

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON 20TH. MAY 2013**

Present : Councillor Z Hammond (Mayor)
Councillor G Hale (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, M Veater MBE, P Cook, C Erasmus, G Erasmus,
M Franklin, J Criddle, S Lewis, R Dimmond, D Ellis, M Jackson

County Councillor Tudor Davies (Chair – South Wales Fire & Rescue Services), Hugh
Jakeway (Chief Fire Officer) & Andrew Thomas (Asst. Chief Fire Officer)

Inspector Mark Smith & Sgt. Mark Thomas (Blackwood Neighbourhood Policing Team)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor A Parsons

2. South Wales Fire & Rescue Services Authority – Concerns re. Response times

Councillor Davies thanked members for the invitation to attend the meeting, and handed over to the Chief Fire Officer and his Deputy to give a brief update.

The Officers explained that the possibility of a new station had been mentioned as far back as 1996, and that the former Bedwellty School Site had been the preferred option for merging the Bargoed & Cefn Fforest stations, using recognised Government modelling systems. Members queried where the actual preferred site from this modelling exercise had indicated, albeit it could have been an impossible position, and how near that is to the actual site. The officers were unable to identify same but indicated they could pass this information on.

Unfortunately the preferred site was unavailable, and so the land for the nearby current site was purchased in 2011, with Planning Permission granted in October of that year. A well managed under spend had enabled an earlier start, and with the local road infrastructure improvements, the Authority is confident this new station will better serve the local community.

The cost is estimated at £2.34 million, and completion is estimated for November/December 2013, with the station becoming operational from January 2014.

Members raised their concerns regarding response times, and the officers reported an anticipated increase of just over a minute in responding to an incident in Blackwood town from the new station compared with the Cefn Fforest station.

Concerns were also raised regarding manning levels, and the officers responded that current levels of 3 appliances and relevant staffing were to be monitored over the next 12 months, albeit that figures show a 57% reduction in call outs to fires and a 30% reduction in call outs to traffic accidents over recent years, which might indicate a need for only 2 appliances. Officers ensured members that staff unions had been fully consulted during all aspects of the move. It was noted that the Abercarn & Risca stations were unaffected by this merger.

The Officers concluded by informing members that the new building was to incorporate some rooms for use by community groups, and that during the planning phase provision was also included to allow for the possible relocation of local ambulance depots in the future.

Councillor Davies intimated members would be more than welcome to visit the site when nearing completion if they wished.

Councillor Davies and the Officers were thanked for their attendance, and they left the meeting.

3. Policing Matters

Inspector Mark Smith introduced Sgt. Mark Thomas who had recently taken up post as the Neighbourhood Policing Team Sgt.

The Inspector reported that overall crime throughout 2012 had fallen by 17% across the force area, the biggest in England & Wales, meaning 7,000 fewer victims of crime.

During the last financial year, 4 of the 5 wards in the Blackwood area saw reductions in crime - Blackwood (-6.4%), Cefn Fforest (- 9.1%), Pontllanfraith (-0.3%), Argoed (-13.6%) and Penmaen (+ 4%)

Although the Chief Constable has set further crime and anti-social behaviour targets for this financial year, the Police & Crime Commissioner, Ian Johnston has set objectives for the force to Put Victims First and Increase Public Confidence. The Inspector stated that he and his team were fully committed to the targets/ objectives and would strive to meet them.

Blackwood Ward is currently experiencing a further decrease in crime, but anti-social behaviour is showing an increase, which the team are working hard to address. Some of the issues are centred around the fast food outlets on the retail park (McDonalds, KFC, ASDA etc.)

The Poundstretcher incident is being treated as an Arson enquiry with a team of detectives led by a Detective Inspector overseeing the investigation. To date 9 arrests have been made, all of which have been released on bail pending further investigation/ enquiries.

A brief discussion took place regarding Shop-Watch Online, which will work in support of the existing Blackwood Retail Partnership. Councillor Hammond, the Council's representative on the Partnership reported that attendance has dwindled in recent months, but that the Partnership are eager to launch this Online initiative, which will allow a far better, more efficient way of exchanging information. An application has been made to the Town Council for £100, to enable the first 5 members to join the scheme, this hopefully being the catalyst for many more to join once they see the benefits.

It was unanimously *agreed* to grant £100 to the Retail Partnership.

