

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3RD. FEBRUARY 2020

Present : Councillor G James (Mayor)

Councillor J Griffiths (Deputy Mayor)

Councillors D Davies, J Edwards, T Evans, R Weeks, Z Hammond, R Mills, D Jones, N Turner,
A Short, C Erasmus & M Gwynne

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors A Farina-Childs & P Cook

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor James Edwards declared his interest in respect of Item 3 Interview for Co-option to Town Council as his wife Carol was one of the applicants.

Councillor Gerwyn James declared an interest in respect of Item 11 Receive Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee Meeting as he has regularly assisted the Blackwood Action on Litter Community Group

3. Vacancy Blackwood North Ward – Interview of Applicants

Having declared his interest, Councillor J Edwards left the meeting for the duration of the interview process

The following had been invited for interview for Co-option onto Town Council to represent the Blackwood North Ward, and each was interviewed in turn –

Mr. Ashley Davies 78 Derwendeg Avenue, Cefn Fforest, Blackwood , NP12 3LN

Mrs Carol Edwards 64 Sunnybank Road, Blackwood, NP12 1HZ

Mr George Edwards 34 Pencoed Avenue, Cefn Fforest, Blackwood, NP12 3LD

After some discussion, where members commented each would be worthy of co-option to serve on Town Council, a secret ballot was held.

After counting the votes, the Clerk declared that Ashley Davies had received the most votes and it was ***agreed*** he be duly elected to serve the Blackwood North Ward.

Councillor Ashley Davies signed the necessary Declaration of Acceptance of Office, witnessed by the Clerk, was congratulated and welcomed by the Mayor and took his place at the meeting.

4. *Police Report*

The Mayor welcomed Inspector Aled George to the meeting and thanked him for his attendance.

The Inspector reported on the crime and ASB figures which he circulated to members. The ASB figures for Blackwood showed a reduction of 6 cases when compared with this time last year, whilst Crime figures showed an increase of 26 cases, 20 of which cases were reported in the last month, reflecting the incidents of egg throwing etc. in and around own.

He reported briefly on the ongoing murder investigation at Apollo Way, and stated that various individuals had been re-housed to try and diffuse tensions in the area. He also reported on the knife incident at ASDA where an arrest was made but no charges brought as yet as awaiting Crown Prosecution Service advice. The individual has obviously been banned from the store.

The Inspector also reported on the recent persistent issues at the Bus Station, where he had arranged additional patrols and issued several dispersal orders. There were reported incidents of drinking, smoking and intravenous cocaine use in the area, and was aware of the damage in the toilets. He had been notified additional cameras were planned for the bus station area and the waiting room area. Councillor A Short queried whether free wi-fi might be attracting youngsters to the area and whether if it were not readily available it would become a less attractive meeting place. The Inspector agreed that might be the case and stated he would take the opportunity to raise this at the next relevant meeting.

With regard rough sleepers, his PCO's and the Community Support Wardens had worked with Cornerstone, the churches night shelter scheme and other agencies to point individuals to available hostel places.

Inspector George then referred to the current spate of incidents which involved large groups of 20/30 youngsters around the area. Some were found to be teenage girls much the worse for drink, but also included 11-13 year olds.

He reported that he had been able to access additional funding which would result in additional patrols around the area (approx 60 hours overtime) and it was hoped that with stop and search powers and dispersal orders there would be a marked improvement in the area.

The Inspector also reported that he had secured Community Safety funding, and that it was planned to hold an event at Blackwood Comprehensive School on Saturday 28th. March 10.00am – 4.00pm, where the community would be asked to highlight the problems/issues and assist in identifying possible priorities and solutions. It was also anticipated other venues would be identified for a number of other community engagement events throughout March & April 2020.

Councillors Z Hammond & G James queried whether some/all of the events planned for the town might be brought under our Bi Centenary banner - Our logo includes the strap line - 200 years of history and progress and as these initiatives are looking to improve the lives of the local community, would seem a possible fit. It was *agreed* we try to work with the other agencies involved and take this opportunity to advertise our Bi Centenary and also instill some pride back into the community.

