

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7TH. DECEMBER 2015

Present : Councillor N Turner (Mayor)
Councillor W Baber (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, C Erasmus G Erasmus, Z Hammond, M Veater MBE,
G Hale, J Criddle, J Edwards

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors M Gwynne & P Cook

2. Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were made at this point

3. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor reported that he and his wife had attended the Civic Awards evening, the Lights Switch On and the Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert and said they had thoroughly enjoyed all the events.

He congratulated the Clerk & the Events Committee for the organisation of such successful and well attended events, especially given the weather for the Light Switch On & Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert.

4. Correspondence

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

5. Schedule of Payments

The Clerk presented his report on payments made/due to be made, an all were agreed.

6. To Deal with Business not transacted at the Town Council Meeting held on 2nd. November 2015 & Receive the Minutes of the Inquorate Meeting held that day.

The minutes of the inquorate meeting were received with *Item 5 Correspondence* and *Item 6 Schedule of Payments* being agreed, together with the following –

Item 9 Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 28th. October 2015

Item 10 Minutes of the Events Committee Meeting held on 28th. October 2015

Item 11 Minutes of the One Voice Wales Larger Council's Committee Meeting held on 15th. April 2015

Item 12 Minutes of the One Voice Wales RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly Area Committee Annual General Meeting and Ordinary Meeting held on 17th. July 2015

Item 13 Minutes of the Town & Community Council's Liaison Committee Meetings held on 24th. June & 29th. July 2015

The remaining items on the agenda were then discussed -

Item 7 To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 12th. October 2015

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

*Item 8 Matters Arising
Presentation on Defibrillators*

The Clerk reported that he had made approaches to Blackwood Town Centre Management Group, ASDA, Manager of Blackwood Precinct, Wetherspoons & Maxime Cinema to see if they would be in a position to sponsor a defibrillator for the town.

Unfortunately at this time the Town Centre Management Group had no funds available to assist, ASDA whilst not in a position to sponsor a machine (specifically requested for Bus Station since their free bus service frequented same), their Community Liaison Champion did say they would be willing to assist in any fund raising for same.

Still awaiting definitive responses from Blackwood Precinct & Wetherspoons

The Owner of the Maxime, however, was fully supportive, and even proposed the purchase of 4 machines (to be used at his other establishments) if it meant this would benefit price negotiations. He also reported that at the Civic Awards Evening, June Thomas had indicated that she might be in a position to assist purchase at favourable terms via Jacks Appeal.

It was **proposed** the item be placed on the agenda for further discussion at the next meeting.

Item 14 To Consider Town Council Nomination for Minor Authority Representation (Governor) of Blackwood Primary School

Councillor D Davies declared an interest as Governor at the school, and took no part in discussion or decision making.

It was **unanimously agreed** that Councillor Mark Harris be appointed Minor Authority Representative for Blackwood Primary School

Item 15 Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales - Draft Report – Implications for Town Council

The Clerk circulated a summary of the Proposed Changes in the Remuneration of members of Community & Town Councillors. It was noted that Town Councils must decide by resolution which determinations, if any, are to be adopted by the council.

After some consideration it was **resolved** that Town Council will allow expenses of partnership and engagement outside the council to be met and also to ensure the costs of holding civic office are catered for.

Item 16 Planning Applications

The Clerk highlighted the planning applications received, and it was **agreed** no objections/comments be raised.

7. *To Receive the Minutes of the Community & Town Council Liaison Sub Committee Meeting held on 29th. July 2015*

The Clerk reported that these minutes had already been received and apologised for the duplication.

8. *Events Update – Civic Awards/ Lights Switch On/ Lantern Parade & Carol Concert*

The Clerk & Councillor Z Hammond, Chair of Events Committee gave an account of the recent events.

The Civic Awards evening had been very successful, with many compliments received from various guests. Whilst numbers were higher than last year, the amount of food ordered was reduced, but yet again there was waste, and it had been suggested that perhaps we contact a charity in future years to come and collect surplus food at the end of the evening.

Despite terrible weather conditions, that led to the cancellation of the proposed street dance display, the Switch-On was well attended – many having left the cinema and deciding to await the arrival of Santa and the Switch-On. The new lamp post decorations and cross street display received many compliments on the evening and since.

Again, given the terrible weather, the Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert proved the most popular to date, with many adults and children taking part in the parade, and the church being full to capacity. The entertainment from the Schools, Choir, Band and soloists were very well received, and again a number of compliments were received from many present.

Again, we reduced the amount of food ordered, and thankfully it was judged about right, with very little waste at the end of the evening.

Councillor Z Hammond asked that all those who took part in the Carol Concert be thanked for their contribution, and the Clerk confirmed he had already e-mailed the Schools, Choir, Band & soloists and spoken to the Church, Cancercareline & Rotary Club expressing the Town Council's appreciation of their support.

She also placed on record her thanks to the Clerk for all his hard work in ensuring all three events had been so successful, and this was supported by members present

9. *Velvet Coalmine Children's Literature Festival*

The Clerk presented his report which outlined the provisional strategic timeline to ensure a successful launch of the Children's Literature Festival planned for late April 2016 at the Blackwood Miners' Institute.

To ensure that funded work planned for January can begin, it was requested that the agreed £2,500 sponsorship be released as soon as possible.

Members were pleased to receive the strategic timeline, and ***agreed unanimously*** on the immediate release of the agreed £2,500 sponsorship monies.

