

Annual report for 2024 – 25

**Luke O'Connor House Resource Centre,
21 Barter Court, Hightown, Wrexham, LL13 8QT**

Email: clerk@offacommunitycouncil.gov.uk

Tel: 01978 291562

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Introduction

This annual report sets out to inform the residents of Offa Community Council about the activities undertaken by Offa Community Council during 2024/25 based on the financial year 1st April – 31st March. The report contains a brief outline of the structure of the Council, an overview of the Council's activities throughout the year and a financial summary.

The Community Council continues to work for the benefit of Offa and its residents. All members are unpaid and work as elected representatives of the community as part of the Community Council which is a corporate body.

The Community Council operates under legislation, the Local Government Act 1972 and other subsequent statutes.

Contact

The Council office is based at its resource centre at 21 Barter Court, Hightown, Wrexham, and the contact for the Council is the Clerk to the Council Benn Minshall, CILCA (Wales)

Meetings

Meetings are held as hybrid meetings which are based at Luke O'Connor House and Teams. The council meets on a Thursday most weeks at 7pm, with exception of the August Recess, unless urgent business arises.

Committee

The Council

The Community Council consists of 18 members (Councillors) covering four wards as follows:

Brynyffynnon Ward	Five members
Erddig Ward	Four members
Hermitage Ward	Four members
Offa Ward	Five members

Council Members

BRYNYFFYNNON WARD

Philip Wynn

Barbara Anne Lloyd

Steven Vale

Christine Griffiths

John Ramm

ERDDIG WARD

David Jones

Keith Williams

Alex Jones

Deborah Corcoran

HERMITAGE WARD

Linda Subacchi

Grahame Wynn

Graham Rogers

Tom Blackwell

OFFA WARD

Katie Wilkinson

Jim Steele

Andrew Ranger

Nicola Laurie

Alun Jenkins

Contact Councillors via the Clerk to the Council Mr Benn Minshall at:
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Court, Hightown,
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The Community Council elects a Chair and a Vice-chair at the Council's annual meeting in May serving a term of two years. The Council is supported by three members of staff, the Clerk to the Council Benn Minshall, Deputy Clerk Helen McCarthy, and Community Agent Annmarie Ruscoe.

Training and Development

The Council actively promotes training opportunities for members and its staff ensuring that the Council is well prepared to carry out its work.

1. Offa Advice Service

The Community Council invests in providing a free advice service for all residents of Offa via a service level agreement with Caia Park Community Council. A free drop-in session takes place at Luke O'Connor House Resource Centre every Wednesday from 10am til 12noon. Advice can be accessed by phone or email at other times of the week and advice offered can cover any benefit related or debt issue as well as more generalist advice on any number or range of topics. It is an open-door service with the sessions run on a "first come first served basis". It is also authorised to issue food bank vouchers to eligible residents and complete debt relief orders. The cost of providing the service is £7,360.00 is met entirely by the Community Council.

2 Term Time Play Provision

In 2024-25 the Community Council have funded play sessions located at the Brynycabanau play area – 1 session a week during term time. They also fund 2 school holiday sessions per week at Bellevue Park and Brynycabanau play area in addition to the term time provision.

The service at all sites is provided by Wrexham Play Development Team and reports confirm the provision is well attended, and it is of value to both children and parents. The cost of the play provision is in the region of £14,478.00 annually for 2024/25

3 Luke O'Connor House Resource Centre

Luke O'Connor House is Offa Community Council's community resource centre located on Hightown's Barracks Field Estate. Formerly the Wrexham Office of Wales and West Housing Association, the Community Council took over the running of the Luke O'Connor House when it became vacant in early 2001 with the aid of £33,000 Sustainable Communities Grant from the National Assembly for Wales. In 2004 when the original 3 year lease expired, Offa Community Council took the decision to purchase the centre with the aid of a PWLB loan.

Office space is leased to various organisations which include Adferiad, a mental health charity, which runs the Wrexham Outreach Tenancy Support (WOTS) supporting tenants with basic skills in tenancy maintenance, help with social living skills and integration into the larger community.

There are various courses and groups that run at Luke O'Connor House which are funded in different ways including well-being groups, art and craft classes, and a youth club.

The centre has been very successful and is a well-used facility. Operational costs currently stand at around £10,382.00 per annum.

4 School Crossing Patrols

Offa Community Council continues to fund a manned school crossing:

Poplar Street (St Giles School)

The community council is committed to ensuring the safety of its children and purchased large bi-lingual signs asking parents to park responsibly outside the school gates and observe the restrictions. These signs were presented to each of the 5 primary schools in the community.

5 Maintenance and Repair of public play facilities

In 2013 Wrexham County Borough Council decided to withdraw funding for the future maintenance, inspection and repair of equipped playgrounds within the community and offered these via a service level agreement to the Community Council or the facilities would close and any equipment removed.