Finally, he informed members that given recent problems at Mc Donalds, they had taken a positive approach and have now appointed private security on site.

The Mayor thanked Inspector George for his detailed report and he left the meeting

5. *Mayoral Announcements*

The Mayor reported that he had attended Blackwood Primary School Year 6 Exhibition on Monday January 20th at Blackwood Miner's institute. They had been working on a project involving WW1 and 2 artefacts and created their own sketchbooks, art, stories and poems, and had been impressed by the work on show.

He also reported attending a dinner at the Moose Hall, Blackwood

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.

Notification of Website Training Monday 2nd. March 2020

Notification change of date – Code of Conduct Training – now provisionally arranged for Wednesday 26th February

Red Lion Car Park Temp. Closure from 12.00am Sunday 9th until 22.00 Monday 10th. February 2020

CCBC Electric Vehicle Strategy And Action Plan. The aim of the project is to provide electric vehicle charging in car parks close to residential areas to support residents with no off street parking to switch to electric vehicles. Sites were selected using the OLEV funding criteria, feedback from a public consultation and from key officers and the results of a feasibility study. The OLEV funding criteria includes demonstrating demand, lack of off-street parking and accessibility to local residents. As part of the feasibility study Western Power Distribution were also consulted on the suitability of sites. For Blackwood, the site chosen is Blackwood Bus Station Market Traders Car Park and it will have 2 double charge points

As part of the CCBC EV Strategy and Action Plan we are also contacting the local supermarkets to see if they will install EV charge points on their sites in the Caerphilly county borough.

Councillor Pat Cook

Request for Leave of Absence

As a committed member of Blackwood Town Council I am writing to you to request a leave of absence for a couple of months in order to recuperate from an impending Knee operation.

I will resume participation as soon as I am able and hope you can accede to this request.

Mr Roger Evans

Freedom of Information Request

Dear Mr Hold,

1. Under what statutory provisions is the Town Council permitted to make:
 - (a) a grant to Studio 54, a private limited company [Minute 6 of Town Council Meeting 2.12.19. refers]; and
 - (b) an interest-free loan to Studio 54, a private limited company [Minute 16 of Town Council Meeting 2.12.19. refers]?
2. Is the loan secured or unsecured?
3. If secured, what is the security?
4. Has the first repayment due 15th January 2020 been received in full?

Cllr. K Etheridge

Various correspondence regarding increased episodes of anti social behaviour in and around town and the temporary closure of the bus station toilets, again due to repeated acts of vandalism causing extensive damage and a hefty repair bill.

Also a request for a multi agency meeting to discuss these matters

Councillor A Farina-Childs

Homeless Query – response from Cornerstone

We're still awaiting the publication from Welsh Government about the annual survey and official count night but the figures are lower than we thought in Blackwood.

Also, we've had our night open since 9th December and we have had at least four bed spaces available every

In respect of the Electric Vehicle Charging, members were concerned that parking charges would not apply to those accessing the charging points

Members **unanimously agreed** that Councillor Pat Cook being granted leave of absence for three months.

In respect of the request for Information, the Clerk outlined his response, namely –

1. Section 145 of Local Government Act 1972
2. Secured
3. Written into Agreement that Ms Jenna Curtis would become personally liable in the case of default
4. Yes first payment received in full and Direct Debit set up

In respect of the correspondence from Councillor Etheridge, much had been covered by the Inspector in his report, and members were supportive of the call for a multi agency approach to solving the current issues in and around town.

7. *Schedule of Payments*

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

		£. p
Playworks	Tax/N.I. January	287.99
John Hold	Salary/ Reimbursements	975.80
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Purchase/Install.of Paddlegates (Toilets) – incl. VAT £1,780	10, 680.00
Elsbury's	Xmas lighting / storage	4,288.08

8. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 6th January 2020*

With the proviso that the names of the other young persons who helped out at the Carol Concert were confirmed as Heather Hopkins & Kelise Rose Lewis, and that thanks were also extended to the Mynyddislwyn Choir & Oakdale Band 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 the Bi- Centenary Committee Meetings held on 28th. October 2019 & 20th. January 2020*

It was **agreed** the minutes be received.

