

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3RD.SEPTEMBER 2018

Present : Councillor J Edwards (Mayor)

Councillor G James (Deputy Mayor)

Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, Z Hammond, P Cook, C Erasmus, R Mills, M Gwynne & T Evans

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Jones & J Griffiths together with those from County Councillor K Etheridge

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. Co-option to fill Vacancy – Blackwood South Ward

The Clerk informed members that one expression of interest had been received from Mr Trefor Evans. After some discussion it was ***unanimously agreed*** that Mr. Evans be co-opted as member for Blackwood South Ward.

Councillor Evans 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.

It was unanimously agreed by all present that Item 10 on the Agenda be discussed at this point

4. Presentation by Blackwood & District Heritage Association – Update on Coed Duon

The Mayor welcomed Granville Hale and Gail Devine (Groundwork Wales) to the meeting to update members on proposals for the remaining part of the woods.

Granville started by highlighting the importance of these woods to the town, having given the name to the original settlement that we now know as Blackwood (Coed Duon). With the upcoming Bi-Centenary in 2020 the Heritage Association are eager to ensure this fact is not lost on the residents and that improvements within the wood could make it more accessible to them and maybe local school children for lessons in flora & fauna.

Gail Devine gave a presentation on works that they had carried out in various locations around South Wales and said she was confident there were several areas in the wood that would lend itself to similar improvement projects and making it much more accessible to the public.

Several members raised the question of access being a major stumbling block with currently only two points of access – one from the car park on Albany Road and the other via Cae Collen/ Lwyncoed . Access from Albany road would obviously require some form of steps, thus making it difficult for anybody with a disability.

The Clerk queried the fact that when this project was highlighted initially, probably some 10 years ago, a public meeting had been held at the Institute and there had been some strong opposition to proposals from properties adjacent to the woods and that could well be the position again.

Both Granville & Gail stated that they understood there would need to be significant consultation but hoped to work with the community to come up with proposals that would satisfy the vast majority, and had undertaken similar such consultation in the past.

Granville also informed the meeting that letters were to be forwarded to local organisations over coming weeks regarding their possible involvement in the planned celebrations to mark the Bi-Centenary of the town in 2020. He hoped there would be numerous events organised throughout the year to mark this landmark.

Members thanked both for their attendance and hoped they would keep members informed of progress regarding consultation and preferred proposals.

5. County Borough Members Report

Councillor A Farina-Childs informed the meeting that there was nothing specific to report over and above what was on the agenda for discussion.

6. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor reported on the following visits/functions attended –

Officially re-opened Garage on Blackwood Road after major refit

Libanus Lifestyle Centre to present certificates for Painting competition

Awareness event at ASDA Blackwood – The Mayor reported on the event he had organised and shared the results of the questionnaires handed out on the day.

62% were aware of Town Council

21% knew their Councillors

16% were aware that meetings are published on Notice board in the Precinct

27% could name events or projects organised or supported by Town Council in the past

7% were aware of Velvet Coalmine Event we sponsor (albeit not identified as Children's Literature Festival) which almost certainly would have given a different result

The main purposes people thought Town Council should play in the Community were

Putting more Police on the streets

More things for children in the area – leisure & clubs

Looking after the town and local problems

The Mayor thought this a worthwhile exercise and was confident the profile of Town Council had been raised in the process.

Whilst it was difficult to realistically assess how many were actual residents of the Town Council area, it was pleasing a relatively high percentage were aware of our existence, albeit few knew their local councillors. Members congratulated the Mayor on this initiative, and given the outcome, it was **agreed** to convene a meeting of the Newsletter/Webpage Committee as a matter of some urgency.

7. Correspondence

The Clerk presented his report on the following items of correspondence received since the last meeting, and all were noted -

One Voice Wales Notification of Conference & AGM to be held on Saturday 29th September 2018 at Royal Welsh Showground
Motions for Conference – See Agenda Item 11

Copy of Independent Review Panel outline findings & recommendations – Review of Community & Town Council Sector in Wales.
Link forwarded to members and would propose this be placed on Agenda for future meeting

St. Margaret's Church Invitations to members to attend British Legion Commemorative Concert end of WW1 at the Church on Saturday 24th November

Cllr. K Etheridge Copy of Questions to Council on the decision to remove position of Assistant Town Centre Manager post and potential consequences for support to business in the town

Complaint regarding condition of former Toilet Block. Notified that since site had been cleared and tidied it would now mean going through the process yet again – obtaining Section 215 Clearance of Site against owner. It was also queried by CCBC officers whether Town Council might consider buying site to develop as perhaps community/commemorative garden or alternatively enter into maintenance agreement with the owners and pay for clearance etc.

