



# Van Community Council Annual Report 2025-2026

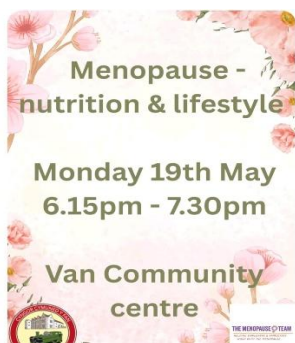
(Section 52 LOCAL GOV & ELECTIONS(WALES) ACT 2021)

Your councillors	Ward
Elaine Forehead (chair)	Lansbury
Anne Broughton-Pettit	Lansbury
Sharon Harris	Lansbury
Sheila Newbury	Porset
John Pettit	Brynau
Matthew Ferris	Brynau
Sheila Jones	Porset
Lynne Hughes	Porset
Jeff Grenfell (vice chair)	Lansbury
Christine Forehead	Porset
Alison Vyas	Porset

## MEMBERSHIPS

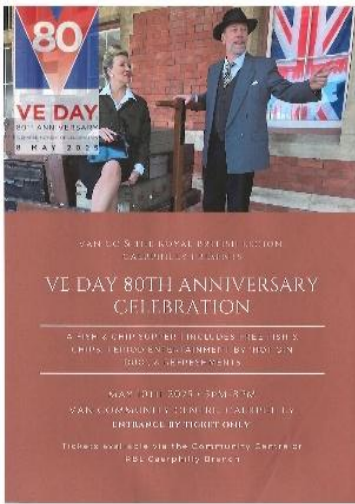
One Voice Wales (OVW)

The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)



In May, the Council hosted its first community gathering of the year, organised by Cllr Sheila Jones. The event included a supportive and informative menopause and nutrition session held at Van Community Centre. Alongside this, Create Caerphilly continued their excellent work by delivering engaging craft sessions at the Centre, further encouraging creativity, wellbeing, and community connection.

The Council conducted its Annual Meeting, followed by the first Full Council Meeting of the year. Declarations of Office were formally signed, and councillors were requested to review and update their Registers of Interests in line with governance and transparency requirements.



### VE Day 80 Celebrations

In collaboration with the Royal British Legion and led by Cllr Matthew Ferris, the Council supported a special VE Day 80 celebration at Van Community Centre. The evening featured live music from the 1940s and 1950s, accompanied by a fish-and-chip supper for approximately 100 attendees.

The Centre was beautifully decorated with streamers and bunting, and many guests embraced the spirit of the occasion by dressing in period-appropriate attire. The event served as a heartfelt thank-you to all those remembered for their role in defending our country and provided a wonderful opportunity for residents to come together to reflect, celebrate, and enjoy good times with friends.



For information contact: Geraint Jones  
geraint.jones@gavo.org.uk

Building communities through participation



### Successful projects currently running in the ward and continuing over the next 12 months include:

- **Seated Movement Sessions** at Van Community Centre – *free of charge*
- **Drama Club** at Van Community Centre – *free of charge*
- **Sewing Skills Workshops**, delivered by Create Caerphilly at Van Community Centre – *free of charge*
- **Men's Crafting Connections** at Van Allotments – *free, including a shared meal*
- **Forces Fitness** sessions at Van Community Centre and surrounding fields – *free of charge*
- **Intergenerational Gardening** sessions at Van Community Centre – *free of charge*

These initiatives provide inclusive, accessible opportunities that support physical wellbeing, mental health, skills development, and community connection for residents of all ages.

**Wednesday 6th August:** Potential projects were presented to residents of the ward and put to a public vote. Based on their merit and community value, successful projects were subsequently awarded funding through the Participatory Budget process.

This initiative proved to be a huge success, with projects selected in direct consultation with residents and designed to make a meaningful difference for people of all ages across the ward.

## Family Tennis Sessions – Funded by Van Community Council

Family tennis sessions were delivered over a five-week period during the summer holidays. Sessions were structured for children aged 5–8 years from 4:15pm to 5:00pm, and 9–12 years from 5:00pm to 5:45pm.

All participants were also offered the opportunity to attend free weekly tennis sessions at CTC on Wednesdays from 4:30pm to 5:30pm, providing continued access to physical activity beyond the initial programme.

Despite being very heavily promoted through social media, the sessions were advertised later than planned and proved to be poorly attended. As a result, the programme was subsequently cancelled. While this was disappointing, it provided valuable learning to inform the timing and promotion of future activities.



## Family Tennis with Van Community Council

Join us this summer as we bring our popular family tennis sessions to the community, for free, thanks to Van Community Council!



