

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEEING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN
COUNCIL HELD ON 12TH. MAY 2014.**

Present : Councillor G Hale (Mayor)
Councillor G Erasmus (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, Z Hammond, M Franklin, M Veater MBE, P Cook,
M Jackson, J Criddle, L Thomas, & N Turner

Prior to the start of the meeting the Mayor presented a cheque for £500 to Mr. Bill Coppage, President of Blackwood Town Cricket Club - £250 in support of the Youth Teams and £250 as a contribution to major ground drainage scheme being undertaken at the ground.

Mr. Coppage thanked the Town Council, not only for this very kind donation, but also for their continued support of the Club and its efforts.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor A. Parsons.

2. To Elect a Mayor

It was ***resolved*** that Councillor Glyn Erasmus be elected Mayor. He then took the Chair and thanked members for their support and the honour they had bestowed on him.

3. To Elect a Deputy Mayor

It was ***resolved*** that Councillor Noel Turner be elected Deputy Mayor.

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 nominated 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 with one nomination outstanding.
Councillor J Criddle was nominated 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, N Turner, Z Hammond, C Erasmus, M Veater MBE & G Hale.
Councillor A Farina-Childs was nominated as Chair of the Committee and Councillor Z Hammond as Vice Chair.

(d) Newsletter Committee

It was ***resolved*** the following members be nominated - Councillors S Lewis, M Jackson, P Cook & Z Hammond.
Councillor S Lewis was nominated Chair of the Committee and Councillor Z Hammond as Vice Chair.

(e) Twinning Committee

It was ***resolved*** the following members be nominated - Councillors J Criddle, N Turner & M Veater MBE.
Councillor J Criddle was nominated Chair of the Committee and Councillor N Turner as Vice Chair.

(f) Events Committee

This Committee is open to all members of the Council.
Councillor Z Hammond was nominated Chair of the Committee, and the position of Vice Chair would be decided by the Committee.

5. To Nominate Members to the following –

(a) Town & Community Council Joint Liaison Committee

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

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

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

(c) Blackwood Town Centre Management Group

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

(d) Mid Valleys East Steering Group

It was ***resolved*** Councillor N Turner be nominated & Councillor J Criddle be 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 & C Erasmus be nominated.

(g) Blackwood Town Centre Arts Panel

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

(h) Plas Mawr Community Centre Committee

It was ***resolved*** Councillor Z Hammond be nominated, and that the Clerk ascertain whether another Town Council member can also serve.

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 & Cefn Fforest Primary School

Councillor C Erasmus – Libanus Primary School

Councillor J Criddle – Bro Sannan School

Councillor L Thomas – Ysgol Cymraeg Cwm Derwen, Oakdale

6. Correspondence

The Clerk presented the following items of correspondence received since the last meeting, and all were noted –

Caerphilly C.B.C. - Copy of Byelaws relating to Recreation Grounds – Copy for Public Inspection

Notification of 1st. instalment of Precept for 2014/15 - £24,539.93

Notification of Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Meeting to be held at 12.30pm. on Friday 16th. May at Ty Penallta.

Changes to bus services – Routes 15 & 56 – Cefn Glas - Blackwood & Newport - Risca – Blackwood – Markham - Tredegar
Agreed that copies be forwarded to members for information.

Bands in the Park Concerts to be held on Sunday 15th. June, 6th. July or 17th. August.

One Voice Wales - Thank you letter for continued membership

Welsh Government - Governance in Small Public Bodies – A recent report of the National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee on the Caldicot & Wentlooge Levels Internal Drainage Board identified significant failings in governance and financial arrangements. The issues raised should be considered by other public bodies.
Agreed this letter and its findings be considered by Policy & Finance Committee

Solitaires Marching Band – Application for Financial Assistance

Agreed this be passed to Policy & Finance Committee for consideration.

Thank you letters were also received in respect of recent grants made to voluntary organisations –

N.S.P.C.C.
St. Margaret's Church
Stroke Association
Blackwood Musical Theatre Society
Kidney Wales Walk for Life
Gwent Police - Blackwood Neighbourhood Policing Team

7. To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 7th. April 2014

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

8. *Matters Arising*

The Clerk reported that correspondence received from Caerphilly C.B.C. regarding further road works on the High Street had been forwarded to members for their attention.

The Clerk reported that he had received information regarding the income collected from car parks across the borough for the financial year 2013/2014, which identified the following –

Blackwood	£425,776
Caerphilly	£194,993
Bargoed	£ 33,670

Furthermore, clarification had been received that the land in Bargoed where parking was currently free was indeed in the ownership of the Council.

The Clerk said he had posed the question as to why the Council does not charge for parking at the Cardiff Road & Hanbury Road car parks, since with 200 spaces available this could quite significantly add potential income, at a time when charges are to be imposed at Country Parks. The response was that historically the car parks had been free, and that the town is to be reviewed following the completion of the proposed developments in the town centre, however, the impact on parking in the surrounding area would have to be taken into account.

Members were incensed that Blackwood seemed to be treated differently to Bargoed, in so much that there were some 200 council owned parking spaces not charged for, and to say this was historical was nonsense, since every site was historically free until a decision to impose a charge was made.