Councillor D Jones queried whether the performances by Blackwood Little Theatre would be open to schools. It was reported that with only 2 performances currently planned that was doubtful, but if it was thought the production suitable perhaps additional performances could be requested, albeit being dependent on the Theatres other commitments

11. *To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 27th. January 2020*

The Clerk presented the minutes and it was **agreed** they be received.

Members **agreed** to award a grant of £410 to Blackwood Action on Litter Community Group to enable them to purchase equipment etc., and £200 to Wales Air Ambulance

Other matters where the Committee had made recommendations to Council were on the agenda for discussion, Budget Monitoring Report and Budget Requirements 2020/2021 & Precept Setting, together with the Independent Review Panel Draft Report and Boundary Commission Changes.

12. Independent Review Panel for Wales Draft Report – Decisions required

The Clerk presented his report, and all relevant determinations were discussed in turn.

42 All community and town councils must make available a payment to each of their members of £150 per year as a contribution to costs and expenses.

No - the payment of £150 is mandated for every member unless they advise the appropriate officer they do not want to take it in writing.

44 Community and town councils in Groups B or C can make an annual payment of up to £500 each for up to 5 members in recognition of specific responsibilities. This is in addition to the £150 payment costs and expenses

Yes – it is optional to pay it for up to 5 members and, if it is paid, the amount (up to £500) must be decided.

Agreed that no payments be paid in respect of specific responsibilities for the coming year, but that consideration be given to drawing up guidelines for such potential payments for future years.

45 Community and town councils can make payments to each of their members in respect of travel costs

Yes – the payment of travel costs is for attending approved duties.

Agreed that payments of travel costs is made for attending approved duties

46 If a community or town council resolves that a particular duty requires an overnight stay, it can authorise reimbursement of subsistence expenses to its members.

Yes – the payment of overnight subsistence expenses is optional.

Agreed that payment of overnight subsistence is made for attending approved duties

47 Community and town councils can pay financial loss compensation to each of their members, where such loss has actually occurred, for attending approved duties.

Yes – the payment of financial loss allowance is optional.

Agreed that financial loss compensation is made, where actual loss has occurred when attending approved duties

48 All community and town councils must provide for the reimbursement of necessary costs for the care of dependent children and adults (provided by informal or formal carers) and for personal assistance needs up to a maximum of £403 per month.

No - the payment is mandated for every member if they are eligible to claim, and wish to do so.

49 Community and town councils can provide a payment to the mayor or chair of the council up to a maximum of £1,500.

Yes – the payment to a Civic Head is optional.

Agreed £400 be paid to the Mayor as per budget

50 Community and town councils can provide a payment to the deputy mayor or deputy chair of the council up to a maximum amount of £500.

Yes – the payment to a Deputy Civic Head is optional.

Agreed that no payment be made to the Deputy Mayor

13. Budget Monitoring Report - Period 9 to 31st. December 2019

The Clerk presented his budget monitoring report for the current year which indicated a number of variances to the original budget, the net effect being a likely under spend of £5,316, but once planned contributions in respect of Xmas Lights and Bi Centenary Celebrations are accounted for, this realistically equates to an overspend of £4,184 albeit some £11,600 (Contribution to toilets & Loan to Studio 54 (less anticipated £300 repayments) are specific unbudgeted calls on Reserves.

Given approx £4,250 under spends have been identified against Events, this potentially gives Town Council the opportunity to invest this amount towards our Bi Centenary Celebrations and the Clerk recommended this course of action to Council.

With the CIL having to be earmarked, and the agreed £8,900 call on Reserves in respect of the Bus Station Toilets, overall General Reserves will increase by £163

After some discussion, it was **agreed** that the Budget monitoring report as presented be accepted, and that the recommendation by the Clerk that £4,250 is earmarked to reserves towards planned Bi Centenary Celebrations was also **agreed**.