The Inspector thanked Town Council for their continued support of this initiative driven by P.C. Adam Lang

The Inspector informed members the next PACT meeting will be held at 6.30pm. June 11th. at Blackwood Primary School.

Examples were given by the Inspector of the power of Social Media in policing. A male wanted by police, whose details and photograph were circulated on Facebook was arrested as a direct result of a telephone call from a member of the public who saw him in Cefn Fforest, having viewed his photograph on Facebook.

Community Support Officers will conduct periodic patrols during all planned events this summer, and there will be a High Visibility Day within Blackwood Ward on 1st. June where Neighbourhood Policing Teams will focus on all hot-spots. A Cruiser operation is also planned during the summer period.

The Inspector also reported a continued reduction in anti-social behaviour/substance misuse calls within the locality of the Bus Station. There has been some excellent partnership working with the Local Authority to tackle this issue.

The last meeting of the Problem Solving Group was held on 17th. April, with the next meeting scheduled for 17th. July.

The Mayor expressed her concern that minutes/ meeting dates had not been circulated to her as the Town Council's representative. The Inspector apologised and promised to rectify this.

Finally, Inspector Smith reported that 4 new Police Cadets have been posted to the Blackwood Neighbourhood Policing Team. These under 18's who wear a uniform, will work closely with the Community Support Officers on engagement events.

4. To Elect a Mayor

It was *resolved* that Councillor Granville Hale be elected Mayor, and he then took the Chair and thanked members for their support, in giving him the opportunity to serve as Mayor of the Town. He said he was privileged to receive this honour, and would work hard on behalf of the townspeople.

His nominated Charity is the Beresford Centre, whose aim is that women and their partners should have information, support and counselling they need when facing crises associated with pregnancy and terminations.

Councillor M Veater MBE paid tribute to the work done on behalf of the town by the former Mayor, and this was endorsed by all members.

5. To Elect a Deputy Mayor

Nominations were received in respect of Councillors Glyn Erasmus and Diana Ellis.

After a vote, it was **resolved** Councillor Glyn Erasmus be appointed Deputy Mayor

6. To Nominate Members to the following –

(a) Policy & Finance Committee

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

(b) Planning & Licensing Committee

It was **resolved** the following members be nominated – Councillors J Criddle, M Jackson, A Farina-Childs, D Ellis 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 J Criddle, C Erasmus, Z Hammond, D Davies, A Farina-Childs, M Veater MBE with one nomination outstanding.
Councillor J Criddle was nominated Chair of the Committee and Councillor Z Hammond as Vice Chair

It was **agreed** that the current Newsletter & Twinning Committee be split

(d) Newsletter Committee

It was ***resolved*** the following members be nominated – Councillors S Lewis, G Erasmus, M Jackson and P Cook.

Councillor S Lewis was nominated Chair of the Committee and Councillor G Erasmus as Vice Chair.

(e) Twinning Committee

It was ***resolved*** the following members be nominated – Councillors J Criddle, D Davies and M Veater MBE.

Councillor J Criddle was nominated Chair of the Committee.

(f) Events Committee

This Committee is open to all members of the Council.

Councillor A Farina-Childs was nominated Chair of the Committee and Councillor D Davies as Vice Chair.

7. To Nominate Members to the following –

(a) Town & Community Council Joint Liaison Committee

It was ***resolved*** that Councillors J Criddle & G Erasmus be nominated.

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

It was ***resolved*** Councillor J Criddle be nominated and Councillor G Erasmus be his deputy.

(c) Blackwood Town Centre Management Group

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

(d) Mid Valleys East Steering Group

It was ***resolved*** Councillors M Jackson & J Criddle be nominated.

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

It was **resolved** Councillor J Criddle be nominated.

(f) *Blackwood Retail Partnership*

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

(g) *Blackwood Town Centre Arts Panel*

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

(h) *Plas Mawr Community Centre Committee*

It was **resolved** Councillors Z Hamond & G Hale be nominated.

8. *Correspondence*

The Clerk presented his report on correspondence received since the last meeting, and all were noted.

In respect of Town Centres – Unique places document, the Clerk stated that he would try to arrange a copy for each member.

Similarly, in respect of the Copy of the Dogs Exclusion & Copy of the Fouling of Land by Dogs (Playgrounds & Multi Use Games Areas Caerphilly County Borough) Orders 2013, the Clerk **agreed** to e-mail copies to members.