Caerphilly C.B.C. Blackwood & Cefn Forest Prohibition & Restriction of Waiting Order 2018 & Caerphilly Resident Parking Order 2018 – copies forwarded for members attention

Notification of payment of Community Infrastructure Levy £5,789.53

Notification of payment of 2nd instalment of Precept £29,311.00

Cllr. N Dix Request of resident for Town Council to consider xmas tree at lower end of town

Velindre Cancer Centre Letter of thanks for generous donation

Mia Rose Lewis Letter of thanks for financial support – requested photo opportunity for presentation prior to her leaving for USA

BDO Notice of Completion/ Conclusion of Audit.
Necessary Notice will now be placed on Notice Board identifying right of Inspection.
The only issue arising was the incorrect use of Section 137 Powers when other statutory powers exist – namely S19 of the Local Govt. (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1972 & Section 145 of the Local Govt. Act 1972

With regard the item relating to the Toilet Block, members were disappointed that the Borough officers seemed to be abrogating their responsibilities having sold the land and now appeared to see the possibility of Town Council purchasing same as a way forward.

Some discussion on the Bus Station toilets ended with the Clerk being asked to try and arrange a meeting with Borough officers over the next month or so.

The issue of a Xmas tree at the southern entrance to town had been discussed previously and will be re-visited again, possibly working with Libanus Lifestyle as a solution.

The letter from the Auditors was discussed and whilst the issues regarding the incorrect use of Section 137 powers were noted, members did not consider this a major issue of concern and congratulated the Clerk for his continued first class stewardship of the Councils financial affairs. After some discussion it was **agreed** the Annual Report as presented be approved and accepted.

8. *Schedule of Payments*

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

		£. p
Mia R Lewis	Financial Assistance	250.00
Libanus Lifestyle	Financial Assistance – Environmental Grant	500.00
Playworks	July Tax /N.I.	275.47
John Hold	July Salary + reimbursements	899.14
Caerphilly C.B.C	Room Hire & printing	92.55
Velindre NHS Trust	Steffan’s Walk	500.00
Playworks	August Tax/N.I.	275.27
John Hold	August Salary + reimbursements	1,073.62
Billyboard	Leaflets etc (incl. VAT)	108.0

9. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 2nd. July 2018*

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

10. *Matters Arising*

There were no matters arising

11. *Motions for One Voice Wales Conference*

The Clerk presented his report on the Motions for One Voice Wales AGM on 29th September 2018

1. *Barry Town Council*

We call upon all members of One Voice Wales to support and adopt all campaigns that actively promote initiatives within their communities to rid beaches, streets, parks, hedges and riverbanks of the plastic litter scourge:

- Remove single-use plastic items from their own premises
- Encourage and support local shops and businesses to use sustainable alternatives to plastic
- Promote campaigns and events to highlight the damage that plastic waste is doing to the countryside, coastlines and towns
- Welsh Town and Community Councils to strive to achieve a ‘plastic free’ status award

2. *Llangynog Community Council*

"One Voice Wales acknowledges the need for the implementation of countermeasures aimed at reducing the damaging impact Mega Dairy farming (CAFO) operations are having on the Welsh rural communities and their environment and will actively lobby Welsh Government to develop policy and procedures to address the situation."

3. *Machynlleth Town Council*

This council urges One Voice Wales to lobby the Welsh government to introduce without delay, legislation that will ensure that those communities who are losing or who have lost their high street banking services due to closure are enabled and assisted to set up, accommodate and promote community banking initiatives.

4. *Peterston Super Ely Community Council*

One Voice Wales calls on the Welsh Government to lead on a 20mph default for restricted roads (ie those with lighting) with a view to reduce road danger where people live, work, shop and learn as soon as possible.

