

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1ST. OCTOBER 2018

Present : Councillor J Edwards (Mayor)
Councillor G James (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors J Griffiths, Z Hammond, C Erasmus, A Farina-Childs, N Turner, R Mills, T Evans,
J Weeks, R Weeks A Short , D Davies & M Gwynne
County Councillor K Etheridge

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors D Jones & P Cook

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this time

3. Blackwood Historical Society Presentation - Bi Centenary Celebrations

The Mayor welcomed Mr Lyn Pask to the meeting, who informed members he represented the Pontllanfraith & District Local History Society as its Chairman.

He explained the object of the Society was to gather knowledge and evidence of the local history and heritage of the area which basically covers the former Islwyn Borough area.

In 2011, he was instrumental in forming a core group of like minded people, dedicated to carrying out documented research into specific subjects, the first being around John Hodder Moggridge who conceived and established Blackwood at the beginning of the 19th. century. Nothing much was known about him other than sparse accounts written by local historians in 1950's. After a couple of years having gathered significant information on the Moggridge family and their extended families by marriage they concluded they should publish a book about them, but as more information was discovered they came to the conclusion they were actually uncovering the history of Blackwood itself.

Mr. Pask stated that they had discovered so much information that they definitely have enough material to publish a book on the subject but in addition had uncovered significantly more information on the Blackwood Chartists and their families, the schools established to educate their children, the churches and chapels they worshipped in and much much more.

They know that the first houses in what is now Blackwood High Street were completed in the summer of 1820, as stated by Moggridge in one of his many blogs (to use modern parlance), hence they believe the citizens of our town should be given the opportunity to celebrate his historic date.

Records survive of events that took place almost 70 years ago in celebration of the Festival of Britain & the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth, the piece de resistance being the Pageant of Bedwellty, a series of one act plays, charting the history of the area from prehistoric times, through the coming of the Romans, the Norman Conquest through to modern times.

Mr Pask identified the current objectives of the Group and petitioned Town Council & Caerphilly County Borough Council to recognise the importance of the year 2020.

They request a Bi-Centenary Committee be formed to discuss the following -

- Publish a Book with the possible title The Village in the Black Wood subtitled An experiment to encourage social improvement by John Hodder Moggridge (1772 - 1834)
- Hold a week of celebratory events in and around town
- Establish Heritage Centre within the town
- Establish Heritage Trails in and around the town
- Research & establish historical sites in and around the town where blue style plaques might be appropriate
- Make contact with local schools to introduce the subject of our bi-centenary into the curriculum
- Grant the said Committee authority to visit other local valley towns where centres/trails already exist
- Establish a dedicated website to the history and heritage of the area
- Ensure the said Committee contact and gain the support of any other local organisations that might have a mutual desire to share in the celebration of the history and heritage of our town.

The Mayor thanked Mr Pask for his thought provoking presentation.

The Clerk apologised to Mr Pask stating that having initially brought together the Heritage Association and the Historical Society, he was of the impression that both parties were working together but it now appears he was sadly mistaken.

After some discussion it was agreed this subject be discussed at the next Town Council meeting in November.

4. *County Borough Members Report*

County Councillor K Etheridge informed members that works on the Sirhowy Riverbridge are planned to be completed by the end of October, with all costs being met by the Developers Costains. He has posed the question to officers given their similar construction methods whether similar issues might occur at the Chartist Bridge and/or the Pioneer (Sainsbury's) Bridge.

5. *Mayoral Announcements*

The Mayor reported that he had attended the Tab Centre in Pontllanfraith for a Fund raising Coffee Morning, organised in memory of our late friend and colleague Jim Criddle, by his daughter Bethan which raised £228 for McMillans.

Councillor Z Hammond thanked the Mayor for his attendance and apologised to members for the very short notice given of the event by Bethan.

He also informed members he had represented the town at the funeral of Enzo Calzaghe.

6. Correspondence

The Clerk presented his report on the following items of correspondence received since the last Meeting and all were noted –

Caerphilly C.B.C. Local Toilets Strategy Consultation - forwarded to members

Copy of Cllrs Guide to Handling Abuse Online – forwarded to members

Copy of Byelaws – Land Drainage forwarded to Welsh Minister for Confirmation. The copy deposit should be open to public inspection at all reasonable times and without payment

Cllr. K Etheridge Notification of Peace March against Leisure Centre Closures on Saturday 3rd. November

Copy of Notice of Motion

“We the undersigned elected members call on the Regeneration Scrutiny to make a recommendation to Cabinet which we understand will be discussing on 14/11/18 that the whole strategy is referred to Full Council for debate and vote by all elected members in the interests of openness and transparency. We acknowledge the strength of feeling in regard the controversial proposal to rationalise Leisure Centres which have achieved cross party support, and the 2 former MPs and the current MP within the Islwyn Parliamentary Constituency have been supportive.

