

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON 11TH. MAY 2015**

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors M Harris, L Thomas, P Cook & A Parsons

The Clerk reported that he had just received a letter from Councillor A Parsons tendering her resignation from Town Council due to health problems, and thanking fellow councillors for their support and assistance during her time as a member.

2. To Elect a Mayor

It was **resolved** that Councillor Noel Turner be elected as Mayor. He then took the Chair and thanked fellow members for their support and the honour they had bestowed upon him.

3. To Elect a Deputy Mayor

It was **resolved** that Councillor Bill Baber be elected Deputy Mayor.

Both the new Mayor & Deputy Mayor signed the Acceptance Of Office, which was duly witnessed by the Clerk.

4. To Nominate Members to the following –

(a) Policy & Finance Committee

It was **resolved** the following members be nominated – Councillors G Erasmus, J Criddle, L Thomas, D Davies, A Farina-Childs, P Cook & G Hale.
Councillor G Erasmus was elected as Chair of the Committee and Councillor J Criddle as Vice Chair.

(b) Planning & Licensing Committee

It was **resolved** the following members be nominated - Councillors J Criddle, A Farina-Childs M Jackson, G Hale & B Baber.
Councillor J Criddle was elected as Chair of the Committee and Councillor M Jackson as Vice Chair.

(c) Environment Committee

It was ***resolved*** the following members be nominated – Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, G Erasmus, Z Hammond, C Erasmus, M Veater MBE & G Hale.
Councillor A Farina-Childs was elected Chair of the Committee and Councillor Z Hammond as Vice Chair.

(d) Newsletter/ Web Page Committee

It was ***resolved*** the following members be nominated – Councillors A Farina-Childs, M Jackson, J Criddle & G Hale.
Councillor A Farina-Childs was elected Chair of the Committee and Councillor M Jackson as Vice Chair

(e) Twinning Committee

It was ***resolved*** the following members be nominated – Councillors J Criddle, D Davies & M Veater MBE.
Councillor J Criddle was elected Chair of the Committee and Councillor D Davies as Vice Chair.

(f) Events Committee

This Committee is open to all members of the Council.
Councillor Z Hammond was elected Chair of the Committee and Councillor C Erasmus as Vice Chair.

5. To Nominate Councillors to the following -

(a) Town & Community Council Joint Liaison Committee

It was ***resolved*** Councillors J Criddle and D Davies be nominated.

(b) Caerphilly C.B.C. Community Council Liaison Sub Committee

It was ***resolved*** Councillor J Criddle be nominated with Councillor D Davies his deputy.

(c) Blackwood Town Centre Management Group

It was ***resolved*** Councillors Z Hammond and C Erasmus be nominated.

(d) Mid Valleys East Steering Group

It was ***resolved*** that Councillor N Turner be nominated with Councillor J Criddle his deputy.

(e) *One Voice Wales Area Committee & Larger Councils Committee*

It was **resolved** Councillor J Criddle be nominated for both Committees

(f) *Blackwood Retail Partnership*

It was **resolved** Councillors Z Hammond and C Erasmus be nominated.

(g) *Blackwood Town Centre Arts Panel*

It was **resolved** Councillor C Erasmus be nominated with Councillor M Veater MBE her deputy.

(h) *Plas Mawr Community Centre Committee*

It was **resolved** Councillor Z Hammond be nominated.

Councillor Z Hammond complained that she had not been contacted over the past number of months regarding meeting dates of this Committee. Councillor G Hale stated that the existing Chair had not been calling regular meetings.

After some discussion, it was **agreed** the Clerk contact Caerphilly C.B.C. to ensure the Chair of this Committee is aware of the Town Council's nominated representative and that she is contacted with future meeting dates.

It was also noted that the following were the nominated Minor Authority Representatives on the Local Schools Governing Bodies –

Councillor D Davies - Blackwood Primary School

Councillor C Erasmus – Libanus Primary School and Cefn Fforest Primary School

Councillor J Criddle – Bro Sannan School

Councillor L Thomas – Ysgol Cymraeg Cwm Derwen, Oakdale

6. *Outgoing Mayoral Report*

Councillor G Erasmus reported that he had enjoyed his term of office, and thanked members for their support throughout the year.

Members congratulated Councillor Erasmus on an excellent job representing the town throughout the past year.

Councillor M Veater asked how much had been raised for his Charity, and he agreed to ask Cancercareline to identify same.

7. *Correspondence*

The Clerk reported on the following items of correspondence, and all were noted -

One Voice Wales - Thank you letter for continued membership

Notification of Larger Council's Conference being held at the Royal Welsh Showground on 8th. July - The Clerk agreed to forward details to Councillor J Criddle

Caerphilly C.B.C. - Thank you letter for sponsorship to Bands in the Park – Event to be held at the Showfield on 16th. August featuring Markham & District Colliery Band

Notification of first instalment of precept in the sum of £24,707.92

Ombudsman - Revised Guidance on Code of Conduct – The Clerk agreed to forward/provide copies for member's attention

Blackwood Street Pastors - Invitation to their 6th Year Celebration Evening being held at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church on 21st. May

Velvet Coalmine - The Clerk reported he had received notification of this Multi Arts Festival to be staged in September over 6 days, across 15 venues in town. The programming includes music, film, literature, theatre, comedy & visual arts
The Clerk agreed to find out as much information as possible and report back to members

8. *Schedule of Payments*

The Clerk presented the following as payments made / due for payment , which were unanimously *agreed* -

		£
Aon Insurance	Insurance Premium 2015/16	1,327.48
One Voice Wales	Membership Fee 2015/16	988.00
G. Erasmus (Eversons)	Past Mayors Badge	25.50
John Hold	April Salary + reimbursements	669.10
Playworks	April Tax/N.I.	484.70
Blackwood Musical Theatre	Financial Assistance	250.00
Mynyddislwyn Male Choir	Financial Assistance	250.00
Blackwood Crime Prev. Panel	Financial Assistance	250.00

9. To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 13th. April 2015

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

10. Matters Arising

The Clerk confirmed that a representative from PS Partnership would be attending the next meeting to discuss the Circuit of Wales development planned for north of Ebbw Vale.

