

**MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD
ON 3RD. MARCH 2014**

Present : Councillor G Hale (Mayor)
Councillor G Erasmus (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors A Farina Childs, D Davies, C Erasmus, M Franklin, Z Hammond, J Criddle,
M Veater MBE

The Clerk informed the meeting of the untimely death of the former Leader of Caerphilly County Borough Council, Councillor Allan Pritchard. Allan was always supportive of the Town Council and attended many of our functions/events over many years.

The Mayor gave his own personal tribute to Allan, and then led a minutes silence in his memory.

The Clerk reported that having consulted with Councillors A Farina-Childs and G Erasmus he had organised a donation to Polio Plus in lieu of flowers in respect of Richard Bullen.

The meeting were fully supportive of this action and it was also then agreed to make a donation of £25 each to the nominated charities – St. David's Foundation & Oakdale Silver Band in respect of Allan.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors A Parsons, R Dimond, L Thomas, S Lewis, N Turner, P Cook & M Jackson

2. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor announced that he was due to visit Blackwood Primary & Libanus Primary Schools to present the Environmental Grants recently agreed by Town Council.

He then reported on the recent WW1 Commemoration and Launch of the Blackwood & District Heritage Association held at Blackwood Library on Thursday 20th. February, which had been a great success and very well attended.

Refreshments had been served at the St. Johns Ambulance Hall opposite and he identified this as a possible venue for meetings in the future if current arrangements were compromised for any reason.

Some members stated there had been a promise of individual invitations to the event, but this had not materialised. The Mayor apologised, but did remind members that an open invitation had been made to all members at a previous meeting.

3. Correspondence

The Clerk presented his report on correspondence received, and all were noted.

The invoices from C.C.B.C. were *agreed* for payment, and in respect of the Consultation Report on Secondary School Rationalisation – Phase 1 West, it was *agreed* the Clerk provide copies of same, and agenda for the next meeting.

Members also *agreed* to continue membership of One Voice Wales for 2014/15 in the sum of £958.

4. To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 3rd. February 2014

It was *resolved* the minutes be confirmed as a true record.

5. Matters Arising

The Clerk reported the following information received re. our response to the Secondary Rationalisation Consultation –

There is a commitment to invest in improvements at Blackwood Comprehensive. Any future new pupils as a result of housing developments will be taken into account in terms of the authority's strategic planning of school places.

The proposed Additional Learning Needs Unit at the new school will provide improved facilities to the existing area of Pontllanfraith Comprehensive. This will help ensure that the quality of provision is maintained and if possible improved.

Implementation of the proposals will not compromise the specialist provision of educational training that is currently available.

6. To Receive the Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 26th. February 2014

Councillor J Criddle, Chair of the Committee, presented the minutes, and it was *resolved* they be received.

7. To Receive the Minutes of the Events Committee Meeting held on 26th. February 2014

Councillor A Farina-Childs, Chair of the Committee, presented the minutes, and it was *resolved* they be received.

In respect of the Carnival it was proposed the Committee allocate specific jobs to individual members, and that they are well prepared for those duties prior to and on the day.

The Chair identified the trip to Pisek in August in celebration of the 20th. Anniversary of Islwyn's twinning with Pisek, and queried whether the Town Council should consider sending a delegation to re-establish our links with Protivin.

8. To Receive the Minutes of the Town & Community Council Joint Liaison Committee Meeting held on 23rd. October 2013

It was *resolved* the minutes be received.

9. To Receive the Minutes of the Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Meeting held on 25th. October 2013

It was *resolved* the minutes be received.

10. Commission on Public Services Governance & Deliverance – Town & Community Councils

The Clerk presented copies of part of the document that related to Town & Community Councils.

He informed members that he had contacted One Voice Wales asking if any advice to town/community councils was available regarding the apparent need for agreement of programme arrangements for mergers by Easter 2014.

He outlined the Town Council's concern regarding the very short timescales and how we might make any meaningful response, and whether individual councils are expected to respond ?

Unfortunately no advice is available at present.

After some discussion, members identified that ideally our Council could cover Blackwood/ Cefn Fforest/ Oakdale (possibly Pontllanfraith), but it was noted that we were talking about areas currently not covered by community councils, and not, therefore, strictly mergers of existing as identified.

Members realise there is much to be done before agreement on merger of principal authorities is reached and it was, therefore, *agreed* to wait until advice is forthcoming before making a response.

11. Planning Applications

The Clerk reported that no further planning applications in respect of Blackwood had been received since those already discussed at Planning Committee Meeting reported earlier.

12. Reports

Councillors C Erasmus & Z Hammond gave a brief report on the recent Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Meeting.

Pound Stretcher & Pet Hut were now confirmed as moving to the Retail Park. Apparently, to re-establish business in the High Street would have meant a long delay for Pound Stretcher, and hence their eagerness to move.

It has been noted that footfall figures on the High Street are down since the fire at the store.

It was reported that the Summer Festival will again take place, with a Beach Party Theme.

Issues were also raised regarding Car Parking Charges in the Town's Car Parks.

Members were very interested in car park charges and how they compared with the rest of the Borough.

The Clerk *agreed* to obtain copies of charges and agenda same for discussion at a future meeting. Queries were also raised whether any special rates were available for retailers and their staff working in town.

Councillor A Farina-Childs reported on the work of the Cefn Fforest Task Group, and praised all partners for the work undertaken in respect of the youth of the area.

Concerns were raised regarding lack of official notification/ consultation on the closure of Blackwood High Street for resurfacing works, and the Clerk agreed to contact C.C.B.C. to query why we weren't consulted as part of the Charter Agreement.

Members queried if it might be possible for a County Borough Councillor to update members, maybe every two months (as Police Report) on issues affecting the area. The Clerk *agreed* to contact County Borough members to request same but highlighted the fact that at present their meetings seemed to coincide with ours.

Councillor A Farina-Childs raised the ongoing issue of vandalism at the Girl Guides/ Brownies Hut, and whether the Council could consider making a financial contribution. The Clerk informed members that a grant of £250 had been made in October/November as result of an application in respect of the initial outbreak of vandalism, but an additional application would be considered by the Committee. Some members queried whether continued grants would be beneficial until the major problem is sorted.

The Clerk informed members a meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee would be held at 6.00pm. on Wednesday 12th. March at St. Margaret's Church Hall.