The Clerk reported that County Councillor Dix had apparently asked for similar information, and felt that working together may prove beneficial, albeit with the current budgetary problems there seemed little likelihood of reductions, but that we should at least strive for parity across the borough.

After much discussion, it was *agreed* the Clerk try to get footfall figures for the last 2/3 years, together with additional income figures for the same years to check for trends.

The Clerk reported that work on the website was well advanced, and that hopefully it would be up and running by Friday 16th. As soon as confirmation is received he promised to e-mail members details of how to access the site, and that he would agenda same for the next meeting, to gauge members views.

9. Events

Councillors A Farina-Childs & D Davies had already indicated they would not be taking active roles in the organising of events for the coming year.

They had emphasised for many years that without the input of volunteers the events would not have been as successful as they had, and felt that such input had been taken for granted by Town Council. The Events Committee was after all open to all members of the Council, and was ultimately responsible for managing the budget, but it seemed that the same few members became involved each year, and several rarely attended the events never mind assist in the organising of same. De-brief meetings were held in respect of the carnival each year, but the same individuals attended each time.

Some members said they felt details of all jobs for all events should be listed, and discussions held as to who would be responsible for what, as they felt they didn't really know what was involved.

Councillors A Farina-Childs & D Davies *agreed* to prepare such a list for the new Events Committee to consider.

Members were unanimous in wishing to officially record their thanks to both Councillors A Farina-Childs & D Davies for their hard work and dedication in the organisation of events over the past years.

10. Financial Accounts Year Ended 31st March 2014

The Clerk presented the Accounts, and reported that figures showed an underspend of approx. £2,500 when compared to figures quoted at budget setting. The majority of the saving was in respect of the newsletter which was never produced (£1,000), grants to voluntary organisations (£550), Christmas celebrations (£545), carnival (£200) and office furniture (£150). He explained that 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.

11. Office Furniture – Meeting Room at Institute

The Clerk reported on his correspondence with Ian Mitchell at the Institute, who has been obtaining quotes for the options for furnishing our meeting room.

The first quotes received were £2,694 (Bridgend Office Furniture) and £2571 (Remploy), albeit a mix/match approach would save approx £240.

These figures did not take into account any local authority discount, and on revisiting same, BOF amended their quote to £1,934.

With the tight budget settlement, where the Institute have been asked to make savings, it is now likely the only way the room can be furnished to meet our requirements, would be a contribution of approx 75% from Town Council – approx £1,450.

After much discussion it was originally suggested to expedite things we purchase the furniture outright, but since the room will be hired out to other organisations as and when, the Clerk and some members voiced caution.

It was then **resolved**, that if it makes things easier for the Institute, we purchase the furniture and then invoice the Institute for a 25% contribution later in the year, or even next year, thereby committing to expenditure of £1,450

12. Official Opening of Maxime Cinema

The Clerk reported that he had been contacted by Mrs Beverly Edwards, on behalf of Blackwood Rotary Club to enquire if the Town Council would be willing to support a Fund Raising event to coincide with the opening of the Maxime Cinema. They are hoping to arrange the Welsh Premiere of a film (yet to be agreed) followed by a dinner, with proceeds raised being distributed to charities. Potential dates being considered are 17th. or 24th. July, but this is obviously dependent upon completion of the works, and looking for 180 -200 tickets to be sold.

A similar event held in Cardiff last year raised upwards of £10,000, much of which benefitted local charities.

Mr Steve Reynolds who is in the business, and a member of Rotary, is negotiating with the owner free use of the Cinema for the evening and the possible film premiere.

At this point in time they are seeking support in advertising the event, once finalised, and wherever possible voicing support for this much needed facility in the town. Some form of financial support would also be appreciated.

Dependent upon Town Council views, they have indicated they would invite the Clerk along to future meetings, so the Council would be well informed as to progress.

After much discussion, when members voiced their total support for the Cinema, with potential benefits it could bring to the town, it was agreed the Clerk attend when invited and brief members on progress. Furthermore, it was **agreed** consideration be given to some form of financial support to the proposed evening, given that the event is likely to generate several thousand pounds that will ultimately benefit many local charities.

13. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on planning applications received since the last meeting, and it was **agreed** no objections be raised.

14. Reports

Councillor G Hale took the opportunity to report on visits he had made within the last weeks of his term of office as Mayor.

He had attended Blackwood Comprehensive School to make awards to pupils for their work at their Intergenerational Club.

On Thursday 24th. April he had hosted an evening at Blackwood Miners' Institute to mark the launch of the Art Gallery, the Blackwood & District Heritage Association and also to commemorate the Centenary of World War 1, with the Commemoration books on display. Mynyddislwyn Male Voice Choir and Blackwood Musical Theatre Society had performed, and the evening had been a great success.

He thanked members for their support during a most pleasurable year as Mayor, when he had taken every opportunity to highlight the work of the Town Council.

Several members paid tribute to Councillor Granville Hale's dedication and hard work on behalf of the Town Council over his term of office, and this was endorsed by all present.