Welsh artist Tee2Sugars and is due to be completed in 2023.

Planning, Commerce and Environment Committee (PlaCE)

Town in Bloom

The Town in Bloom project provides planted displays throughout the area. This year, its budget was increased from £5,000 to £14,500, funding a £12,000 contract with The Willows in Usk, who supply and maintain the planters. The other £2,500 in the budget was allocated for community involvement, and so it was agreed in a PlaCE meeting on June 28th 2022 that up to £150 worth of plants from The Willows could be donated to groups or individuals, provided they are displayed for the benefit of the community. On September 23rd 2022, this was expanded to allow spending for other necessary supplies. Several groups adopted planters this year, such as The Brynithel Activities Group and Cwmtillery Litter Pickers, and new planters were also purchased. A £1,000 overspend on the project was attributed to unaccounted VAT, which was noted by the Clerk.



Allotments

As part of the 1908 Small Holdings and Allotments Act, it is the Council's duty to provide sufficient allotments according to demand. Therefore, ALCC supports 6 allotments in the area: Gelli Crug, Adam Street, Bishops Street, Gwastod, Brynithel and Pant-Y-Pwden. In 2022 a review of these allotments uncovered that some of the leases were out of date, and there were some questions over land ownership for some of the sites. The costs of resolving these issues is expected to be minimal, and officers continue to liaise with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to resolve them.

Defibrillators

As part of their commitment to providing life-saving defibrillator units for the public, ALCC budgeted £6,000 for defibrillators this year. This covered the costs of installing two new units, as well as maintenance costs for existing units. On September 28th 2022, Council adopted the Automated External Defibrillator Policy, providing a formal commitment for the Council to provide, maintain and support defibrillator access in the area.

Other Events

In a PlaCE Committee meeting on 23rd September 2022, it was decided that the £5,000 budget allocated for a Halloween Event and the £3,000 budget for Shop Local Events could instead be used to fund local events hosted by other groups and organisations, as no event plans had been made by ALCC. £250 from the Shop Local budget was granted to a local group, Ffrindiau Tyleri, to cover insurance costs at their Springfest event. It was agreed in October that budgets would not be allocated for stand-alone Council events next year, as funding would be given to external groups instead. This followed the success of Ffrindiau Tyleri's Aberfest and Winterfest events in 2022-2023, which ALCC provided some funding for.

£5,000 was budgeted for a Fun Run event in 2022-2023, with the budget line being moved from the Leisure and Tourism Committee budget into the PlaCE Committee budget. Although this event did not occur, Councillor Ben-Owen Jones utilised some of this budget to begin preparing a Fun Run event for next year.

Other Committees

ALCC also has a Finance and Grants Committee, which is responsible for monitoring, reviewing and assisting in the effective financial management of the Council. There is also a Human Resources Committee, which monitors and reviews the performance of the Council's officers and assists them to ensure proper management of the Council's business.

Full Council Key Actions

- On May 25th 2022, Council resolved to adopt a **Single-Use Plastic Policy** which aims to reduce the environmental impact of Council actions.
- On June 29th 2022, Council resolved to adopt a **Council Training Policy and Plan**, with a £2,000 budget, to ensure Councillors can receive proper training and ensure transparency with the public.
- On July 27th 2022, Council resolved to support **paperless meetings** to reduce its environmental impact.
- On September 28th 2022, Council resolved to adopt the **Community Asset Transfer Policy**, promoting sustainable development which improves the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the area.
- On December 14th 2022, Council resolved to consider the **well-being of future generations** in every decision made by the Council, its committees and sub-committees.
- On February 22nd 2023, Council resolved to request a formal review of banking needs in the area from LINK, as Council felt the area may be eligible for a Banking Hub. This evaluation from LINK and Access To Cash began in March 2023.

Plans for 2023-2024

PlaCE Committee

- Investigate the feasibility of a community transport scheme which could link unserved areas with the current public transport system and provide service after 5pm to the whole ALCC area.
- Maintain existing defibrillators and provide two new ones.
- Increase Town in Bloom budget to encourage more community involvement.
- Provide grant funding to Ffrindiau Tyleri for their town centre events, which has now increased from two to four per year.
- Investigate the possibility of a community asset transfer of a mosaic mural in Abertillery.

People and Communities Committee

- Continue providing Christmas lighting in the area, including the addition of two more community hubs that will both receive £1,500 in grant funding for lights in their areas – Pentref Tyleri (Cwmtillery) and Aberbeeg TRA.
- Continue maintaining the War Memorial to a high standard.
- Continue hosting local events like the St David's Day Concert and Party in the Park.
- Provide grant funding in the community as part of the Loneliness Project.
- Provide new events in the area like the Fun Run and Summer Cinema Events.

Community Empowerment Committee

- Continue supporting the important work done by Off The Streets and the Blaenau Gwent detached youth workers.
- Begin providing funding for opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to many young people in the area, such as educational visits.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
1926 – 2022

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council was deeply saddened by the news of the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Cllr Nick Simmons, Chair of the Council said:

“Queen Elizabeth dedicated her life to the service of our country and the Commonwealth and was held in deep respect and admiration across the world.

“I wish to extend my sympathy to our new King and to all members of the Royal family.”

The Community Council observed the period of National Mourning until after The Queen’s funeral.