The current status of the petition 5000 names in respect of retaining sites at Cefn Forest and Blackwood currently lists a number of signatures from the following wards; Argoed, Penmaen, Pengam, Aberbargoed, Pontllanfraith, Ynysddu, Blackwood, New Tredegar, Abercarn, Newbridge, Risca East, Maesycwmmmer, Ystrad Mynach and Cefn Forest

We ask the Committee to consider this motion and request should they agree to request that Cabinet refer the matter to Full Council”

Re-opening of Wetherspoons 6th. December – Mayor’s attendance requested

Notification of response F.O.I. requests to Aneurin Bevan Healthboard

Velvet Coalmine

Velvet Coalmine 2018 Legacy

Building on the sensational appearance of England Rugby legend Jason Leonard at the 2018 Velvet Coalmine festival, a tremendous opportunity has appeared to put Blackwood firmly on the World Rugby Map.

With Jason's 'Atlas Foundation' the official charity partner for 2018, one of the projects it is supporting over the next 3 years is the Lesotho Rugby Academy. Lesotho is internationally twinned with Wales and as well as providing support in education, health and agriculture, the Rugby academy uses the sport of Rugby to educate children about the dangers of HIV/AIDS as Lesotho has one of the highest rates of HIV in the world.

www.lesothorugbyacademy.org

www.theatlasfoundation.org.uk

To follow-up the charity partner status of Velvet Coalmine and to commemorate World AIDS Day on Saturday December 1st 2018 it is proposed that all the schools involved in Velvet Coalmine in the Blackwood area stage a fundraising day to raise funds for this urgent and incredibly worthwhile project that has already reached 4,000 children in Lesotho and simultaneously has grown the sport of Rugby Union. The direct impact of the funding will be solidified before the fundraising event so all parties know precisely where the money is going and can hopefully moving forward, set up one-to-one links with a school in Lesotho.,

Lit'sitso Motseremeli, an incredibly inspiring person who runs the Lesotho Rugby Union and the Lesotho Rugby Academy will be in Blackwood between Wednesday November 28th - Friday November 30th 2018 to go into schools and tell stories and experiences of life in Lesotho and what the children have to sacrifice in order to survive and what Rugby does in what are brutal conditions for many of them

To maximise such a unique moment and as one of only three towns/cities in Wales supporting this (alongside St David's and Cardiff!) Velvet Coalmine would like to propose that Blackwood Town Council, as title sponsors of the festival, hold a civic reception in partnership with the schools, local Rotary clubs and dignitaries to both celebrate the relationship with Lesotho and to welcome such an incredible and inspiring person to our town.

The proposed date for this would be Wednesday November 28th in the evening.

Regards,

Iain Richards

Festival Director, Velvet Coalmine

Blackwood Street Pastors Invitation to 9th. Year Celebration Evening at Blackwood
Methodist Church on 25th. October 7.30pm

Stephen Davies Thanks for Support of SSAFA Ride to the Somme 2018 (Raised £2,520.35)

Libanus Lifestyle Request for funding – Christmas Tree – would propose initial meeting
with Chair/Vice Chair of Events Committee to discuss options

Notification of Fashion Show (Blackwood Friends of Tenovus Cancer
Care) on Thursday 1st. November 7.00 p.m.

One Voice Wales Notification of RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly Area Committee Meeting
7.00pm. on Wednesday 24th. October at Maescywmmmer OAP Hall, The
Crescent, Maescywmmmer

Elsburys Called to see Viv Williams (V Buy) but not there. Checked out possible
fixings for proposed new Cross Street Xmas decoration – will need to
double check with CCBC regarding potential fixings to Institute (Grade
II Listed building). Have requested quotation for works pending
agreements

With regard the item relating to the Local Toilets Strategy consultation, Councillor D Davies
reported this had been discussed at the Elder Persons Forum.

In respect of the request from Iain Richards, some members expressed disappointment that we
were being asked to organise/fund a Civic reception when we already sponsor the event by
£7,500 and that the schools were being asked to support a charity abroad, when there were so
many deserving local charities.

Councillor Z Hammond stated she thought a Shoe Box Appeal via local schools, asking for any
rugby kit/ boots etc. might be a more acceptable way of supporting the charity.

