

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 2ND DECEMBER 2019

Present : Councillor G James (Mayor)
Councillors Z Hammond, R Mills, A Short, N Turner & T Jones

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, J Edwards, J Griffiths, M Gwynne, P Cook, C Erasmus & R Weeks

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor reported on the following visits made/ functions attended –

Remembrance Service at the Market Place

Remembrance Service at Moose Hall followed by wreath laying at Cenotaph

Winter Fayre, including the opening of a new business on the High Street – The Dessert Yard

He also reported that he had received an invitation to all town councillors to attend Margaret Veater's 90th. Birthday Party being held at the Moose Hall on Friday 27th. December at 7.00pm. She has indicated no presents, but that donations to a children's charity would be an acceptable alternative if people so wished.

4. County Borough Report

The Clerk reported that Councillor A Farina-Childs had forwarded the following brief update -

He had recently met with a few Independent Traders, Town Centre Manager and the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, where topics such as infrastructure, business rates, empty shops and footfall were discussed. It was a very productive meeting.(As an aside invites to the meeting were made by the Traders)

He reported that he had also been working closely with the owners of the Retail Park to improve the cleaning up of litter in the area, and can confirm that an increased litter picking service at the Retail Park will commence from 1st. January 2020

He also wished to pass on congratulations to the Town Councillors who helped make the Christmas Fayre a success again on Saturday, whilst apologising for his absence on the day.

5. 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. Chief Executive apologising that since we have entered a pre election period and she is the Returning Officer she thinks it appropriate to rearrange her planned attendance at Town Council meeting on December 2nd., but looks forward to attending in the near future

Notification of Closure of Red Lion Car Park on Sunday 8th. December

Notification of Code of Conduct Training at 5.30pm. on Wednesday 12th. February 2020 – approx 1hour 30minutes – names by Monday 27th. January

Community Councils Liaison Sub Committee meeting dates for 2020 -

Wed. 12th February 2020 – TCCLC Only

Wed. 11th March 2020 – Combined Comm.Council Liaison Sub Comm.

Wed. 10th June 2020 – TCCLC Only

Wed. 8th July 2020 – Combined Comm. Council Liaison Sub Comm.

Wed. 14th October 2020 – TCCLC Only

Wed.18th November 2020 – Combined Comm.Council Liaison Sub Comm.

Boverton Nurseries Quotation for Provision of Hanging Baskets or 2020 in the sum £1,089.50 excl. VAT (Payment this year £1,086.50)

In respect of Boverton Nurseries, it was *agreed* to accept the quotation. The Clerk asked, given the importance of 2020, whether members wished to consider maybe adding additional baskets/ planters around town. Members agreed this should be explored, and be placed on the agenda for a future meeting, and to include the Market Place, ASDA and other areas in town.

6. *Schedule of Payments*

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

		£. p
Blackwood Cricket Club	Grant	250.00
Mynyddislwyn Choir	Grant	250.00
Blackwood Musical Theatre	Grant	250.00
Studio 54	Grant	500.00
Markham Band	Remembrance Service	100.00
Henllys Pipe & Drums Band	Xmas Parade	200.00
Oakdale Silver Band	Xmas Market & Carol Concert	240.00
Mynyddislwyn Choir	Xmas Market & Carol Concert	240.00
Dancelicious	Xmas Market	100.00
DYT Dance	Xmas Market	100.00
Studio 54	Xmas Market	100.00
Markham Band	Xmas Market	250.00
John Hold	November Salary + Reimburse	1,134.80
Playworks	November Tax/N.I.	287.99
Bobath	Grant	50.00
Alzheimer's Society	Grant	250.00
Pontllanfraith Rotary Club	Xmas Parade	100.00
Blackwood Methodist Church	Carol Concert	100.00
Wales Audit Office	Audit Fee	249.50
John Hold	Reimb.– App Fees Xmas Market	340.00

7. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 4th. November 2019*

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

8. *Matters Arising*

Correspondence – Governor Support.

The Clerk reported that he had received confirmation that Community Representatives would be allowed to be nominated where no Town Council representative position had been filled. They advised we contact the schools in question - Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Sannan, Ysgol Gymaeg Cwm Derwen and Blackwood Primary and ask the head teacher if they had any individuals that might be interested, and to forward details to us for consideration.

During discussion on the above, Councillor Rhys Mills expressed an interest in becoming the Town Council representative at Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen, and this was unanimously agreed by members.

9. To Receive the Minutes of the One Voice Wales Larger Councils Committee Meeting held on 16th. October 2019

It was *resolved* the minutes be received

10. To Receive the One Voice Wales Caerphilly/Merthyr/RCT Area Committee Meeting held on 9th. October 2019

It was *resolved* the minutes be received

11. To Receive the Minutes of the Town & Community Councils Liaison Committee Meeting held on 12th. June 2019

It was *resolved* the minutes be received

12. Vacancy on Town Council – Blackwood North Ward

The Clerk reported that confirmation had been received that there had been no call for an election, and following previous custom and practice a further Notice has been placed on the Noticeboard seeking expressions of interest in Co-option to Town Council, with a closing date of Friday 13th. December.

Two expressions of interest had been received to date.

It was *agreed* to agenda this for the next meeting with the possibility of calling a Special Meeting to interview those chosen later in January.

13. Christmas Events – Verbal Update

Councillor Z Hammond, Chair of Events Committee thanked those members who had assisted at the Christmas Fayre and the Clerk for organising the on-stage entertainment. The general consensus was that the event had been very successful.

It was suggested that perhaps a meeting with the Borough organising team would be beneficial for future events, and Councillor Hammond and the Clerk both confirmed there were regular meetings already being held prior to the carnival and Christmas event.