14. Budget Requirements 2020/2021 & Precept Setting

The Clerk presented a budget for 2020/2021 which reflects current spending patterns, plus inflationary increases on some expenditure heads, but also reflects the Council's decision to continue the provision of hanging baskets, continued sponsorship of the Blackwood RFC Firework Display and the ongoing Events Programme and our Grants to Local Organisations/ Groups. A contribution of £2,000 is also included towards Replacement fund for Christmas Lighting, and an additional £7,500 towards our Bi- Centenary Celebrations.

The current year 2019/20 Caerphilly C.B.C. (due to budgetary constraints) no longer financed the Summer Event Carnival/ Beach Party, and the event whilst still organised by the Caerphilly Events Team, with all stage entertainment organised by Town Council Events Committee was fully funded by Town Council. It is proposed, whilst there were some under spends, the same budget of £9,500 be earmarked for 2020/2021.

Similarly, with the Borough now fully funding the Xmas Fayre/Market as a One Day Event, we had fairly considerable savings, but given the obvious emphasis on our Bi-Centenary Year Celebrations it is proposed the £2,750 budget remains, so that we might look to enhance the hopefully Victorian themed Xmas Fayre/Market to properly round off the year.

After some discussion it was **unanimously agreed** the budget as presented be adopted and that the Precept for 2020/2021 remain at £20 per Band Property.

The Clerk was thanked by members for his financial stewardship throughout the year and his hard work in producing the 2020/2021 Budget papers.

15. Boundary Commission Changes – Draft Proposals for Caerphilly Electoral Boundaries – Consultation period ends 15th. April 2020

The Clerk presented the following report –

The Commission wishes to highlight that this review of electoral arrangements is seeking to make improvements to electoral representation within Caerphilly County Borough Council. This process except for those specifically mentioned in Chapter 6, is independent from any changes to arrangements concerning community or town councils. Where combinations of communities or their wards are used to create electoral wards, the individual communities in question will retain their existing community council arrangements. These councils will remain independent following the outcome of this review, any precepts generated or assets contained with a community or town council will remain part of that community council.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

Blackwood & Cefn Fforest

45. The existing Blackwood electoral ward is comprised of the Town of Blackwood. It has 6,203 electors (6,414 projected) represented by three councillors, which is 10% above the proposed county average. The electoral ward has an estimated population of 6,662 eligible voters.
46. The existing Cefn Fforest electoral ward is comprised of the Community of Cefn Forest. It has 2,809 electors (2,874 projected) represented by two councillors, which is 26% below the proposed county average. The electoral ward has an estimated population of 3,048 eligible voters.
47. The Commission received two representations concerning these wards from Caerphilly County Borough Council and a joint submission from two residents.
48. Caerphilly County Borough Council proposed that Cefn Fforest representation is reduced from two to one councillor. It was also proposed to transfer Bedwellty Road and Bryn Road (297 electors) to the Town of Blackwood from the Cefn Forest community ward.
49. These two residents proposed to transfer 800 electors to the Community of Cefn Fforest.
50. The Commission proposes to combine the Community of Cefn Fforest and the Cefn Fforest East ward of the Town of Blackwood to form an electoral ward of 4,367 projected electors, which, if represented by two councillors, would result in a level of representation that is 16% above the proposed county average.
51. The Commission has given the proposed electoral ward the single name of Cefn Fforest. The Welsh Language Commissioner is in agreement with the proposed name. The Commission would welcome any suggestions for alternative names.
52. The Commission, as a consequence, proposes to combine the Blackwood Central, Blackwood North and Blackwood South wards of the Town of Blackwood to form an electoral ward of 4,645 projected electors, which, if represented by three councillors, would result in a level of representation that is 18% below the proposed county average.

53. The Commission has given the proposed electoral ward the Welsh language name of Coedduon and the English language name of Blackwood. The Welsh Language Commissioner is in agreement with the proposed name. The Commission would welcome any suggestions for alternative names.
54. The Commission considered the recommendation made by the Council, however, the proposed boundary Town Council Expected Decision Level: Delegated change did not provide sufficient improvement to electoral parity in the Community of Cefn Fforest. It is the view of the Commission that these arrangements would build on the established community, communication and social links within the area.

