***MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD***

 ***ON 6TH. JANUARY 2014***

***Present*** : Councillor G Erasmus ( Deputy Mayor )

 Councillors A Farina-Childs, C Erasmus, D Davies, Z Hammond, M Franklin,

 J Criddle, M Veater MBE & P Cook

In the absence of the Mayor it was formally agreed that Councillor G Erasmus, Deputy Mayor, Chair the meeting.

1. ***Apologies for Absence***

Apologies were received from Councillors G Hale & A Parsons

1. ***Mayoral Announcements***

The Clerk highlighted visits by the Mayor as outlined in an e mail received with his apology –

5th. December – Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert - Thanks and congratulations to all who helped

 organise the event

9th. December – Emily’s Indoor Market 20th. anniversary & re-launch

15th. December – Christmas Carol Service at Wesleyan Chapel

16th. December – Enrolment & Service – Duke of Edinburgh Award to a local young man

17th. December – Meeting with Isabel Hunt re. Heritage Association website

1. ***Correspondence***

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

In respect of the Consultation Document regarding the proposal to build a new school in the Islwyn West Region on the Oakdale Plateau 3, replacing the existing Oakdale & Pontllanfraith secondary schools, which would close, it was ***resolved*** a Special Meeting be arranged to discuss this issue.

The Clerk was asked to arrange for copies of the document to be made available to all members prior to the meeting, provisionally arranged for 20th. January 2014.

1. ***To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 2nd. December 2013***

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

1. ***Matters Arising***

The Clerk reported that he had been informed by Inspector Mark Smith that the hearing regarding the Vanilla Bar licence was arranged for 10th./11th February

1. T***o Receive the Minutes of the Environment Committee held on 4th. December 2013***

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

It was ***resolved*** the recommendations made to Town Council, namely –

Grants of £500 be awarded to Blackwood Primary & Libanus Primary Schools to enable them to continue with their impressive Environmental Schemes

Blackwood & District Heritage Association be approached to take on responsibility for Coed Duon, that the earmarked funding remain in place and that the Heritage Association be invited to submit applications for funding as and when work is planned

***be approved.***

Furthermore, it was ***resolved*** that Councillor Jim Criddle ,be nominated as the Town Council’s official representative on the Heritage Association.

1. ***To Receive a Verbal Report on the Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert***

Councillor A Farina-Childs thanked everyone who had worked so hard on the night and in the run up to the event, to ensure its success. The parade itself had been particularly well attended, and the lanterns (made by his family), had proved very popular on the evening, with many more children being able to feel part of the parade, by borrowing same.

He asked the Clerk to comment on the Carol Concert, as he had not been able to take part, being tied up in preparation and laying out of refreshments.

The Clerk reported that the evening was probably the best in terms of numbers, with very few seats available in the Church, and also in terms of content with the Mynyddislwyn Choir, Oakdale Silver Band and the Blackwood & Libanus Schools Choirs being very well received by all present. He felt the event was going from strength to strength, and seemed to be eagerly awaited by the local community.

Councillor Criddle queried the road closure requirement given the High Street is closed to traffic on Thursday evenings, and the Clerk explained that without a rolling closure, this was the only real alternative to guarantee a safe environment for the parade.

It was expected, however, that this issue together with the lights switch on will be revisited by the Events Committee in the coming year.

1. ***To Receive an Update on the Vacancy on Town Council***

The Clerk reported that he had received an e-mail from Diana Ellis apologising for the situation that had arisen, and stating that it had been a very difficult year for her, but that her short time on Town Council was definitely a new and good experience, and also a great learning curve.

The Clerk then informed members that after consulting with Caerphilly C.B.C. the necessary Notice of Vacancy had been posted on the Council notice board and at the Pontllanfraith Offices stating that an election would be held to fill the vacancy if notice were given in writing by 10 local government electors from the Blackwood Central Ward. The Notice also requested persons interested in co-option to the Town Council to contact the Clerk.

To date, no request for an election to be called had been received by the Returning Officer, albeit the closing date is Wednesday 8th. January.

After some discussion, it was ***resolved*** that if no request for an election is received by the deadline, that the Clerk post another Notice requesting expressions of interest for co-option with a closing date of 15th. January.

Furthermore, as previously agreed all such applicants be invited to the February meeting to state their individual case for co-option.

1. ***To Receive an Update on Council Chamber Furniture***

The Clerk reported that he had received an e-mail from Ian Mitchell, Blackwood Miners’ Institute explaining that whilst there had been a great deal of investment in the building over the past three years, that funding did not allow for purchase of fixtures and fittings.

A budget review and the success of the pantomime was awaited prior to decisions on the spend on furniture for our meeting room was taken.

He accepted the Town Council were looking to contribute financially towards the cost of the furniture, and hoped that after meeting with his manager later in the week to discuss budget spend for the remainder of the year he will be in a better position to confirm if purchase can be authorised.

It was ***agreed*** the Clerk try to get details of costs, and liaise with Ian Mitchell over the next week and report back to the Policy & Finance Committee later this month.

1. ***Planning Applications***

The Clerk presented his report on planning applications received since the last meeting.

Councillor J Criddle reported that he had discussed both, and was of the opinion there were no real issues that needed comment upon.

He reported that the community garden had been retained in proposals submitted for the Blackwood Junior School Site.

Wit regard the proposals in respect of Cliff Road reported last month, having had chance to discuss same, he proposed that concerns be raised regarding the stability of the site and what appeared to be a lack of amenity space.

It was ***agreed*** these concerns be forwarded to Caerphilly C.B.C.

1. ***Reports***

Councillor A Farina-Childs reported on the Cefn Fforest Task Group meeting held on 17th. December, congratulating Inspector Mark Smith and C.C.B.C.officers on all their efforts. All stakeholders are involved, and several new initiatives are likely to start in the near future – C.C.B.C. Junior Warden Scheme & Street Pastors, however, whilst there have been some success, anti social behaviour is an ongoing problem.

Councillor D Davies reported on the After Dark / Bus Station meeting held on 4th. December.

Swabs taken in the toilets in September had indicated some substance misuse had occurred there, but no calls or complaints from cleansing operatives and no attention raised via CCTV gave rise to believe drug use is currently occurring.

It was noted there had been a significant reduction in the number of calls in respect of the bus station over the past five months, and the general feeling was that there was a significant improvement overall due to the impressive partnership work between the police and the local authority.