In respect of the C.C.B.C. Improvement Objectives for 2013/2014, it was **agreed** to support same.

9. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 8th. April 2013*

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

10. Matters Arising

Councillor J Criddle queried if any notification had been received from C.C.B.C. regarding the outcome of consultation on the Review of Subsidised Local Bus Services.

The Clerk indicated no response had yet been received, but would make enquiries over the next few days.

Councillor G Erasmus reported, that as requested by the Clerk, he had met with Ian Mitchell (Blackwood Institute) regarding furniture for our meeting room, and had agreed a revised layout which should fulfil our requirements. As the furniture specifications were higher than the Institute would normally have fitted, it is anticipated a contribution of approximately £600 will be required from the Town Council.

Members were fully supportive of the actions taken by Councillor Erasmus, and ***agreed*** the contribution towards higher spec. furniture.

11. To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 22nd. April 2013

Councillor G Erasmus, Chair of the Committee, presented the minutes, and it was resolved they be received.

It was agreed that the maximum grant awarded be increased to £250.

As the 2012/2013 Accounts were to be discussed later on the Agenda, it was ***resolved*** the following grants be approved –

(a) Fleur-de-Lys Institute	£100
(b) St. Margaret's Church	£250
(c) Wales Air Ambulance	£100
(d) Goldies Cymru	£ 50
(e) DYT Dance Project	£250
(f) Blackwood Primary School	£200
(g) Cefn Fforest Allotments Society	£200
(h) Malika Rezougui	£200
(i) Islwyn Comrades Assoc.	£125
(j) Blackwood & District Royal British Legion	£125
(k) British Legion Poppy Appeal	£250
(l) Caerphilly County Borough Access Group	£ 50
(m) Cefn Fforest Angling Club	£130
(n) Town Council Mayor's Charity Appeal	£250

Councillor D Davies advised members that Islwyn Comrades Association and the Royal British Legion had requested their cheques be presented at the July Town Council meeting. This was agreed.

12. To Receive the Minutes of the Events Committee Meeting held on 22nd. April 2013

Councillor A Farina-Childs, Chair of the Committee, presented the minutes and it was ***resolved*** they be received.

He informed the meeting that Lillys & Lace had agreed to sponsor the event again this year.

13. Annual Accounts 2012/2013

The Clerk presented the Accounts, and reported there was little difference to the figures quoted at budget setting. He also explained that the Annual Return would be presented to the next meeting to meet the new end of June deadline for submission to our External Auditors.

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

14. Reports

Councillor P Cook reported on a meeting she had attended with County Borough Officers regarding the Subsidised Bus routes consultation and the zebra crossings/ disabled parking proposals for the High Street. Initial indications did not seem favourable, but members were assured the proposals were to be discussed at the next Town Centre Management Group Meeting.

The Mayor reported on the Heritage Groups latest meeting, with an essay competition sponsored by the Freedom of the City of London Group being organised with local schools. Furthermore, a meeting was arranged for 31st. May at the Moose Hall, where all local groups/ associations/ organisations in the catchment area were invited to see where they could assist with the aims and aspirations of the Heritage Group.

Councillor A Farina-Childs reported that Ian Mitchell (Blackwood Institute) had approached him regarding the hanging of the Notice Boards.

It was ***agreed*** the Clerk contact the Institute with a view to the Boards being placed in a public area.

He also informed members that he had approached Lauren Howells, a 2nd. Year student at Crosskeys College to undertake photography on behalf of the Town Council at any events organised. Members supported his actions and ***agreed*** to look into the possibility of contacting the College and maybe offering this opportunity to students each year.

He also suggested the Town Council consider some form of Youth Awards, and it was ***agreed*** this be the responsibility of the Events Committee, and that they bring forward proposals for same for discussion at a future meeting.

15. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on planning applications received since the last meeting, and it was agreed the following observations be made –

13/0259 14 Coed Y Bryn, Blackwood – to ensure adequate car parking is available

13/0264 51 Cefn Road, Blackwood – to ensure a Certificate B (formal notification to neighbours) has been sent making them aware of proposed works.

Members noted that notification for permission to vary condition 6 of original planning permission to allow open A1 food and non-food retail and bulky goods retail/leisure at Blackwood Gate Retail Park subject to various conditions, and with a Section 106 agreement also in place.