Members expressed their concerns that community perceptions of the proposed ward changes might cause some issues with some apparently already voicing their opinion that if they are no longer within the Blackwood Ward why should they continue paying the Town Council precept.

The Clerk reported that he intended to organise a meeting with both C.C.B.C. Blackwood & Cefn Fforest Ward members to prepare a joint response to these proposals prior to the consultation closing date of 15th. April 2020.

After some discussion members *agreed* a meeting be called, but took on board Councillor D Jones suggestion that perhaps our position might be better served if responses were sent separately

16. Planning Applications

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

Case Ref. 20/0022/FULL

Location: Budget Vets Ltd Unit B Highfields Way Blackwood NP12 1SL (UPRN 000043078678)

Proposal: Install 4 No. air conditioning units

Case Ref. 19/1013/RM

Location: Land At Grid Ref 317561 196510 Libanus Road Blackwood (UPRN 000043085652)

Proposal: Seek approval of the reserved matters relating to access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of planning consent 18/1080/OUT (Erect up to 8 no. dwellings with associated works)

Case Ref. 19/1015/FULL

Location: Cwmgelli Lodge Lon Pennant Cwmgelli Blackwood NP12 1BR (UPRN 000043091641)

Proposal: Replace and relocate existing cycle store with secure store and relocation of bin store

Case Ref. 19/1024/RM

Location: Land At Cwmgelli Blackwood (UPRN 000043085950)

Proposal: Seek approval of the reserved matters regarding details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of planning consent 15/0252/OUT (granted on appeal reference APP/K6920/A/15/3137884) (Erect residential development, public open space, landscaping, highway improvements and associated engineering works with all matters reserved except for access)

Case Ref. 20/0053/COU

Location: 3 Tree Tops Avenue Blackwood NP12 1JF (UPRN 000043055207)

Proposal: Change the use from dwelling house to HMO temporary accommodation

The Mayor permitted Mrs Daphne Davies, who had expressed an interest to speak on the application regarding 3 Tree Tops Avenue to address the meeting.

Mrs Davies, a neighbour to the property in question, said she spoke on behalf of a number of local residents who had concerns regarding the plan to change to a temporary accommodation scenario and the possible consequences of disruption caused by what would inevitably appear to be an ever changing group of individuals renting the property.

Members were sympathetic of residents concerns and agreed to formally object to the application in question but realised we would need specific planning matters to support the objection, possibly additional on street parking issues.

After further discussion it was **agreed** a meeting of the Planning Committee be called to consider this application and also Case Ref. 19/1024/RM , albeit as Councillor Z Hammond pointed out the developer had appeared to have addressed all issues previously raised by C.C.B.C. planning department, and perhaps the only contentious issue might be the access to the proposed development from the main Blackwood to Tredegar road.

17. Reports

The Clerk presented the following from Councillor A Farina-Childs, which was noted.

I have three issues that I and my Colleague Cllr Etheridge are working on –

ASB in and around Blackwood. There appears to be a rather large Group of youths (approximately 30) causing mayhem in and around Blackwood at present. They are throwing stones, eggs and mud pats at houses and cars, turning bins over, stealing bins and in some circumstances actually climbing over residents cars too! We are working with the Police and CCBC to try to put an end to this as this ASB cannot be allowed to continue.

Potential Housing Development at Cwm Gelli. We have had a meeting with residents and Planning Officers over this proposed development as this has changed quite dramatically since the initial application as the developers are looking to build an extra 40 + houses.

Boundary Changes. The Boundary Commission have proposed that Cefn Fforest East be transferred from Blackwood to Cefn Fforest. Both Kevin and I have been contacted by residents who are un-happy about these proposed changes.

18. To Consider Date of April Meeting Of Town Council

The Clerk reported that he would be on leave for 2 weeks from Sunday 29th. March until Sunday 12th. April and would therefore miss the April meeting scheduled for April 6th.

After some discussion it was **agreed** the April meeting be held on Monday 20th.April, with the Annual General Meeting to be held on Monday May 4th.