5. *Tredegar Town Council, Pencoed Town Council and Wrexham Flint Area Committee Composite Motion*

One Voice Wales recognises that the current environment of financial austerity is having a profound impact on the ability of Unitary Authorities to continue to support non-statutory service provision. Consequently One Voice Wales calls upon Welsh Government to:

- Put in place a financial programme to enable Community and Town Councils to have available funded resources to enable the efficient and effective transition of services from Unitary Authorities to the community and town council sector
- Review the current Public Service Board representation to ensure in future community and town councils are represented on all such bodies across Wales

6. *One Voice Wales Motion*

"That membership fees are uplifted by up to 4% for the financial year 2019-20."

Each motion was discussed in turn and it was **agreed** to fully support Motions 1, 3, 4 & 5
To oppose Motion 6 and that no opinion was made regarding Motion 2

12. *Chartist Bridge – Update*

The Clerk reported that PC Kramer Sloman had been true to his word and had lobbied for Town Council to be represented at the Multi Agency Group Meeting, and was pleased to report that he had now received an invitation to attend same tomorrow 4th. September.

The Clerk reminded chosen representatives of the follow up meeting arranged for 2.30pm on Friday 14th.September at the Ebbw Room, Penallta

13. *Caerphilly C.B.C. Sport & Active Recreation Strategy - Update*

The Clerk reported that following meetings arranged at Cefn Fforest Community Centre which had been well attended the following press release had been sent, with all town and local borough members being given the option of attaching their signature in support -

COUNCILLORS AGAINST CLOSURES

We the undersigned are totally opposed to the proposed Caerphilly County Borough Council Sport & Active Recreation Strategy that identifies the potential closures of both Pontllanfraith & Cefn Fforest Leisure Centres, which will rip the heart from both communities.

The quoted net operating costs per annum of both centres is £322k, (Pontllanfraith £105k & Cefn Fforest £217k) a drop in the ocean of the authorities budget, and bearing in mind that during these times of austerity the fact that under spends on budgets last year resulted in some £1.8m being transferred into balances.

This appears to be yet another direct attack on the old Islwyn taxpayers and their long suffering communities – lets not forget that the income generated from car parks in Blackwood alone amount to some £440k per annum (64% of the total collected across the whole Borough) – any wonder we are seen as the Cash Cow for the Borough !!!!!

The objection to the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre was highlighted some 8 months ago, and member's views have not changed, whilst the proposed closure of Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre a few years ago resulted in a petition of nearly 2,000 signatures being presented to the Borough.

The Consultation Response Form itself – some 14 pages with almost 40 questions is considered inappropriate and coupled with the fact the consultation period covers the school holidays is likely to mean a poorer response.

Given that the Caerphilly County Borough Council in its wisdom has agreed a public consultation exercise in Blackwood Library on Tuesday 4th. September 4.00 -6.00pm and refused a request for others to be held in Pontllanfraith & Cefn Fforest, individual Councillors will be arranging these at Cefn Fforest Community Centre & the Millenium Centre at the Penllwyn.

Please show your support and turn up in numbers so the message can go back loud and clear to the Borough,(whose Leader back in February this year ,said Hopefully the community will see that we have listened to their concerns and we are responding accordingly)

– HANDS OFF OUR LEISURE CENTRES

Blackwood Town Councillors J Edwards, G James, D Davies, P Cook, J Weeks,
R Weeks, C Erasmus, D Jones, Z Hammond,
R Mills, J Griffiths, N Turner, M Gwynne,
A Short

County Borough Councillors A Farina-Childs, K Etheridge , N Dix
(Blackwood) T Williams, G Simmonds
(Cefn Fforest), W Williams (Argoed),
R Saralis (Penmaen), A Higgs, A Collis
(Aberbargoed) , K Dawson (Pengam)

It was also *agreed* to organise a petition, and at this point the number of signatures is well over 4,000 Several members commented on the meetings and collection of signatures, and Cllr. A Farina-Childs wished to place on record his thanks to Cllr. Gerwyn James for printing and distributing the petition sheets to various locations around the Borough

After further discussion it was **agreed** the Clerk write to schools in the area asking they submit letters of support to keep the leisure centres open with particular attention to how their swimming provision requirements might fair with the proposed closure of Cefn Fforest.

14. Grit Bins

Councillor A Farina-Childs reported that he had received requests regarding possible provision of grit bins at various streets in and around the area, and on following this up with Borough officers had been told there was a long waiting list and funding was an issue. He wondered therefore whether town council might consider purchasing some bins for the area. Likely costs were in excess of £300 for provision plus costs of restocking twice a year.