Councillor Hammond reminded members that the Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert was on Thursday 5th. December and requested assistance for marshalling the parade and assisting with refreshments after the Carol Concert. The Clerk confirmed everything was in hand regarding both the parade and concert.

14. Caerphilly C.B.C. Budget Proposals – Consultation

The Clerk presented his report which highlighted the draft savings proposals identified by Caerphilly C.B.C. and apologised for the small print.

Members recognised the financial problems faced by the Borough, and after significant discussion on the proposed savings, it was agreed the following comments be forwarded –

B09 Public Protection – Members felt the proposal to merge the Community Safety Wardens with the Environmental Health General Enforcement Team and to delete 4 CSW posts to provide a streamlined service is ill judged and believe this could further exacerbate problems in and around the area. The loss of these posts could further increase the call on police resources, and members query if this proposal has been discussed with the Public Services Board ?

C10 Infrastructure – Members feel the School Crossings Patrols should be retained from a child safety perspective, especially with the ever increasing number of vehicles present around school sites.

C11 Infrastructure – Members have concerns that the withdrawal of subsidy might have an adverse effect on the town itself. The report briefly mentions an alternative less frequent service, and details including timings would be helpful.

C16 Community & Leisure Services – Members are concerned that further cuts in playground maintenance budget will lead to closure/removal of playground facilities which will result in even less children potentially enjoying some form of physical exercise, at a time when child obesity is on the increase. Again has this proposal been discussed with the Public Services Board as the decision could well lead to increased pressures on Health budgets ?

C25 Public Protection – Again Members have concerns that the Decommissioning of all BT line rental cameras could lead to an increase in anti social behaviour and again an additional call on police resources.

C28 Corporate Policy – The proposed reduction in the Voluntary Sector budget will have a significant effect on the most vulnerable people in our communities, as they regularly rely on the free, confidential information and advice on money, legal, consumer and various other problem areas they provide.

D09 Public Protection – Members have concerns that the Review of Pest Control Fees, and especially the introduction of a charge for rat treatments could well affect the most vulnerable/ elderly in our communities and potentially lead to increased numbers of infestations (if the charges cannot be afforded), and all manners of public health issues. An indication of the new charge would be helpful.

15. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Report

The Clerk presented his report which highlighted the main issues of the Report. After much discussion it was **agreed** no representations be made on the Draft Report, and that the details be further discussed whilst setting the budget for 2020/2021.

16. Interest Free Loan to Studio 54

As directed the Clerk met with Miss Jenna Curtis and having received assurances that the monies will be used for the nominated purpose – new dance floor at the Studio, and had negotiated the following -

Loan Amount

1. The Lender promises to loan £ 3,000 (Three Thousand Pounds) to the Borrower and the Borrower promises to repay this principal amount to the Lender without interest payable on the unpaid principal

2. Payment

The loan will be repaid in full, repayments commencing on the 15th. January 2020 by way of 30 monthly instalments of £100 payable by direct debit on the fifteenth day of every month,

As long as the Borrower performs and observes all his obligations hereunder the Lender will accept the payment by instalments as set out herein and will not enforce clause 3 below. The borrower may also (if they so wish) repay additional amounts during this period (via cheque or bank transfer) in order to affect an early repayment of the loan

Default

3. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Agreement if the Borrower defaults in the performance of any obligation under the Agreement then the Lender may declare the principal amount owing as due under this Agreement at that time to be immediately due and payable

The named Director, Miss Jenna Jane Curtis becomes personally liable for repayment if the Company (Studio 54) should cease trading.

Members were in ***agreement*** with the terms and conditions of the interest free loan, and it was further ***agreed*** arrangements be made for the signing of said agreement by the Mayor (witnessed by the Clerk) and Miss Jenna Curtis, with transfer of funds (£3,000) arranged soon afterwards to enable the works to be completed over the Christmas break

17. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on the following planning applications received since the last meeting –

Case Ref. 19/0896/FULL

Location: 5 Homeland Place Blackwood NP12 1AS

Proposal: Erect two storey rear extension

Case Ref. 19/0905/FULL

Location: 14 Woodbine Road Blackwood NP12 1QJ

Proposal: Erect a part single storey, part two storey rear extension

Case Ref. 19/0907/COU

Location: 102 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AF (Adjacent to Boot Chemists)

Proposal: Change the use from A1 to A3 (Restaurant/Cafe)

Case Ref. 19/0661/FULL

Location: 9 Denbigh Close Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1JH

Proposal: Partly convert garage into living accommodation, demolish existing conservatory and erect single storey rear extension and first floor side extension

Case Ref. 19/0925/FULL

Location: 271-273 High Street Blackwood

Proposal: Install 6 new air conditioning units

After some discussion it was **agreed** no objections be raised, albeit whilst realising it was not a planning issue members did raise concerns regarding the number of restaurants/cafés, barbers/hairdressers and vape shops in the town

18. Reports

The Mayor reported briefly on the Aneurin Bevan UHB Community Network Event held at Rodney Parade on Thursday 21st. November. He now becomes a Community Champion, and will be updated regularly on changes to services or developments within the Health Board.

The Clerk reported a request from Councillor Jan Griffiths (Deputy Mayor) for leave of absence. She is still not fully recovered from her operation and is now also supporting her family through some difficult times.

Members were fully sympathetic to the request, but obviously hoped she would be in a position to return sooner rather than later, and **agreed** initially leave of absence for a 3 month period, and would review again at that time.

Councillor Zoe Hammond extended an invitation for members to attend the Studio 54 Awards Evening at their studio at 7.00pm. on Saturday 14th. December