There are six equipped play areas:

Brynycabanau	Howards Field	Court Road
Bryn Offa	Maesgwyn	Bellevue Park Infants and Juniors

Adult fitness trail at Bellevue Park which has recently been upgraded.

These cost approximately £18,585.00 per annum to maintain. On addition during 2024/25, the Community Council has spent approximately £1221.00 on replacement play equipment. The Council actively seeks financial opportunities to upgrade or enhance these facilities.

6 Youth Outreach Work

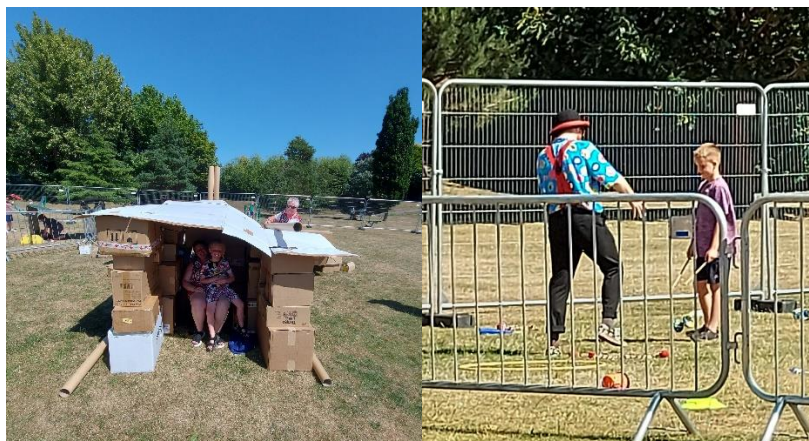
The Community Council fund the provision of three youth work sessions per week (2024/25) through an SLA agreement with the Caia Park Partnership. These sessions are centre based youth clubs. The outreach workers also travel around the four community wards engaging with young people offering support and guidance as well as acting as a deterrent for anti-social behaviour when required.

The Community Council also funds weekly football sessions for Offa young people and children run by Brickfield FC in various locations in the community.

The total costs for providing both the youth service and football training sessions, excluding any one-off grant payments, represents almost 20% of the Council's income.

7 Community Events

The Community Council arranges several free events throughout the year for its residents. An Annual Offa Carnival is held in Bellevue park, recently bringing in an Event Management Company to provide the set up and entertainment, with financial support from Offa Community Council. The event has been held continually every year since 1998, until the Covid pandemic lockdown restrictions in 2020/21, returning in 2022, and has grown in attendees and attractions into one of the biggest events in Wrexham. The event is staffed on the day by volunteers from the Community Council both Councillors and staff. This year is was extremely hot and some Acts were cancelled due to the temperature on the day. Annual cost £6,000.





Annual Pensioners Xmas Party - The Community Council hold a special Xmas party every year which is now held at the Wrexham Lager Club. This is for the Residents from Offa who are senior citizens. This is a free event funded by Offa Community Council, and Wrexham Lager Club provide a 2 course traditional Xmas lunch, with service provided by their own staff. There is a free raffle with gifts donated from different agencies, and kind residents. There is entertainment from a local school choir who sing carols to provide a festive atmosphere. Annual cost £900 plus donations.

Santa float - The Community Council stage a Santa float which travels around the area. This has proven to be a huge success and is now an annual event. Annual cost £250

Xmas lights switch on event. Offa Community Council staged a Xmas light switch on event in Bellevue Park with the Support of Fair Event Management Limited. There were festive food, stalls, and acts which provided entertainment for the community. Unfortunately, we were hit with stormy weather, so the dates of the events had to be moved, and the days were reduced. There was musical entertainment which was the highlight of the events. Cost is £3600

8 Climate change/biodiversity

The Council is conscious of the need to continually act responsibly and try and influence the wider community. Signed up to the “Plastic Free Wrexham” initiative, and Offa Community Council has adopted a “Carbon Neutral Strategy” action plan. Encouraging residents on social media and the web site, to remove the use of single use plastics.

The council owns a parcel of land called Little Vawnog which has been developed into a Conservation Area with 3 distinct habitats meadow, woodland, and river bank. Offa is in a partnership with Woodwork CIC to manage the woodland area. Woodwork is a community interest company, which is a non profit organisation. They manage the area in a way that protects the wildlife and the environment whilst also making it a safe, accessible and appealing place for the community to enjoy winning awards for their work.