- Children and a grownup family member can enjoy tennis warmups, skill builders, rallies and fun games each week.
- Every Tuesday during summer holidays, starting 28th July, at Van Community Centre (Clos Guto, Caerphilly, CF83 1RXX).
- Ages 5-8 at 4:15pm. Ages 9-12 at 5pm. (x8 spaces in each session)
- Free to attend for residents of Momington Meadows, Porset Park, Lansbury Park and the surrounding areas.
- All equipment provided. Just dress in comfortable clothes and wear trainers. Also bring a drink.
- Plus we're offering weekly free play at CTC, every Wednesday at 4:30pm.

Caerphilly Tennis Club  
Virginia Park, Caerphilly, CF83 2SW  
Head Coach Jonathan Morgan  
jonathanmorgan@caerphillytennis.co.uk 07891 640642  
Book now at: www.clubpark.lta.org.uk/caerphillylta/coaching  
www.caerphillytennis.co.uk @CaerphillyLTC on social media



## FREE Skateboard Sessions :Funded by Van Community Council

Skateboard sessions were held at Clos Guto Skateboard Park a day in July and a day in August. Attendance was slow to start due to unpredictable weather conditions; however, once the sun came out, participation increased and more children joined in. The sessions proved enjoyable and provided a lively opportunity for outdoor activity, social interaction, and positive engagement within the community.

See below, Cllr Elaine Forehead attending and engaging with the young people throughout a session.

## FREE SKATE BOARDING LESSONS



PORSET PARK SKATEPARK

PRE-BOOK TO SECURE A SPACE  
(OR TURN UP IF WE HAVE SPACES)

FUNDED BY  
VAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

31ST JULY (3PM AND 4PM)  
20TH AUGUST (11AM AND 12 MIDDAY)



SCAN HERE

WWW.SKATEBOARDACADEMY.UK/BOOKING



**SUMMER**  
PLAY DAY

**WHERE:** CAERPHILLY UNIFORM EXCHANGE  
42 Ailee Court, CF83 5DU

**WHEN:** August 12<sup>th</sup>

**TIME:** 10:00am - midday

**FREE event**

**\*\*VAN WARD ONLY**



Coerphilly Uniform Exchange

Salvaged Creations Wales

07793813373

**Salvage Creations Play Day – Funded by Van Community Council:**

in August at Caerphilly Uniform Exchange / Lansbury Stretch

The event featured a range of interactive, creative play activities and games, providing children and families with an enjoyable opportunity to come together, be creative, and engage in active outdoor play in a welcoming

**Forces Fitness Play Session – awarded funding from Van Community Council**

to deliver a structured play and fitness session at Van Community Centre and Grounds in August.

The session was designed to include a range of activities such as a mini obstacle course, gladiator pugil challenges, tug-of-war, and water-based challenges, aimed at encouraging physical activity and engagement among young people.

Due to extremely poor weather conditions, the session had to be moved indoors, which significantly impacted attendance. Despite being heavily promoted, turnout was disappointing.

See Cllr Sharon Harris and Cllr Elaine Forehead alongside the Forces Fitness team



**October 2025 Bulb Planting**

Volunteers took part in a bulb-planting initiative at **Van Orchard**. The activity was initiated by **Cllr Sheila Jones**, who successfully requested a **bulb pack from Keep Wales Tidy**. The project enhances the local green space, supporting environmental improvement, community pride, and longer-term biodiversity benefits for the area.

**Tribute to Councillor Christine Forehead**

It is with deep sorrow that the community of Caerphilly bid farewell to an extraordinary public servant and a cherished neighbour. Cllr Christine Forehead, aged 81, passed away peacefully on 18 November 2025,

Elected in 1995 to the newly established Caerphilly County Borough Council, Christine had already served her community on Rhymney Valley District Council—and went on to be Chair of the Council

A proud Labour representative for Van ward, re-elected as recently as 2022, she held senior roles on key committees and civic bodies, including governance and scrutiny. Having represented Van ward with distinction for over 30 years, Christine exemplified tireless advocacy and practical compassion. Her public record—attendance, committee leadership, and community roles—reflects her deep sense of duty and passion. Actively involved in school governing bodies and supporting Caerphilly’s youth, she played a vital role in local development projects—such as expanding CCTV and enhancing leisure facilities.

Christine’s warmth and humour made her a much-loved figure in all circles.

Though she has left us, Christine's spirit lives on in the positive changes she brought to our community—from safer streets and thriving schools, to the next generation of local leaders she inspired. Her laughter, her kindness, her tireless energy: these remain indelible parts of Caerphilly’s story.

# November 19th

## Awards night: Van Community Champions

The evening was compered by Ryan Hyde, a deserving winner from the previous year, and catering was provided by Van Community Centre (which was fantastic!)



