

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON  
19<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2019**

**Present :** Councillor G James ( Mayor )

Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, C Erasmus, Z Hammond, A Short, J Edwards, P Cook  
T Evans & R Weeks

Mr George Edwards, Vice Chair & Treasurer of Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors J Griffiths, J Weeks & R Mills

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest made

**3. To consider Proposal from Caerphilly Taxi Association to re-open Blackwood Bus Station Toilets.**

The Mayor thanked Mr. Edwards, Association Vice Chair & Treasurer, for his attendance and asked him to address the meeting to explain the proposals in more detail and outline what is required/ expected of Town Council.

Mr. Edwards explained that the Association had approximately 600 members across the Borough who paid £60 per year membership.

When the Borough Council closed the public toilets throughout Caerphilly there was a public outcry, with many of his members also complaining that they were affected and had nowhere to go to the toilet other than finding shops, pubs or cafes. After a 14 week legal battle, and with the financial assistance (£5,000) of Caerphilly Town Council, the Association were able to purchase the toilet entry machines, and they took over responsibility for the running of the toilets in Station Terrace in Caerphilly in July.

To date, albeit there have been some minor problems, things are going well, with the facility being well used. The toilets are opened and closed by members of the Association and cleaned by volunteers. The Association will be responsible for all internal repairs, albeit external repairs remain the responsibility of the Borough Council.

Mr. Edwards stated the Association recognised that Blackwood Bus Station was likely to be a busier venue, and would be interested in a similar outcome as with Caerphilly. On visiting the toilets he found that the magnetic strips had been removed from the toilet doors and that unfortunately meant the most realistic and economic solution he was advised, would be the installation of a turnstyle type system. The Company he dealt with for the Caerphilly machines was willing to supply a custom made entry system at a cost of £8,900 ( normally £     ).

Members questioned Mr Edwards whether the Disabled toilets would also become their responsibility and he responded that they would, and would be free of charge for those with a radar key. The likely charge for use of the toilets would be 40p or 50p, which appeared to be the norm across the country.

He stated that the 20p currently charged in Caerphilly was only ever temporary and would be reviewed shortly and brought into line with the proposed charges for Blackwood.

The Clerk queried what sum of money would be required from other possible funding sources to keep the charge at 20p. Mr Edwards stated that was an unknown at present, but felt the proposed charge might deter some of the more undesirable individuals who were known to frequent the toilets in the past. Furthermore, all monies collected would be constantly reinvested to ensure the toilets were well maintained.

The Mayor thanked Mr Edwards for his attendance, and informed him members would now discuss the proposal and that he would be contacted by the Clerk with their decision. Mr Edwards in turn thanked members for the invitation, and left the meeting stating he was always available if members had any further queries or issues.

Discussion amongst members concentrated on the opportunity of reopening the facility, at one off cost to Town Council of £8,900, and at a potential cost of 40p/50p to users rather than the apparent continued promise of a new facility being built by the proposed developers of the Artisan Market sometime in the future.

Members were of the view that the town had undoubtedly suffered due to the closure and immediate action was required.

Councillor Z Hammond raised her concerns regarding the Café and the effect the responsibility of the disabled toilets passing to the Association might have in the future, if for any reason the Association closed the toilets, and was eager the cafe owners be informed out of courtesy of any proposed decision prior to it going public.

The Clerk was asked if funding could be found to finance the turnstile, and he informed members there were sufficient reserves in the Environmental Improvements Reserve Fund to meet this request of £8,900 as a one-off contribution to enable the reopening. He did inform members that he had already made contact with the Borough Council to see if any grants might be available to assist, and was still awaiting a response due to officers leave.

After further discussion, it was **agreed** that Town Council support the request from the Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association for a contribution of £8,900 to purchase the turnstyle as a precursor to the re-opening of the toilets.

It was also **agreed** the Clerk contact the café owners s a matter of urgency to inform them of the decision, and to ask the Borough Council that assurances be given to the café, that should for any reason in the future the toilets are shut, they be afforded similar concessions for the use of the disabled toilets, as at present, to ensue their business is not compromised.