



Abertillery & Llanhilleth  
Community Council

# **Councillor Surgeries Guidebook**

# SURGERIES

## What are Surgeries?

Surgeries provide an opportunity for Councillors to meet residents, discuss their concerns and build an understanding of how to tackle issues raised. Traditionally, Councillors will advertise a time and place in the community where residents can attend to talk to them.

## Casework

Casework is the work which you handle as a Councillor, such as working to resolve issues which are raised during surgeries.

It is important to develop ways to manage information and paper flow associated with casework. Use a simple form to note down key information like names, addresses, contact details and the nature of the enquiry. Make sure to ask permission to record or share this information.

## Safety

There have been very few major incidents of violence towards Councillors, and there are no statistics proving that public figures are at more risk than anybody else involved in front-facing roles.

Most aggression experienced by Councillors is on the low to moderate end of the scale of unacceptable behaviour. Severe abuse can be considered violence, even if no physical interaction is involved.

Residents may be stressed or angry - remember to be polite and assertive, but never aggressive as this will increase tension. Do not promise more than you can deliver as this will create problems in the long run.

Avoid taking personal responsibility for problems, as blame and hostility may shift on to you. Do not respond to offensive remarks or foul language - draw the discussion to a close. Choose a safe, public venue with clear escape routes and make sure the door to the room you are in cannot be locked from inside.

Read the Personal Safety for Councillors guide for more detailed advice and never host surgeries alone.

# SAFETY CHECKLIST

When conducting surgeries, you may meet people who are confrontational or in different states of distress. They may display irrational behaviour or become upset, angry or aggressive. It is therefore important that you continually assess your surroundings and potential threats before and during meetings to ensure that you reduce the risks and stay safe.

### Ask yourself the following questions:

- ☐ Will there be other people present in the building when we hold our surgery?  
→ Do they know we are in the building?
- ☐ Do we have the incident logbook?  
→ If not - make notes of incidents to be added to the logbook later.
- ☐ Have we checked the incident logbook to see whether the visitor has previously attended and caused problems?
- ☐ Has the visitor previously displayed irrational behaviour or been aggressive or confrontational?
- ☐ Is the visitor currently displaying irrational behaviour or signs of being upset, angry or aggressive?
- ☐ Have we checked the room to make sure it is set up correctly with our chairs nearest the door, so that we can get out quickly if we need to?
- ☐ Is my escape route clear and how do I get out quickly and safely if I need to?
- ☐ Where are the fire exits, and is access to these clear?
- ☐ Have we removed any items that have been left lying around, that could be used as a weapon against us?
- ☐ Is there sufficient room between myself and the visitor to respect personal space?
- ☐ Is the room well lit?
- ☐ Is there a phone in the room?
- ☐ Is my mobile phone within reach, is it charged and with signal?
- ☐ Is there a password that I can discreetly use to inform my colleagues that I need their assistance?
- ☐ Is my personal safety alarm working and within reach?
- ☐ Am I sat at their level?
- ☐ Am I using eye contact and open hand gestures to display a helpful attitude?

Adapted from the Personal Safety Checklist for MP/Councillor Surgeries:



ASSOCIATION OF  
CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS

# HANDLING ENQUIRIES

All enquiries should be handled with humility and care. Some residents may see you as a last resort and may be angry or upset. Avoid promising to fix every issue, but offer a supportive ear.

To understand and deal with an enquiry, consider the following:

- Establish the facts - what exactly are they asking for?
- What (if any) action have they already taken to deal with the issue?
- Is there any action they should take now?
- Is the issue within our remit as a Council?
- Focus on solutions, not blame.
- Use your judgement to offer solutions, whether that is by advising them of who to talk to, or bringing the issue to Council or a Committee to discuss.

If you are referring issues to the officers, give a clear overview of the issue, why you think the officers are best to handle it, and what you think should be done. Try to copy the constituent into the email. Remember to keep confidentiality and data protection in mind.

Most importantly, don't promise what you cannot deliver. It is essential to manage expectations around what you can or cannot do, and the timeframe associated with this. If you are unable to help with an enquiry, explain why and try to refer them to somewhere that may be able to help.

If you do not know how to answer a query, do not give an answer that you are not sure is accurate. Instead, explain that you need to seek further clarity or refer them elsewhere.

Make sure you stick to the code of conduct throughout your surgeries. This means ensuring you do not misrepresent the Council:

'6. - (1) You must -  
not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute'

'7. - You must not -

(b) use, or authorise others to use, the resources of your authority -  
ii) in breach of your authority's requirements;  
iv) other than in a manner which is calculated to facilitate, or to be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the authority or of the office to which you have been elected or appointed'

# OUR REMIT

Understanding the duties and powers of the Council is vital in ensuring you don't over-promise anything during surgeries. Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council operates with a Committee System. For a deeper understanding of what the Council and its Committees do, the terms of reference can be found in 'extra reading'. If a resident would like to make a complaint against the Council, please refer them to the officers.