### Winner-Riley Messer

#### Nomination Citation:

Riley is a dedicated and much-valued volunteer at the community centre who can always be relied upon to help. He supports Cwtch Café by setting up tables and chairs, running the community shop, and has recently begun assisting in the kitchen, preparing ingredients and cooking under the chef's guidance.

At Christmas, when no Santa was available, Riley stepped in without hesitation to ensure everyone received a gift. He also takes time to sit and chat with older members of the community, offering companionship that often brightens their day.

Riley's kindness, reliability, and willingness to go above and beyond make him a true asset and a wonderful example of community spirit.



Winner-  
Riley Messer



Runner up-  
Kieran Sawday

### Runner Up-Kieran Sawday

#### Nomination Citation:

He has been a great asset since becoming a volunteer in February. He has supported the Van Foodbank, helping with setting up and packing down, transporting stock to and from the centre, and preparing food parcels for distribution. He also provides valuable support at the youth club, assisting as part of the kitchen team and helping sessions run smoothly. His reliability, willingness to help, and commitment make him a highly valued volunteer and a genuine asset to the community.



**Sponsored by Van Community Council  
Van Allotments –  
Grower of the Year**

The award was nominated by members of and proudly presented by the Allotments Chair, Tracey Lintern Davies. The award recognised Dannielle Chui for her contribution, commitment, and dedication to the allotment’s community.

**Christmas Party and Community Light Switch-On**

In the lead-up to the Christmas celebrations, a decoration workshop week was held to prepare for the community Christmas party and the light switch-on. The main event took place on Saturday 6th December at Van Community Centre.

A children’s disco was held from 2:00pm to 4:00pm, with 50 tickets issued, followed by a buffet of soup and rolls served from 4:00pm. A choir performance also took place at 4:00pm, adding to the festive atmosphere.

United Welsh attended with a Christmas Grotto van, and all children received a gift, kindly provided by Toybox.

Gwent Police were also present, bringing a gaming van which proved very popular with young people.

The Christmas lights were officially switched on around the tree at 5:00pm by Cllr Elaine Forehead, marking the highlight of a wonderful community celebration.

The event was a great success, bringing residents together to celebrate the festive season, and there is strong commitment to build on this success and enhance next year’s celebrations even further.



**January Pamper Day**

at Van Community Centre, delivered in collaboration with Gwent Police and Ystrad Mynach College and Van Community Council.

Cllr Elaine Forehead and Cllr Sharon Harris were in attendance presenting favour bags donated by the Council to all those who attended.

A number of partner organisations were also present, offering information, advice, and support. These included GAVO, The Menopause Team, Help Me Quit Smoking, and Prevention of Youth Homelessness.

The event provided a positive opportunity for residents to access wellbeing services, connect with local organisations, and enjoy a supportive community environment.

# Tribute to Leslie Rees

*Volunteer and Caretaker, Van Community Centre*

On 17th January, at Van Community Centre, we came together to celebrate Leslie's life — to share stories, reflect on moments that made us smile, and honour someone who brought so much light into the lives of those around them.

Anyone who knew Leslie will smile at the thought that yellow was Leslie's favourite colour — bright, warm, and cheerful, just like Leslie. And of course, Leslie's love of raspberries was fondly remembered: a small but sweet reminder of the simple joys that meant so much.

While the day carried an element of sadness, it was also a time of togetherness — a chance to laugh, connect, and hold on to treasured memories. As we remembered Leslie, we also took a moment to reflect on other loved ones we have lost, who remain very much in our hearts.

Everyone's presence was a powerful reflection of the impact Leslie had on our community. Thank you to all who came together to support one another and to celebrate a life so deeply loved and fondly remembered.



## Blue Monday 20th January 2026

*Blue Monday is the term often used to describe the third Monday of January and is sometimes referred to as the most depressing day of the year. In recognition an event, for the second year running, was held at Van Community Centre, with Cllr Sheila Jones playing an integral role in its organisation*



Van Community Councilors provided a comprehensive contact list representing local organisations and network partners working within the ward. This created a valuable opportunity for residents to engage directly with services and for the Council to consult with the community on how it can continue to make a positive difference. Reflecting on the event, Tracey Davies (Platform) commented: *"I think events like this are important. Face-to-face conversations with other organisations are far more productive than relying on emails alone. I came away with several ideas to strengthen community connectivity and improve our support. The event highlighted the value of partnership working, with collaboration benefiting not only wellbeing services but also wider community initiatives, including allotments and local food projects supported through organisations such as GAVO."*



**Community Infrastructure projects:**

June 2024 Van Orchard-Fruit trees £70.97

On 1st March, a **Welsh-themed St David's Day** celebration was held at the Cwtch Café, Van Community Centre.