Councillor A Short asked if Accounts were prepared in respect of the Velvet Coalmine Festival
so that members could see how our sponsorship money is spent. He highlighted this was public
money and with the likelihood of a funding request in respect of the Bi-Centenary celebrations
we must ensure all monies are spent wisely. It was **agreed** the Clerk make enquiries regarding
the Accounts.

7. *Schedule of Payments*

The Clerk presented his report on payments made/to be made and the following were **agreed** –

		£. P
John Hold	September Salary + reimbursements	1,018.14
Carole Hold	Administrative Duties	324.50
Playworks	September Tax/ N.I.	405.41
James Edwards	Mayors Allowance	400.00

8. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 3rd. September 2018*

It was **resolved** the minutes be agreed as a true record

9. *Matters Arising*

There were no matters arising

10. To Receive the Minutes of Newsletter/ Web Page Committee meeting held on 24th. September 2018

It was **resolved** the Minutes be received.

It was **unanimously agreed** that with regard Members Contact Details no home address be identified on the Newsletter or our Web Page, and that name, telephone number and e mail addresses be provided instead.

11. To Consider filling of vacancies on Committees caused by resignation of W Baber

After a short discussion it was **agreed** that Councillor Trefor Evans replace W Baber on the Policy & Finance, Environment & Newsletter/ Web Page Committees

12. Budget Monitoring Report to Period 5 - 31st. August 2018

The Clerk presented his Budget Monitoring Report to 31st. August 2018 which highlighted a potential under spend of £1,134 (the majority £1,000 being in respect of the Carnival)

The Clerk was thanked for his report which it was **agreed** to accept.

13. Funding Request – Blackwood Basement Engagement Project

Councillor Z Hammond declared an interest and took no part in the discussion or decision making, but did answer some queries raised by members

The Clerk presented the following Funding Request -

The Basement is an information support and advocacy project within Caerphilly Youth Service which seeks to empower young people to fulfil their individual potential by overcoming social or personal circumstances, which may limit this accomplishment by providing integrated information, support and advocacy services. The Basement and the services it provides are aimed at all young people aged eleven to twenty-five in the county borough of Caerphilly

Using a team of experienced youth and community workers, voluntary workers and in partnership with the local Policing team and Zoe Hammond from Blackwood Town Council, we hope to run an array of different activities in the Market Place in Blackwood on Wednesday 31st. October. (Halloween Event). The planned project will provide a safe environment for young people to undertake a variety of diversionary fun, educative, creative and inclusive activities, which aims to considerably contribute in reducing the amount of anti-social, unlawful behaviour within the local communities.

We are aiming to engage with a minimum of 60 young people over the planned forth-coming event, which will considerably reduce crime rates and disorder within the local communities and also the surrounding areas.

At the end of the project we hope that all participants will have developed a more social attitude about their community and be more willing to take part in more social events or clubs thus again supporting a measurable reduction of anti-social behaviour over the Halloween period, consequently proving the effectiveness of the collaborative work being done within the Blackwood area. The event will incorporate other professionals such as the Armed forces, St Johns Ambulance service to name a few, all running activities and promoting their services to the young people.

A brief break down of anticipated event costs

Art and Craft resources -£300

Theatrical Special Effect Makeup - £300

Marquee Hire - £450 (if one does not become available for free)

DJ – £250

Refreshments - ?

Other funding will hopefully be sought through our local Asda store and the Police & Crime Commissioners fund to further support this project.

The Clerk further reported that last year Town Council supported GAVO by £300 for a similar project, which on that occasion bussed youngsters out of the area.

Furthermore, Town Council had previously agreed support of £500 towards the After Dark Team's proposed pub breathalyser project which had unfortunately never progressed, and it was agreed to support their planned Graffiti project over the Easter holiday period instead. Unfortunately this did not proceed either, but given the success of the recent Youth Day, he wondered whether Town Council might consider transferring monies to this proposed project?

After some discussion members agreed this seemed a very worthwhile project that might well assist in reducing anti social behaviour on what is a notoriously problematic evening and agreed that the previously *agreed* support of £500 be utilised for this project.

14. Request for necessary work to maintain memorial bench to Alun Pask at Cwmgelli

The Clerk presented a request received from Bryan Wilkins regarding the work necessary to maintain the memorial bench to the standard Alun's memory deserves.

Following Alun's death in 1995, the then Town Council and Blackwood R.F.C. jointly funded and erected the memorial bench. Each year in conjunction with the rugby club he has maintained this, sanding, varnishing and re-varnishing it, but it now requires more professional attention.

The Clerk reminded members that Alun received a posthumous Civic Award back in 2011 in recognition of his outstanding sporting achievements.