## Our Remit:

### PlaCE:

- Defibrillators
- Town in Bloom
- Car Schemes
- Ffrindiau Tyleri events
- Community energy projects
- Allotment provision
- Biodiversity
- Commenting on planning applications
- Community Asset Transfers

### Leisure & Tourism:

- Party in the Park
- Viaduct Run
- Events
- War Memorial
- Christmas lights
- Summer Cinema
- Christmas/St. David's Day Concerts
- Loneliness Project
- Remembrance Day

### Community Empowerment:

- Newsletters/publications
- Funding youth work
- Grant funding

### Finance:

- Finances and regulations
- Governance

### HR:

- Staffing

### Council:

- Wellbeing
- Budgeting/precept

We have powers to deal with other things as well, but many of these are not applicable. See extra reading for a detailed list.

For enquiries about the following, **Blaenau Gwent CBC** should be contacted:

- Highways & transport
- Waste & recycling
- Taxes
- Housing
- Planning, licencing & development
- Voting & elections
- Parking
- Social care
- Trading standards
- Births, deaths & marriages
- Benefits & universal credit
- Street lighting
- Schools

Many of these can be handled via the Council's 'My Services' function.

If the resident has been unsuccessful in receiving help from Blaenau Gwent CBC, use your judgement as to whether ALCC involvement could help.

See the 'Contact Information' page for more details about where to refer residents to for enquiries outside our remit.

# DATA PROTECTION

## GDPR

The General Data Protection Regulation provides guidance for handling personal information. This includes any information that could identify someone, like a name or address.

The UK GDPR sets out 7 key principles which must be considered when handling personal data:

Lawfulness, fairness & transparency

Purpose limitation

Data minimisation

Accuracy

Storage limitation

Integrity & confidentiality (security)

Accountability

## Before Surgeries

Implement a booking system so you know who to expect.

This system should also minimise the amount of personal data recorded. For instance, it may only request their name.

Figure out a system to record the discussions you will have at the surgery.

If intending to use a computer, ensure it has proper security features in place to protect data.

## During Surgeries

Ask permission before recording personal data, and before sharing it with others.

Provide details for the office so people can request information about their data or ask for it to be deleted.

Only record details which are necessary and relevant to the issues discussed.

## After Surgeries

Destroy any notes with personal data that are no longer needed.

Store your notes at the Council Offices or securely in password-protected files on a computer.

Only share information where necessary and with permission.

# EXTRA READING

This guide was developed using the following resources. More detailed information about certain topics covered can be found by following the links below:

**[A Councillor's Workbook on Handling Casework - LGA](#)**

**[A Councillor's Workbook on Handling Complaints for Service Improvement - LGA](#)**

**[ALCC Committees - Terms of Reference](#)**

[ALCC Councillor Surgeries Policy](#)

[ALCC Councillor Surgeries Risk Assessment](#)

**[All Councillor Workbooks - LGA](#)**

**[Code of Conduct](#)**

**[Parish Councils - Powers and Duties](#)**

**[Personal Safety for Councillors - LGiU](#)**

**[Personal Safety Checklist for MP/Councillor Surgeries](#)**

**[UK GDPR Guidance and Resources - ICO](#)**

Please email us at [clerk@abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk) for pdf copies of any of these documents.



# CONTACT INFORMATION

Here you can find contact information for some of the organisations you may need to refer residents to. Click on the pictures to visit their websites.



**GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES**

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Aneurin Bevan  
University Health Board

## **Aneurin Bevan University Health Board**

For healthcare enquiries. For medical attention, refer residents to their GP or other healthcare provider, or NHS 111.



## **Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

**01495 311556**

Refer residents to the Blaenau Gwent app, website or phone number. You could also find contacts for specific issues like highways or planning if they struggle to find these themselves.



**Blaenau Gwent**  
**in this together**  
**yn hwn gyda'n gilydd**

## **Blaenau Gwent In This Together**

For residents seeking community groups and organisations in their area. This has a wellbeing directory/map for the area.



## **Blaenau Gwent Youth Service**

The youth service has youth clubs, groups and detached teams for people aged 11-25. They also provide guidance, information and have links to other organisations.



## **Bridges Community Car Scheme**

**01600 228787**

For residents that have specific enquiries about the car scheme or would like to register for the service. Residents interested in volunteering can be referred to the Council officers.



## **Gwent Police**

**101 or website**

For enquiries, information or reporting incidents and crimes which are not emergencies.



## **Off The Streets**

**Via Facebook or [Alana.offthestreets@gmail.com](mailto:Alana.offthestreets@gmail.com)**

They provide free sessions for young people around Llanhilleth, Swffryd and Brynithel. These include free food provisions.





# Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council

## Councillor Surgeries Policy

### Introduction:

Councillor Surgeries are a way for people to meet with their local Councillors and raise any concerns they may have. Councillors can then provide help and guidance for these concerns.

### Considerations:

Surgeries should take place in safe, accessible buildings selected by the Councillors hosting them. The Councillors shall also determine the date and time, as well as any booking system required.

Councillors must not conduct surgeries individually. There should not be less than two persons present at a Surgery.

Councillors will take on responsibility for determining an appropriate solution to any issues or questions raised. If the issue is not within the remit of the ALCC, the Councillor should endeavour to put the resident in contact with the appropriate organisation. Councillors should exercise due caution in responding to public enquiries and must not bring the Council into disrepute.

Relevant training will be provided to Councillors when this is available. The Councillor Surgery Guidebook will also be distributed to any Councillors hosting surgeries and should be followed.

A risk assessment must be conducted for these events, and this document will be kept live so it can be amended as needed. Councillors are responsible for adhering to the actions raised within the risk assessment for these events, and they must minimise risk as much as possible.

Surgeries should be advertised as widely as possible to encourage participation. This includes advertising on social media, the Council website and in noticeboards. They should be advertised as far in advance as possible.

Notes should be taken during surgeries, outlining the issue and contact information for handling it. These can be taken by hand or on a computer in a secure, password-protected file. Councillors must follow GDPR guidance and ask permission to record and share personal data. Notes taken should be treated as confidential and should be stored in the Council Offices, Mitre Street, NP13 1AE or in a password-protected computer file.

Members of the public can request to speak to Councillors privately if they wish, but two persons should still be present for these meetings. Members of the public may also request to speak to Councillors of a certain gender, which can be arranged via the Officers.



# **Councillor Surgeries – 2024 RISK ASSESSMENT**

**Abertillery and Llanhilleth  
Community Council  
Council Offices  
Mitre Street  
Abertillery NP13 1AE**

Version Number: 1 2024  
Date of Issue: 4 November 2024  
Review:

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## 1.0 Event Details

<b>Name</b>	Councillor Surgeries
<b>Date</b>	Various - TBD
<b>Location</b>	Various - TBD
<b>Event Organisers</b>	Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council <a href="mailto:clerk@abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk">clerk@abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk</a> / 01495 217323
<b>Event Manager/Contact</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	To meet with residents and understand issues in the area.

## 2.0 General Overview

As event organisers, Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council (ALCC) initially has the prime responsibility for the safe operation of the event and is required to have in place effective arrangements for its events.

As part of the risk management approach, a risk assessment must be completed. This document will remain live throughout the planning process and will be amended according to any changes.

This event involves inviting residents to talk to their community Councillors, and give an opportunity for Councillors to help resolve issues.

## 3.0 Risk Assessment Notes

‘Councillors’ refers to members of Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council.

‘Staff’ refers to officers of Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council.

‘Public’ refers to attendees.

The risk ratings are assessed based on the likelihood of the issue occurring, combined with the possible harm caused by it.

#### 4.0 Risk Assessment

Overall Risk Rating:

ASSESSORS NAME: Molly Jones Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council		DATE OF ASSESSMENT: 14/11/24				
OBSERVATIONS / HAZARDS	LOCATION	RISK			PERSONS AT RISK	ACTION REQUIRED
		H	M	L		
Leak of personal data				✓	Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Councillors will only record necessary details to deal with inquiries.</li> <li>A private space should be available for people to discuss confidential issues.</li> <li>All recorded data will be stored at the Council Offices.</li> <li>Councillors will be informed of appropriate procedures (GDPR).</li> </ul>
Photographs being taken without consent			✓		All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If photographs are wanted for marketing purpose, consent must be sought first.</li> <li>Notice will be displayed stating no photographs to be taken.</li> </ul>
Having to cancel at short notice		✓			Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An apology notification will be placed at the premises, social media posts may also be published informing the public.</li> <li>Members of the public that were expected to be present can be warned if possible.</li> </ul>
Accident occurring on the premises					All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Premises selected will already have public access and will be checked to ensure it is safe to use.</li> <li>Fire exits must be functioning and remain clear for use.</li> <li>First Aid facilities will also be checked and access to these must be possible.</li> <li>Councillors will follow the Safety Checklist to maximise safety.</li> </ul>

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council  
Councillor Surgeries Risk Assessment