The event celebrated Welsh culture and traditions, with guests enjoying traditional cawl soup and Welsh cakes in a warm and welcoming community setting. The celebration provided an opportunity for residents to come together, socialise, and mark St David's Day in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.



**FF FORCES FITNESS**

**FORCES FITNESS HEALTH & WELL-BEING SESSIONS VAN COMMUNITY CENTRE**

March 31st - May 26th - Aug 4th

10AM - 2PM - Ages 7+

The FREE to attend sessions will be amazing, fun and will include:

- Health and well-being Tips
- Obstacle course
- Gladiator pugil challenges
- Team Games
- Military Command tasks
- Tug of War

Meet at the community centre. The session will take part on the fields if the weather is good!

Scan the QR Code to Book! Or contact [Info@forcesfitness.co.uk](mailto:Info@forcesfitness.co.uk) for more information.



**Forces Fitness: FREE for residents in the ward!**

A structured play and fitness session was held at Van Community Centre and Grounds during the Easter holidays in March. The session included a range of activities such as a mini obstacle course, gladiator pugil challenges, and tug-of-war, all designed to encourage physical activity and positive engagement among young people.

With the weather on our side, attendance was fantastic, and the session was enjoyed by all who took part. Forces Fitness will be returning to deliver further sessions on two additional dates in May and August, continuing to provide fun, active opportunities for young people in the community.

## Year to year summary of accounts

DESCRIPTION	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/2025	2025/2026
C/F	£45,708.00	£39,228.00	£52,403.00	£27,350.00	£27,350.00	£36,097.54	£36,560.62
<b>INCOME</b>							
Precept	£25,000.00	£27,500.00	£27,350.00	£27,350.00	£27,350.00	£31,000.00	£31,500.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£27,017</b>	<b>£35,369</b>	<b>£ 27,355</b>	<b>£30,277.16</b>	<b>£28,587.42</b>	<b>£33,283.96</b>	<b>£32,402.19</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>							
General Expenditure							
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£13,979.45</b>	<b>£15,288.00</b>	<b>£14,619.00</b>	<b>£20,317.15</b>	<b>£17,851.33</b>	<b>£24,570.67</b>	<b>£23,806.39</b>
Fees to outside Bodies							
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2,282.01</b>	<b>£2,133.00</b>	<b>£2,597.00</b>	<b>£5,541.79</b>	<b>£2,404.62</b>	<b>£3,413.02</b>	<b>£2,490.82</b>
Council Allowances/Expenses							
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,614.71</b>	<b>£1,631.00</b>	<b>£1,966.00</b>	<b>£1,617.50</b>	<b>£1,684.54</b>	<b>£1,404.00</b>	<b>£1,404.00</b>
Financial Assistance/ Projects							
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£15,620.49</b>	<b>£3,142.00</b>	<b>£10,167.00</b>	<b>£10,023.59</b>	<b>£6,121.20</b>	<b>£4,215.81</b>	<b>£4,548.29</b>
CIL RESTRICTED							
<b>CIL Balance</b>				£7,274.70	£2,452.10	£615.67	£544.70
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£33,497</b>	<b>£ 22,194</b>	<b>£29,349</b>	<b>£37,803</b>	<b>£32,884</b>	<b>£ 35,440</b>	<b>£32,320</b>

## Recommendations and Conclusions

Van Community Council recognises that it would be good practice to develop and adopt a formal Engagement Policy. Working in partnership with local networks and organisations, there remains a continual need to reach those who rarely participate, those who are harder to engage, and residents who do not regularly express their views. A priority going forward is to actively seek input from residents across the ward to better understand their preferences, concerns, and aspirations for future activities and projects.

Van Community Council will continue to allocate budgeted funding to ring-fenced projects, prioritising initiatives that provide inclusive benefits across the ward. The Council acknowledges the diverse demographic, cultural, and social characteristics of the community and is committed to ensuring equitable access and opportunity.

To further support community participation, future projects will benefit from improved promotion across the ward. This will include greater face-to-face engagement, the use of posters, and a stronger, more confident use of social media to advertise opportunities and encourage residents to get involved.

Building on the success of community events such as the Christmas Celebrations at Van Community Centre and VE Day, the Council has agreed to expand and further promote these initiatives to achieve wider reach and greater impact.

Van Community Council will also continue to support Van Allotments' "Grower of the Year" award as part of the Community Champions Awards, recognising the valuable contribution volunteers make to the community.

Finally, Van Community Council remains committed to keeping pace with training and development needs. The Council ensures that all councillors are accessible to residents via email, by phone, or—where appropriate—through face-to-face engagement.