10. Hanging Baskets – High Street, Blackwood

The Clerk presented his report on the proposed continuation of the hanging baskets in the High Street. As members were aware initial estimates from Caerphilly C.B.C. were £6,283.94, however, after being asked to reconsider, a revised figure of £3,213 had now been received.

To meet necessary timescales, a decision was required by 30th. November, obviously prior to this meeting, and so the Clerk had e-mailed all members to gauge their views. All nine members that responded indicated their acceptance, and so the Clerk had confirmed acceptance of the quotation.

It was ***resolved*** the actions of the Clerk in agreeing to the Town Council funding the provision of hanging baskets in the High Street for 2016/2017 in the sum of £3,213 be agreed.

11. Proposed Older People's Housing Provision – 85 High Street, Blackwood

Councillor J Criddle presented his report on the recent exhibition regarding the proposed Older People's Housing provision at 85 High Street, Blackwood and the Clerk produced some plans of the proposed scheme.

He explained that whilst no formal planning application had yet been made, finance was in place and it was intended to submit plans during December or January.

The proposed development would provide a building of 4 storeys on the High Street frontage with 5 at the rear, and the High Street level floor would have a retail use. The remaining 3 floors will provide 6 flats on each floor, these being a mixture of one and two bed properties intended for tenants of 55+.

He and other members who had attended the exhibition had raised some concerns regarding noise, amenity spaces (clothes drying & bin storage), emergency vehicle access and traffic conflict at the rear of the development, and whilst several of the concerns had been answered, it was accepted Town Council will be able to give these matters more detailed examination upon receipt of the planning application.

12. Planning Applications

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

Members were pleased to see the application for change of use in respect of 105A High Street, as it meant the end of problems relating to the previous business – the Vanilla Bar.

Councillor J Criddle, Chair of Planning, proposed he looked into the application for extension to rear of property, and porch to front of 16 Thornecombe Road, Blackwood, but stated he had no issues regarding the other applications.

This was ***agreed***.

13. Reports

The Clerk reported on the Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Meeting held on 16th October 2015.

Both the Choose the High Street Campaign & Past and Present Campaign had proved successful. Vacancy rates in town were reported at 14%

It had been reported that the Promotional Space at the Dragon Circle, outside ASDA, was available for hire - £50 Commercial & £25 Charity.

No funding was currently available within the Area Forum Budget to sponsor/fund a Defibrillator, as the steps leading to/from the Wesley Car park needed significant repair, and balances had been earmarked by officers to remedy same.

Some 45 stalls had booked space at the Blackwood Christmas Market on 5th/6th December.

Officers reported that they had learnt that the Red Lion was now in the ownership of Jackson Properties Ltd., and that they had contacted them on 9th October regarding the state of the property and an update on proposals for same.

Councillor A Farina-Childs queried why the Council website had still not been updated. The Clerk responded by saying his contact at Caerphilly C.B.C. had been on sick leave, but was hoping to get the list of Councillors updated within the next week or so, and to make arrangements to receive the necessary training etc. to enable him to update the website himself during January.

Councillor A Farina-Childs also queried what progress had been made on the DBS checks for members and the current vacancy on Town Council.

The Clerk apologised for not making progress on the DBS checks and promised to follow this up in the new year.

With regard the vacancy on Town Council, no request had been made to the Returning Officer for an election to fill the vacancy for the Cefn Fforest East Ward, and so the vacancy can now be filled by co-option. However, the Clerk reported that he had received no such expressions of interest to date. After some discussion, it was *agreed* the Clerk post another notice on the notice board requesting anyone interested in being co-opted to contact him prior to Christmas and that an update be provided at the January meeting.

Councillor A Farina-Childs also made mention of the recent announcement regarding the proposed new Metro transport system for South East Wales, and wondered if we might be able to have some form of presentation outlining how it might affect Blackwood.

Councillor J Edwards raised the issue of suspected drug dealing at and around the Bus Station area and asked if we could request an update from the Inspector.

Councillor B Baber queried why if there is camera surveillance, arrests are not made.

After some discussion, it was *agreed* the Clerk write to the police outlining the Council's continued Concerns at the apparent/suspected drug dealing in the area.

Councillor G Hale agreed to ensure all members of Town Council were in possession of identification badges – those currently requiring same were Councillors Margaret Veater MBE, Jim Edwards & Mark Gwynne. Any other members requiring badges or replacements were asked to contact Councillor Hale as soon as possible.

- (1) The Carnival be discontinued given the loss of current venue
- (2) The Carnival be merged with one of the other events held in town – Summer Beach Party or Velvet Coalmine Festival
- (3) Instead of a Carnival we introduce a Family Fun Day
- (4) We plan to hold the 2016 Carnival as normal, Civic Centre Fields probably being available and then look for alternative venue from 2017
- (5) We hold a Carnival at a different venue

General discussion took place, and the consensus was that we should continue with the Carnival, which has become a firm favourite with the local community.

If the event merged with any other ongoing event it would lose its identity, and there was no certainty the other events would be willing to negotiate or relinquish their identity.

Members considered that a Fun Day was probably likened to be a Carnival without the parade, and possibly similar to the Beach Party.

Given the current venue (Civic Centre Fields) would only be available for one year at best, it makes sense to consider life without it now, rather than revisit the situation in 12 months time.

Members considered various other possible venues available to us – The Showfield, Blackwood Rugby Club and Libanus Fields or within the town.