

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL HELD
ON 29TH JANUARY 2018**

Present: Councillor J Weeks (Mayor)
Councillor J Edwards (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors Z Hammond, A Short, P Cook, J Griffiths, R Weeks, N Turner, C Erasmus,
G James, D Davies, W Baber & D Jones

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from A Farina-Childs & M Gwynne
Apologies were also received from County Councillor K Etheridge

2. Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were made
Councillor G James informed members he was at present no longer a Governor at Blackwood
Comprehensive School

3. To Discuss the following Notice of Motion:

Blackwood Town Council resolve to investigate options for the authority to take potential legal
action against Caerphilly County Borough Council to determine if the following can be undertaken:

1. To suspend the closure plans, whilst a legal challenge is mounted
2. To build a legal case to force CCBC to rescind their closure decision based upon BTC's
objections contained within its consultation response report
3. To work in partnership with CCBC and others to either support continued LA management of
the centre or to investigate alternate management and ownership arrangements

Prior to Councillor Hammond speaking to the Notice of Motion, the Clerk reported to members the
fact that was the Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 19th January.
After being refused permission to speak initially, after appealing it was agreed he could attend and
speak on behalf of Town Council.

The meeting itself started at 5.00pm and after Apologies & Declarations of Interest the Chair
announced the Call in. At that point it was moved and seconded that it be referred back to Cabinet.
An amendment for it to go back to Full Council was defeated and the meeting ended.

In terms of the next steps, the Borough Council will action the recommendations of the committee
– i.e. consultation will take place with the Future Generations Commissioner, the Children's
Commissioner, the Youth Forum and a response will be provided to the Town Council following
their representations previously made. The outcome from the additional consultation will then form
part of a further report which will allow the Cabinet to revisit their decision.

Members who had attended on the evening agreed the meeting was a travesty and certainly did
nothing for openness and transparency of local democracy. Protesters were quick to show their
anger and displeasure that their views were yet again being ignored.

Councillor Hammond presented the Notice of Motion and urged members for their support. We were only looking to investigate options to take potential legal action against the Borough Council, and any action proposed would have to come back to Town Council for further discussion and a decision. After some discussion the Notice of Motion was *agreed* and the Clerk was asked to investigate options.

It was also *agreed* Town Council issue a press release stating its intentions and also to offer support to any individual or organisation contemplating similar action.

Furthermore, it was *agreed* the Clerk contact the Chair of Governors of Blackwood Comprehensive & Islwyn High Schools to ascertain if there had been meaningful consultation regarding their capacity to fulfil existing bookings of individuals and clubs at Pontllanfraith at their facilities and whether they would be prepared to share their current bookings.

4. To Discuss the Consultation Document on the Review of Community & Town Council Sector in Wales

The Panel are keen to hear views on the following 4 Questions

What should Town & Community Councils be responsible for ?

How should they operate ?

What's standing in their way to deliver for the local community ?

How do Councils ensure they best represent their local community ?

After some discussion it was generally agreed that our Website required more work, maybe photographs of members etc., and that we probably needed to engage more with the public, maybe a drop in facility within town. There were suggestions that if a suitable venue were available, it might be possible to invite along various other agencies/ charities, together with local Borough members. It was agreed these issues be discussed at a future meeting.

In respect of the 4 questions tabled –

Members were fully supportive of Town & Community Councils owning assets and being able to deliver a range of services from crèches to leisure facilities

Members found it difficult to respond to how they should operate as much would depend on the services being delivered, albeit it would mean the engagement of additional staff and associated issues. Members were, however, adamant that they should operate with fairness, openness and transparency and listen to the views of the electorate.

Members felt that in the current climate there are problems in proper engagement with the Local Authority & Police

Councils can ensure they best represent their local community by seeking their views on a regular basis – engagement events etc. and by operating in a fair, open and transparent way.

5. To Discuss the Community Review Guidance Document (Guidance for Principal Councils on the Review of Communities)

The Clerk suggested that considering the more important and pressing issues that Town Council are dealing with at present that this is considered when timing is more appropriate and when Caerphilly Borough Council undertake any review. The Town & Community Councils Join Liaison Committee together with the individual Councils will then be consulted via our Charter Agreement.

Members agreed with this suggestion, but also asked the Clerk try to ascertain when the last review was undertaken and when the next one is due.