Whilst members had every sympathy with residents this could be seen as setting a precedent and if one area were provided with a bin, it would undoubtedly lead to further requests from other areas, and how would we prioritise.

After further discussion it was **agreed** to ascertain actual costs from the Borough and see what other service providers might charge and revisit this again at a future date.

15. Velvet Coalmine Children's Literature Festival

The Clerk reminded members of their invitations to this year's Launch at Blackwood Methodist Church on Thursday 6th. September at 2.30pm with Special guest Jason Leonard MBE, world cup winner, England's most capped player and 3 times British Lion together with our writer in residence Clare e Potter

16. Civic Awards Evening – Nominations

Councillors D Davies & A Farina-Childs declared an interest in this item as both having been Chair of Governors at Blackwood Comprehensive School & Blackwood Primary School respectively.

The Clerk presented his report which highlighted that the following had been identified as possible recipients of a Civic Award for the current year, namely

June Parfitt	Mount Pleasant Baptist Church Lunch Club 25years +
Jane Mather Thomas	Teaching at Blackwood Primary School + Velvet Coalmine + Town Council Events 1991 start Deputy Head 1995 & 2001on amalgamation Head in 2008 Mentored other head teachers
Cerith Lewis	Teaching at Blackwood Comprehensive for 30+ years many as Deputy Head
Blackwood Street Pastors	Invaluable service to the Community since October 2009
Young Persons Award	
Mia Rose Lewis	Former Blackwood Carnival Queen + Town Council Events + Charity work + Runner up Miss Teen Galaxy 2018

After some discussion it was **unanimously agreed** all five nominations were worthy recipients

The Clerk reminded members the Awards Evening was arranged for Tuesday 16th. October and that arrangements were in hand

17. Blackwood in Bloom

The Clerk reported that nominations had been received in respect of Blackwood North & Cefn Fforest East but was still awaiting information in respect of Blackwood Central & Blackwood South.

Some members queried whether we should perhaps request individuals to nominate in future years, consider vouchers rather than cash prizes and whether it should also include back gardens, and that the process should be started much earlier.

The Clerk commented that the perceived original aim of the competition was to make the area a more attractive place, and that was why front gardens visible from the road was the current indicator, back gardens tending to be more private and not visible to the public. Furthermore, by requesting nominations from the public were members abrogating some of their responsibilities, also he had requested nominations at the June meeting, surely giving members sufficient time to tour their respective patches and view prospective nominations.

After further discussion it was **agreed** this item be discussed at a future Events Committee meeting and a report brought back to Council on how we should move forward

18. Planning Applications

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

Case Ref. 18/0615/FULL

Site Area: 321m² Location: 93 Bloomfield Road Blackwood NP12 1LY (UPRN 000043047742)

Proposal: Erect garage

Case Ref. 18/0566/ADV

Site Area: 146m² Location: Greggs Plc 128 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AF (UPRN 000043055548)

Proposal: Erect one fascia sign, one projecting sign and two internal posters

Case Ref. 18/0661/COU

Site Area: 96m² Location: 217 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AL (UPRN 000043054056)

Proposal: Change the use of property to 2 No self contained one bedroom flats with associated works

Case Ref. 18/0693/FULL

Site Area: 127m² Location: Flat B 193 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AA (UPRN 000043172547)

Proposal: Convert one flat into two flats

Case Ref. 18/0703/CLPU

Site Area: 244m² Location: 38 Y Cedrwydden Blackwood NP12 1FD (UPRN 000043074480)

Proposal: Obtain a Lawful Development Certificate for single storey kitchen and dining room extension to rear of dwelling

It was **agreed** no objections be raised.

19. Reports

Councillor A Farina-Childs reported that he had been contacted by a newly formed Blackwood Litter Action Group who had identified a number of areas in and around town and that they had undertaken the removal of significant litter from these locations.

Members queried whether we could support this group, as Town Council had agreed a contribution to Keep Wales Tidy over the past six months, which had included certain items which might be of benefit to this group. The Clerk said he would make contact with Keep Wales Tidy.

Councillor Zoe Hammond reported on the recent Youth Day Event held at the Market Square which had been very well attended, and supported by the Police Cadets, Air Cadets and the Basement Youth Project based at the Library. It was hoped that following its success further such events will be arranged in the future to engage with the young people of the area.