Councillor Andrew Short reported that he had visited the site and volunteered to arrange for any necessary works to be undertaken. Members thanked Councillor Short for his offer and after a short discussion it was agreed it was essential to maintain the bench as a fitting tribute to one of the towns greatest sportsmen and a budget of £100 was *agreed* to complete the necessary works.

15. Verbal Report on Chartist Bridge Meeting

The Clerk & Councillor A Farina-Childs reported briefly on their attendance at the MAG meeting on 4th.September where there appeared to be a change in attitude with many new members on the Group and the acknowledgement that there was a growing interest/dialogue between local members, Town Council and the local support group.

ARUP have now been commissioned to undertake a review of the previous options report, in light of newer innovations and for these considerations to be presented to the group. This would allow any remit to be finalised and for a more structured approach and design consideration to be taken forward. ARUP designers are invited to attend the next MAG to present their report.

Other members commented on the meeting on 14th. September with Costains and Borough officers and were encouraged by the response at the meeting, albeit agreeing we must continue to challenge and ensure the deadlines they have identified for reports are adhered to.

The Clerk informed members he would forward a copy of the MAG minutes one received.

16. Caerphilly C.B.C. Sport & Active Recreation Strategy - Update

County Councillor K Etheridge reported that after discussions with County Borough Officers he had been informed that the cost of initiating the road closures of £700 would fall to him as event organiser. Furthermore, any problems with liability, if an accident occurred, that he would be personally responsible and he felt given these circumstances he could not assume this responsibility on November 3rd for any health and safety issues especially with a large number of children proposing to attend as well.

They had also specified that they would require first aiders and may also require qualified stewards and marshals all with additional costs that would fall on him.

Councillor A Farina-Childs estimated these potential additional costs could amount to approximately £650/£700.

Councillor Etheridge stated that the event had been very well advertised and that he had sent many letters to politicians requesting their support on the day, with several promising to attend. He requested that Town Council consider taking over the organising and running of the event.

Members queried whether there might be an alternative of a static protest somewhere in town.

Realistically the only locations would be the Market Place (in use on a Saturday) or the Dragon Circle near ASDA and it was generally agreed would have nowhere near the impact hoped for.

After much discussion, where members expressed the point of view that as Town Council had been very much to the fore in campaigning against closure and that the event had been so widely advertised it could reflect badly on Town Council if we weren't seen to be supportive of this event.

The Clerk informed member he would need to check with One Voice Wales regarding legitimacy of expenditure on a protest march and with our Insurers regarding validity of our Public Liability Insurance for this sort of event.

It was **agreed** the request be put to a vote. Councillor D Davies requested a recorded vote and this was agreed.

Those voting for Town Council to take on responsibility/ financial & organisation of the Protest March (providing clearance by One Voice Wales and our Insurers) were Councillors J Edwards, G James, T Evans, R Mills, N Turner, A Farina-Childs, C Erasmus, A Short, Z Hammond, J Griffiths & M Gwynne

Those voting against Councillor D Davies

It was *agreed* responsibility would fall to the Events Committee for organisation

17. Civic Awards Evening

The Clerk reported that most things were in hand for the Civic Awards Evening on Tuesday 16th October. Most recipients/prize winners had been notified, with the remainder to be contacted over the next few days. It was anticipated approximately 140/150 will be attending, and the format of the evening would be similar to previous years – Presentation of Certificates to Carnival Children, followed by Blackwood in Bloom winners and then Civic Award Winners. This will be followed by presentations in respect of the Velvet Coalmine Children’s Literature Festival followed by entertainment and buffet.

Guests were being asked to arrive for 6.30pm with a planned 6.45pm start with the evening expected to finish approximately 9.15/9.30pm.

18. Planning Applications

The Clerk reported that no Planning Applications had been received since the last meeting

19. Reports

Members queried progress on the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks. The Clerk apologised saying he had put the forms ready to bring to this evenings meeting, but had unfortunately left them at home but promised to bring to the next meeting.

Councillor J Griffiths offered to arrange safeguarding training for members if required.

Councillor Z Hammond reported on a recent After Dark Meeting which identified Acid Attacks as a potential threat in other towns and cities in the country and it was considered that to be pro-active perhaps Acid Attack First Aid Packs be provided in Blackwood High Street pubs.

After some discussion members *agreed* to purchase 2 packs at £60, one to be placed in a pub in town and the other to be presented to Blackwood Street Pastors (at Civic Awards Evening if possible)

Councillor G James stated he had not been informed of the meeting and asked the Clerk to contact the secretary to ensure future meeting notices are forwarded to him.