

# MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 4<sup>TH</sup>. JANUARY 2016

**Present :** Councillor N Turner ( Mayor )

Councillor W Baber ( Deputy Mayor )

Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, J Criddle, Z Hammond, C Erasmus, G Erasmus, G Hale,  
M Harris, J Edwards, M Gwynne

Inspector Jason White & Sergeant Mark Thomas Gwent Police

## ***1. Apologies for Absence***

Apologies were received from Councillors L Thomas, M Veater MBE & P Cook

## ***2. Declarations of Interest***

No Declarations of Interest were made at this point.

## ***3. Policing Matters***

Inspector Jason White introduced himself to members and stated he looked forward to having a close working relationship with the Town Council.

Sergeant Mark Thomas gave an update of Crime & ASB figures, comparing April 2015 to date with the same period last year –

This year 483 crimes, the top 5 being –

Violence without injury	89
Shoplifting	74
Criminal Damage	70
Violence with injury	60
Theft	49

Last year 490 crimes, the top 5 being –

Criminal Damage	87
Theft	70
Shoplifting	70
Violence without injury	64
Violence with injury	53

The increase in violence without injury was due to a change in the way harassment is recorded. Last year it was not a recordable offence, so did not register in the figures as this year.

Anti Social Behaviour 960 cases this year compared with 1228 last year.

Sergeant Thomas had been asked previously by the Clerk to provide information in the use of the CCTV system in assisting with arresting offenders and reported the following -

The CCTV system is operated by Caerphilly C.B.C. used in compliance with the Schemes Objectives for open space CCTV. Basically if the CCTV is being monitored generally and something suspicious or a crime takes place then monitoring can continue and evidence gained. However, if an operation is planned to watch people in relation to a crime, in a covert manner and there is a likelihood of obtaining private information then an application for a RIPA ( Regulation of Investigator Powers Act ) must be made, requiring the authority of a Superintendent. There are certain criteria that must be met around the authority being proportionate and necessary. If this is not done, Articles 6 & 8 of the European Court of Human Rights may be breached. Part of that assessment will be what intelligence is held in relation to the matter under review.

Taking the specifics of the Bus Station, a RIPA authority would be required if it was believed drug use/ dealing was going on and certain individuals/vehicles were to be targeted. Since October 8<sup>th</sup>. 2015 there had only been three calls in relation to drug activity, the last being on 31<sup>st</sup>. October. It was most unlikely this would be sufficient intelligence to obtain the necessary RIPA authority.

Councillor J Edwards responded by stating he had collected information over lengthy period about the vehicles that frequented the area on a regular basis.

After further discussion regarding potential drug useage/dealing and other unsavoury issues in and around the bus station, it was agreed that this might best be dealt with outside of the meeting between officers and Councillor Edwards.

The Sergeant then reported that Operation Arcade which had run throughout December to deter shoplifting had been successful with low numbers of reported offences.

C.S.O.'s carried out engagement at the Christmas Market, Switching on of the Christmas Lights and the Lantern Parade.

He reported that he had been working with Libanus School and the local authority to try to identify a solution to the ongoing parking congestion outside the school, and working with the local authority and County Councillors to discuss the problem of parking in general and to see if any new working practices by all concerned can be adopted to improve the situation.

Finally he reported that the next meeting of the Bus Station Problem Solving Group was to be held at 2.00pm on 12<sup>th</sup>. January.

It was suggested perhaps members would find it informative and helpful if they visited the CCTV Unit

The Inspector and Sergeant were thanked for their attendance and they left the meeting.

#### **4. *Mayoral Announcements***

The Mayor reported that he had attended several concerts at various chapels and schools prior to Christmas.

## 5. *Correspondence*

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

## 6. *Schedule of Payments*

The Clerk presented his report on payments made/ due to be made, and the following were *agreed* –

		£ . p
Cwm Bakery	Refreshments Civic Awards & Carol Concert	516.60
Elsbury	Supply & fit plugs & load testing of new lights	986.40
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Hire of Rooms – Nov. Meeting & Civic Awards	276.85
John Hold	December Salary & Reimbursements	694.36
Playworks	December Tax/ N.I.	479.60

## 7. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup>. December 2015*

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

## 8. *Matters Arising*

Councillor A Farina-Childs thanked the Clerk for ensuring that the details on the Council's website had been updated.