Councillor A Farina-Childs queried if any progress had been made in respect of DBS checks, and the Clerk stated that he would be making enquiries over the next week or so.

11. To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 29th. April 2015

It was *resolved* the minutes be received.

It was unanimously *agreed* that the following grants be awarded –

Blackwood Musical Theatre Society	£250
Mynyddislwyn Male Choir	£250
Blackwood & District Crime Prevention Panel	£250

The Clerk reported that he had received acknowledgement of the responses to the various consultation exercises from Caerphilly C.B.C.

Councillor D Davies informed members that the Head Teachers Association had discussed the proposed closure of Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre at their recent meeting and were making similar representations to the Council.

12. To Receive the Minutes of the Events Committee Meeting held on 29th. April 2015

It was *resolved* the minutes be received.

Councillor A Farina-Childs informed members that Pontypool Carnival was being held on 11th. July. Apparently for the first time the event was to be held in the town, (previously being held in the park), and urged as many to attend as possible to see how they approached the change.

13. To Receive the Minutes of the One Voice Wales RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly Area Committee Meeting held on 21st. January 2015

It was *resolved* the minutes be received.

14. To Receive & Discuss One Voice Wales Response to the White Paper on Reforming Local Government – Power to the People

The Clerk referred to the One Voice Wales Response that had been forwarded to members prior to the meeting.

He stated that indications appeared to be that with the ever growing financial pressure on Unitary Authorities, the non statutory duties would always be under scrutiny, and any reorganisation of local government that takes place should define who is responsible for what services and consequently accountable for the delivery of which services.

It was also felt that the balance between centralised control and local accountability would be better served by creating a tier of regional authorities based on merged/amended unitary council boundaries (taking health board and other boundaries into account also), supplemented by a single tier of truly community based organisations grounded on the existing model of town and community councils.

Discussion took place on various aspects of the paper including the potential for the creation of larger town/community councils; the need for closer working relationships with the Local Service Boards; potential for direct funding to town/community councils from the Welsh Government.

It was generally agreed there was still much work to be done, but that One Voice Wales whilst supporting the overall proposed direction of travel - councils delivering modern, accessible, high quality public services within their communities, agreed much more detail is required before it is able to assess whether the proposals will have a net beneficial impact for the communities of Wales if enacted on the content of the paper.

It was ***agreed*** the paper be received.

15. Financial Accounts For Year Ended 31st. March 2015

The Clerk presented the Accounts for the year ended 31st. March 2015, and reported that figures showed an underspend of approx. £3,500 when compared to figures quoted at budget setting. The majority of the saving was in respect of the newsletter which was not produced (£1,000), grants to voluntary organisations (£1,345), Christmas celebrations (£480), Office furniture (£200), administrative expenses (£490)

He explained that this resulted in a sum of £11,440 being earmarked towards the Christmas Lighting Project.

The Annual Return would be presented to the next meeting to meet the end of June deadline of submission to our External Auditors.

It was ***resolved*** the Annual Accounts be approved.

16. Review of Internal Controls

Members reviewed the current practice regarding internal controls, namely –

Schedule of payments made/due to each meeting highlighting the Payee/ Reason for Payment/
Amount

All cheques still require signature of Clerk, together with two other signatures (currently Councillors
A Farina-Childs, G Erasmus & J Criddle)

Meetings of Policy & Finance Committee throughout the year

Budget Monitoring Reports to Town Council three time a year – comparing spend to budget together
with bank reconciliation and balance sheet

Internal Auditor audits Accounts during May/ early June in readiness for completion of Annual
Return to be forwarded to Mazars (current external Auditors) by 30th June

It was unanimously ***agreed*** the current practice is considered adequate for Town Council

17. Review of Risk Management

Members reviewed the current level of Risk Management –

It was considered the misappropriation of funds by the Clerk (as the only employee) is an obvious
risk, but that the Internal Controls reviewed earlier would greatly negate that risk

Little of the rest of the work/responsibilities of the Town Council, other than the organisation of
Events was considered to carry much of a risk

With regards the Events, regular meetings of the Events Committee highlight any risk areas.

In respect of the Carnival, Town Council are required to submit separate risk assessments in respect
of the Carnival Parade and the Activities on Site each year to Caerphilly County Borough Council.
Furthermore, the Clerk and members of the Events Committee are required to attend the ESAG
Events Organisers Forum to discuss proposals with officers of the Council, Emergency Services and
other interested parties prior to the Event.

Adequacy of Insurance cover, which was discussed at previous meeting.

It was unanimously ***agreed***, given the work/responsibilities of Town Council, risk assessment is
considered adequate.

18. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on planning applications received since the last meeting. Councillor J Criddle proposed there were no issues in respect of applications 15/0237/COU and 15/0295/ADV.

However, in respect of applications 15/0190/FULL (Single storey side and rear extension) and 15/0252/OUT (erect residential development etc.), he proposed he check with Caerphilly C.B.C. and liaise with the Clerk before making any observations/reservations. This was *agreed* by members.

19. Reports

Councillor A Farina-Childs promised an update on the 21st. Century Schools at the next meeting.

Councillor G Hale reported that via the Heritage Association the Remembrance Books had been on show throughout the Borough.

Furthermore, they were currently working on ensuring all names are correctly recorded on the Miner's Memorial, and also working to include bar codes on same, which can be read by electronic devices.