9 Financial Assistance

The Council supports local organisations and charities which provide a service to the Offa Community. Through the Offa Grant Scheme the Council awarded grants to voluntary or charitable groups primarily based or working in the community. In 2024/25 these groups included:

Wrexham Litter Pickers	100.00
The Friends Of Bellevue	100.00
Brickfield Rangers	3,000.00
Hightown Evergreen Social Club	120.00
Adferiad Recovery	200.00
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	300.00
Wrexham Sounds	360.00
Wales Air Ambulance	250.00
Parciau Bowling Club	4,000.00
JNE Security Limited	1,000.00
Premier Radio CIC	200.00

10 Maesgwyn and Parciau Community Centre

In 2013 the Community Council were approached by Wrexham CBC to see if it would be interested in taking on the funding and management of the two community centres as it was the intention of WCBC to close the centres following a review of their discretionary services

Both centres were well used facilities and the Community Council took the decision to undertake the future funding in order for the 2 centres to remain open. In 2019 the Maesgwyn Community Centre was leased to the Community Council. In 2025 the lease for the Parciau Community Centre was agreed.

11 Crime prevention and reduction

The Community Council has a close working partnership with its policing team who produce monthly crime reports and regularly attend Council meetings.

The Community Council has also invested in mobile CCTV cameras and now has a total of 4 cameras funded and maintained by the Community Council.

A quarterly liaison meeting is arranged by the Town Inspector for all four town councils to get together to discuss issues and current crime trends.

12 Community Agent Scheme

The Community Council employs a part-time Community Agent for 16 hours a week. The post is funded by Wrexham County Borough Council via a grant they receive direct from the Welsh Government. The Community Agent works for those aged over 50 in the community who are isolated, vulnerable or in need of support and guidance. Referrals are made by GP practices and adult social care, and the agent is responsible for signposting clients to the relevant agency.

General Power of Competence

Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Section 24 a General Power of Competence is provided for qualifying local authorities in Wales. The general power came into effect on 5th May 2022 and replaces the well-being power (Section 2 of the LGA2000) for all principal councils and eligible community councils. It gives Community Councils the same powers to act as individuals generally thus enabling them to do things that are unlike anything they have done before, subject to limitations or restrictions under other legislative provisions. In using the general power, a qualifying local authority may undertake activities anywhere and can be used to act in their own financial interests for a commercial purpose or for a charge.

The main positive effects are a more clearly-drawn general power of competence with a reduced risk of legal challenge on vires grounds than is currently the case. There are no negative effects.

In order for a Community Council to become eligible three conditions have to be satisfied:

- 1 At least two thirds of the total number of Councillors of the Community Council must have been declared elected
- 2 The Clerk must hold the CILCA or equivalent Level 3 qualification in the National Qualifications Framework
- 3 The Council must have received two unqualified auditor's opinions for two consecutive financial years, the latest of which must have been received during the 12 month period ending on the day on which the Councils resolution is passed

Once a Community Council has resolved itself to be an eligible community council it will need to reaffirm on an annual basis that it continues to meet the eligibility criteria. A council will do so by passing a resolution at its annual meeting.

It was resolved at its Annual Meeting that Offa Community Council satisfies all 3 of the eligibility criteria and declared itself an eligible Community Council for the General Power of Competence

The current Clerk has got the recommended CILCA professional qualification

The Council's expenditure / income is in excess of £200k

The Council has sound management and financial systems. Its internal audit is undertaken by JDH Business Services of Mold.

Agendas, minutes, accounts and contact details can be found at:

www.offacommunitycouncil.gov.uk

The Community can email the Clerk at clerk@offacommunitycouncil.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Income 2024/2025

Precept	£209,985.00
Interest Received	£4,531.49
Booking Fees / Rent	£36,917.19
Grants	£3,300.00
Other (Community Agent Grant)	£10,308.00
Other (HMRC Vat reclaim)	£6,488.65

Expenditure 2023/2024

Administration	£12,684.73
Office equipment	£617.17
Section 137 Payments (Grants)	£9,630.00
Service Level Agreements (Youth)	£29,922.14
Wages and Salaries	£89,334.01
Community Agent	£11,938.91
Defib supplies	£894.80
Councillors Allowance	£2,041.00
Chairmans Allowance	£156.00
Subscriptions	£1,814.00
Training	£160.00
Community Football	£240.00
Playschemes	£14,478.00
School Crossings SLA	£5,955.00
Environmental Improvements	£6,727.19
Advice Service SLA	£7,360.00
Play Areas SLA	£18,585.00
Play Areas Repairs	£1,221.55
Luke O'Connor House	£8,902.80

Offa Carnival	£6,000.00
CCTV	£528.00
Xmas Events	£4,762.05
Remembrance Day	£25.00

Appendix 2

Council Members

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Philip Wynn

Barbara Anne Lloyd

Steven Vale

Christine Griffiths

John Ramm

ERDDIG WARD

David Jones

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Appendix 3

Partner Agencies

Wrexham County Borough Council

Offa Policing Team & NW Police

Caia Park Partnership Ltd

Caia Park Advice Service

Woodsworld CIC

Plastic Free Wrexham

Keep Wales Tidy

Wrexham Play Development Team

Wrexham Probation Services

Bodhyfryd School

St Giles School

Victoria School

St Marys RC School

St Christophers School

St Joseph's School

Ysgol Clywedog

Friends of Bellevue Park

Friends of Wrexham Cemetery