## 9. *Proposed Purchase of Defibrillators*

The Clerk referred to the report he gave to the last meeting regarding the provision of defibrillators in the town, and that a formal decision to purchase was still required.

After some discussion it was *unanimously agreed* that Town Council purchase a defibrillator, which would ideally be positioned somewhere on the bus station site, possibly near Jim's Café.

It was also agreed that approaches be made via Tom Forbes and June Thomas as regard the best deals available, and to try and ascertain exactly how many might be ordered ( Maxime Cinema/ Wetherspoons ).

It was further *agreed* that once costs are established, and we ascertain the number ( and siting) of defibrillators the position be reviewed.

## 10. *To Consider the Vacancy on Town Council – Cefn Fforest East Ward*

The Clerk presented his report, which was noted by members.

After some discussion it was *agreed* that Mrs. J Weeks of 47 Sunnybank Road be invited along to the February meeting for interview.

## **11. Audit of Accounts Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup>. March 2015**

The Clerk presented the External Auditor's report by Mazars LLP which stated that –

Except for the matters reported below, on the basis of our review, in our opinion the information in the Annual Return is in accordance with proper practices and no matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

In Section 2 of the Annual Return, item 5, the Council has stated that for 2014/2015 it has carried out an assessment of the risks it faces and taken appropriate steps to manage these risks. However, the Council has not been able to provide evidence to demonstrate a comprehensive risk assessment was carried out during 2014/15. A risk assessment was carried out in May 2015. In future the Council should ensure that an annual risk assessment is carried out and documented.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the council :

- A. The Council does not maintain a record of the risks it has identified. A risk register or similar document would enable the Council to demonstrate effective risk management.
- B. The minute reference of the Council's approval of the Annual Return was initially omitted from Section 3. In future the Council should ensure all sections of the Annual Return are complete.

The Clerk responded by stating that the Risk Assessment had been carried out, albeit slightly later than strictly required. Furthermore, whilst no formal risk register was in place the risks identified had been recorded in the minutes. Mazars had been the Council's auditors for a number of years, but this, their last year as auditors, was the first time they had specifically identified this as a requirement.

Members thanked the Clerk, and it was *resolved* the Audit Report be received and noted.

## **12. Planning Applications**

The Clerk presented his report on planning applications received, and advised the two received were in respect of reconfiguration of site and signage at McDonalds, Cliff Road, Blackwood.

Councillor J Criddle, Chair of Planning, stated he had some concerns regarding the number of signs planned for the site and intended discussing same with Caerphilly C.B.C. planning officers.

## **13. Reports**

Councillor G Hale reported that the Heritage Association, working in close association with Gwent & Glamorgan Archives, South Wales Miners' Library, Coalfields Regeneration Trust & Chris Evans M.P. were working towards recording the names of all miners who were killed in both wars at the Memorial on Enterprise Way. Progress was slow but very encouraging.

He also reported on the Libanus Lifestyle Community Centre, based at the old Libanus Chapel which will be providing services for the community of Blackwood and surrounding areas. The services will be developed over time according to identified need, working in partnership with other voluntary and statutory organisations for the benefit of the community, namely fitness & exercise sessions, lunch club, day services, community café, social activities and community events. The Centre will also look to provide drop in services for help & advice via various organisations, particularly for adults with disabilities, the elderly and disadvantaged.

Furthermore, with the closure of the Civic Centre in Pontllanfraith, quite a number of items have been given to the Centre to act as guardians – memorabilia including Past Mayor's Board, Councillors photographs, paintings etc. These will eventually be displayed at the Centre so that members of the public can view.

The Clerk reported that it was his intention to call the final meeting of the Task & Finish Group, established to consider the future of the Carnival on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup>. January and a meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee to discuss Applications for Financial Assistance and Budget Monitoring Report for the current year together with Budget & Precept requirements for 2016/17 on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup>. January.