

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

Present : Councillor G Erasmus (Mayor)
Councillor N Turner (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, Z Hammond, C Erasmus, M Veater MBE, S Lewis,
J Criddle, A Parsons, G Hale & P Cook

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L Thomas

2. Community Infrastructure Levy & Implications for Town Council

The Mayor welcomed Lisa James, Caerphilly C.B.C. Senior Planner to the meeting, and she informed the meeting that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was a system of charges levied against new development in the Borough. Different rates are identified for different types of development, dependent upon how viable each type of development is.

The revenue generated from CIL will be used to fund infrastructure that will support future development in the county borough.

Different rates are to be charged, and these are set out in the C.C.B.C. Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule. The rates will apply to all qualifying developments.

Ms. James stated that whilst the Council can still use Section 106 Agreements to deliver scheme specific infrastructure, they will be severely restricted in nature and use and cannot be used for pooled purposes. The Council will also continue to use Section 106 Agreements to secure affordable housing on residential sites.

She then explained that 15% of CIL received in respect of new qualifying development in their respective areas would be passed on to town & community councils, and that the Council were eager to engage with community & town councils to help draft local lists of infrastructure that can be used to identify local schemes to be funded through the 15% CIL receipts.

It is proposed that CIL payments be made to community & town councils on an annual basis, payable on 30th. June each year.

If the community & town councils failed to spend its levy share within 5 years of receipt, the charging authority (C.C.B.C.) will require the CIL payments to be repaid.

Members, whilst delighted we would be receiving an additional funding stream had some major concerns.

Until we have an idea of likely receipts, how can we draw up a meaningful list of priority schemes ? Because the CIL can only be spent on infrastructure works, the town council will always have to be mindful of any recurring revenue costs of same, and factor into budget deliberations.

It was also confirmed that whilst our 15% will be earmarked to Blackwood Town Council priorities, the Caerphilly Borough portion of same will be pooled to fund Borough wide priorities.

Ms. James promised to forward information to the Clerk that he could then pass on to members. She pointed out that a CIL Agreement outlining the Borough & Town Council responsibilities would be included and asked that Town Council consider same at their next meeting.

It was **agreed** to place Community Infrastructure Levy on the Agenda for the next meeting.

The Mayor thanked Ms. James for her presentation, and she left the meeting.

3. *Mayoral Announcements*

The Mayor informed members that he had attended a Dinner at Blackwood Rugby Club to commemorate the Battle of Geleveldt.

4. *Correspondence*

The Clerk presented his report on correspondence received since the last meeting, and all were noted.

In respect of the proposed sale of a parcel of land at Woodbine Road, it was **agreed** Councillor Jim Criddle discuss same with C.C.B.C. officers and respond accordingly.

It was noted that the floral displays will remain for a further year, but might result in a small reduction in numbers to offset any cost increases.

Councillor Farina-Childs suggested we try to make contact with the sub contractors who undertake the work to maybe negotiate a reduced fee for watering etc. This was **agreed**.

In respect of the Consultation on the Local Transport Plan, the Clerk **agreed** to forward copies of same to Councillors J Criddle and S Lewis who expressed a specific interest.

Members **agreed** payment of invoice in respect of new furniture in the sum of £1,825.98 (incl. £304.33 VAT)

The Clerk also reported that he had received several e-mails from Mrs Julie Farina-Childs.

At this point Councillor Andrew Farina-Childs declared an interest and left the meeting.

The Clerk read the e-mails that criticised the Town Council for introducing a new Young Citizen Award, stating this was not what had gone to press, is age discriminatory and was not specifically placed on the agenda for discussion.

The Clerk read his response which intimated a new category had been mentioned previously to recognise the work of young people in our area, but that we had never followed through on that suggestion. The particular nomination in respect of Miss Lyndsay Davies had focussed member's mind/thoughts, and considered this would be an ideal time to introduce such an award, and that she would be a worthy recipient. Members had been mindful of the timings, compared with the much longer service etc. of other recipients/ nominees, but no means considered this as being age discriminatory. Furthermore, as regards what had gone to press, all he could recall was recognising the contribution individuals have made to the well being of the town.

Julie, contests that council cannot change the criteria unless being specifically placed on the agenda and fully discussed. It had been changed last minute after previous nominations were considered and voted upon. Furthermore, she contests it doesn't matter how long someone has contributed within the community or a persons age, and that previous recipients have had a limited years contribution to the community and yet this was never an issue.

Members were sorry to hear how disgusted Julie was at their decision to introduce a new Category of Award, and somewhat dismayed of being accused of being discriminatory.

Members were of the opinion that since the Agenda item being discussed was Civic Awards, and this was the introduction of a new category, not an amendment to the existing, that this had been beneficial to the discussion in hand, especially given the Awards evening was only a matter of three weeks away.

Furthermore, they certainly did not feel they were being discriminatory in deciding to introduce a new category of Award, or in fact in honouring Lyndsay as the first recipient.

Members were sympathetic of the fact that her name would not appear on the Honours Board, and it was *agreed* that the possibility of a new Honours Board for Young Citizens be placed on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

It was *agreed* the Clerk formally respond to Julie's correspondence identifying much of what has been discussed above.

5. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 13th. October 2014*

Other than under the Police Report, where it had stated free tickets were provided for youths on November 5th, and not on Halloween Evening, it was resolved the minutes be confirmed as a true record.

6. *Matters Arising*

Councillor J Criddle informed members he had attended his first meeting of Blackwood Primary School Governors.

Councillor D Davies confirmed the wreath had been ordered for the Remembrance Service on Sunday 9th.

It was reiterated that only a wreath for this Service is supplied by Town Council.

Councillor D Davies stated that he took exception to the inference in Minute 10 that the delay in progressing the new Christmas lighting was down to he and Councillor A Farina-Childs, when in fact they had informed the Clerk the cheapest quote would be via the internet. The Clerk stated this was certainly not the intention, and that he was identifying the need for three quotes per Financial Regulations.

Members supported the Clerk's view that Councillor Davies had mistakenly taken this as criticism.

7. *To Receive the Minutes of the Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Meeting held on 6th. May 2014*

It was *resolved* the minutes be received.

8. ***To Receive the Minutes of the One Voice Wales Large Councils Meeting held on 16th. April 2014***

It was ***resolved*** the minutes be received.

9. ***To Receive the Minutes of the One Voice Wales RCT/ Merthyr/ Caerphilly Area Committee Meeting held on 23rd. January 2014***

It was ***resolved*** the minutes be received.

10. ***To Receive the Minutes of the Town & Community Councils Joint Liaison Committee A.G.M. and Ordinary Meeting held on 25th. June 2014***

It was ***resolved*** that both sets of minutes be received.

11. ***Vacancies on Town Council - Verbal Update***

The Clerk reported that the necessary Notices of Vacancy for the Cefn Fforest East Ward had been posted, and that having checked with the Returning Officer, no call for an election had been made, and the Council can no proceed to fill the vacancy by co-option.

He further reported that the Notice in respect of Blackwood Central Ward had been posted, and that if no call for an election is made is received by 11th. November, arrangements can also be made to fill that vacancy by co-option.

It was ***agreed*** the Clerk wait until confirmation is received from the Returning Officer regarding Blackwood Central Ward, and that if no call for an election has been made, a further notice be posted on the notice board requesting expressions of interest for co-option in respect of both Cefn Fforest East Ward & Blackwood Central Ward.

It was also ***agreed*** that a copy of the notice in respect of Cefn Fforest East Ward be posted at the Post Office in Cefn Fforest Square.

It was further ***agreed*** that the same format as last time be followed, and that all interested parties be invited for interview at a future meeting, and selection then be made.

12. ***Forthcoming Events - Verbal Update***

The Clerk reminded members of forthcoming events, namely –

Civic Awards Evening at the Institute on Tuesday 4th. November

Remembrance Services – Sunday 9th. November at Blackwood War Memorial

Tuesday 11th. November at Market Place, Blackwood

Christmas Lights Switch On – High Street at 4.30pm on Saturday 29th. November

Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert at Market Place, Blackwood for parade at 7.00pm followed by Carol Concert at the Methodist Church

13. *Planning Applications*

The Clerk presented his report on planning applications received since the last meeting. Councillor J Criddle asked that he and the Clerk be given delegated powers to follow up on the applications and report accordingly to Caerphilly C.B.C. This was unanimously agreed.

14. *Reports*

The Clerk, together with Councillors Z Hammond & C Erasmus, reported on the recent Blackwood Town Centre Management Group meeting.

It had been reported that this year's Christmas Market being held on the weekend of 6th/7th December has attracted 10% more stalls than last year and promised to be another successful event in the Town.

The Clerk had reported the proposed removal of floral basket displays in the High Street, and the Group had agreed a sum of £2000 be earmarked to enable purchase of plants etc. in the hope that Town Council might cover cost of watering etc.

Updates had been given on the Choose the High Street Campaign & the Choose the High Street at Christmas Campaign, both of which had been encouraging with several enquiries from potential new businesses and 14 offers of participation of current businesses to the Christmas Campaign. This year retailers across the five managed town centres will have the opportunity to submit offers which will be included in a voucher booklet. It was agreed Town Council have a supply of these booklets to distribute at our Switch on of Christmas Lights Event.

Councillor Steffan Lewis informed members that he had made tentative contact with the new Cardiff Capital City Region's Board about attending one of our future meetings to discuss the new opportunities for Blackwood as part of this new region.

It was **agreed** the Clerk make contact and try and arrange a mutually convenient date for their representatives to attend a Town Council meeting, hopefully early in the new year.

He also identified a potential scheme under the Community Infrastructure Levy proposals discussed earlier, namely the potential hydro electricity generation in the Sirhowy. He had had previous discussions with Caerphilly C.B.C. officers regarding similar projects at Gibbs Weir and other locations in the Borough, but considered it might be worthwhile to see if a wider joint project between councils that share the river would be viable.

It was **agreed** the Clerk make contact and ask either Derek Rees, Senior Engineer and/or Paul Cook from the Planning Division along to a future meeting to outline the potential for hydro electricity generation.