Members of the public attending the session without having booked					Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A booking system will be implemented to ensure Councillors are aware of who is due to attend.</li> <li>• The meeting will be publicised as widely as possible.</li> <li>• Councillors should inform the person that meetings are appointment only, and could advise them on how to book in the future.</li> </ul>
Councillors responding inappropriately or incorrectly to questions					All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors will be trained on procedures for dealing with the public.</li> <li>• Councillors will be made aware of their responsibility to maintain the reputation of the Council.</li> <li>• A list of areas the Council do/do not have involvement in may be published as part of the promotion of the event, or borough Councillors may attend to handle these requests.</li> </ul>
Inappropriate (e.g. racial or abusive) language being used by a member of the public					All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A list of unacceptable behaviour will be posted in view of attendees.</li> <li>• The member of the public should be warned that the language is not acceptable.</li> <li>• If it continues, the Councillors should terminate the meeting and invite the member of the public to re-book at another time.</li> </ul>
Public becoming distressed during meeting					All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors will be trained on dealing with these situations and should remain calm and compassionate.</li> <li>• Councillors should try to de-escalate to avoid aggression or violence.</li> </ul>
Aggression or violence towards Councillors					Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors will follow the Safety Checklist ahead of and during the surgery to minimise risk of violence or aggression.</li> <li>• Councillors should never host surgeries alone.</li> <li>• Police presence is encouraged when arranging surgeries.</li> <li>• Councillors will be trained on dealing with these situations.</li> <li>• Personal alarms will be provided to Councillors attending.</li> <li>• Mobile phones should be kept with Councillors at all times so they can call for help if needed.</li> <li>• An appointment system will be implemented so Councillors are aware of who is attending.</li> <li>• An incident logbook will be provided to record issues encountered.</li> </ul>





# Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community

## Council

### Cyngor Cymuned Abertyleri a Llanhilledd Winter Newsletter - Cylchlythyr Gaeaf 2024

*Our thoughts are with everyone affected by Storm Bert, and we thank all those who have volunteered & supported the community. We encourage grant applications from groups working to assist during this challenging time—please do not hesitate to get in touch.*

#### Remembrance Day

Our Town in Bloom contractor, TAFY, filled the tubs around the War Memorial with red flowers in November. Our staff also added poppies to the fencing and helped Abertillery Knit 'n' Knatter hang their poppy cascade.

The Chair of Council attended the service at Abertillery War Memorial to lay a wreath. Other councillors laid wreaths at Llanhilleth, Swffryd, Bournville, Aberbeeg & Blaenau Gwent Village.

We also supported the Royal British Legion's Remembrance Concert by making programmes & advertising the event.



#### Youth Representatives

In October, Council welcomed Sophie Townsend & Jackson Powell as its new Youth Representatives. They are aged 15-25 and will represent the views of young people in the area to the Council.

#### Senedd ALC

In September, we continued our work with Abertillery Learning Community by hosting another Senedd ALC meeting and supporting the new student clerks, Chair, and Vice Chair.



#### Scare in Jubilee Square

We helped fund Ffrindiau Tyleri's Scare in Jubilee Square event again this Halloween. Thank you to everyone that joined in!



#### Bridges Car Scheme

In June, the PlaCE Committee gave £1,000 to Bridges Car Scheme to subsidise journeys for passengers in the Council area. This has saved passengers £336 on journeys to medical appointments between June-October.



#### Co-Options

In November, Council co-opted Cllr Frankie Baker to the Cwmtillery Ward & Cllr Ivor Beynon to the Aberbeeg Ward.



#### Grants Awarded

- £300 to AADMS towards their new show 'Shout!'
- £1,000 to Abertillery Bluebirds FC towards a sporting facility for youth teams.
- £250 to Ebenezer Baptist Church for their free 'Messy Christmas' event.
- £1,000 to The Mitre to host groups & workshops.
- £500 sponsorship for a Hospice of the Valleys Christmas Concert at The Met.
- £200 Cwmtillery Ward grant to Abertillery Belles FC.
- £1,000 to Abertillery Piranhas for swim equipment.
- £300 Aberbeeg Ward grant to Ebbw Fach Community Group.

#### Solar Farm Grants

Each year, we distribute funding from Hafod-Y-Dafal Solar Farm as community grants.

This year, Council agreed to award the following grants:

- Friends of Blaenau Gwent Village and Roseheyworth Park - £29,506 for play equipment at Roseheyworth Park.
- St. Michael's Church - £25,000 to install a sustainable heating system.
- Abertillery Learning Community - £7,180 for gates & rugby posts.
- Abertillery Town Band - £7,300 to refurbish instruments for the Academy.

The remaining £1,014 was given towards a new roof for Abertillery Bowls & Cricket Club.

#### Recent Actions

- We got accepted into an Energy Learning Network for councils to learn about community energy.
- We published our 2024 Biodiversity and 2024 Wellbeing Reports, highlighting our actions towards these goals.
- In September, Council agreed to formally support Abertillery Aspirations.
- We advertised tenders for grounds maintenance of the War Memorial & for a new Council website.