

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3RD OCTOBER 2016 .

Present : Councillor W Baber (Mayor)
Councillor J Weeks (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors A Farina-Childs, J Criddle, Z Hammond, D Davies, C Erasmus, P Cook
& M Gwynne

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Edwards, G Hale, R Moore & M Veater MBE

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillors are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on the agenda in accordance with the Local Govt. Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

3. Report on Velvet Coalmine Children's Literature Festival – Iain Richards & Estelle Wilkinson

The Mayor welcomed both Iain Richards & Estelle Wilkinson Directors of the Velvet Coalmine to the meeting.

They highlighted what an outstanding success the Festival had been, a rewarding week for all concerned. From the Opening Night at the Methodist Church with Lady Lucy French founder of the Never Such Innocence Charity, Ifor ap Gwyn the National Poet for Wales, Sophie Mckeand Young Peoples Laureate for Wales, all the Roald Dahl Centenary Day sessions in the schools featuring Marty Jopson (The One Show) & the Putrid Poems & Despicable Brutes with Simone Greenwood, followed by the Peter Karrie Production in the evening (and following evening due to popular demand). All the Creative Writing sessions with Sophie Mc Keand, Clair E Potter , Rhian Edwards and local illustrators, the Schools & Local History sessions with Rhiannon Phillips from Gwent Archives and talks on the Music Industry by Estelle and Sports Journalism by Satoshi Takahana, European Correspondent for Rugby Magazine.

However, for them, the major breakthrough had been the engagement from the Schools, various organisations and even the town itself. They wished to place on record their sincere thanks to Jane Mather, Head Teacher of Blackwood Primary who had worked tirelessly to ensure the cluster schools participation, and to Simone Greenwood (Burst Publishing) and Helen Greenwood (Blackwood Rotary Club).

They also thanked Town Council for their financial support, and The Mayor & Deputy Mayor and other members for their support at various events, and to the efforts of Councillors Zoe Hammond & Jim Criddle together with the Clerk in helping to make this Festival the success it was, and said they could not wait for next year, given the enthusiasm already generated.

There were certain issues that needed to be addressed, but they were positive given recent experiences these could and would be overcome.

The Mayor thanked both for their attendance and said he looked forward to seeing them at the Civic Awards Evening for the Prize Giving to the winners of the Children's Literature Competition. Iain and Estelle then left the meeting.

Members stated they were eager to ensure the ongoing success of the Festival which gave undoubted benefits to the town, and more importantly the many opportunities it afforded the youngsters. Councillors Hammond & Criddle reported that links made between the Gwent Archives, the Theatre Group and the schools seemed likely to continue, something that is bound to benefit the children in the future.

It was ***agreed*** the Clerk prepare a report for Policy & Finance Committee outlining the potential for additional financial support to the Children's Literature Festival.

4. Presentation on Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Mayor welcomed Alison Palmer from Caerphilly C.B.C. Policy Unit to the meeting.

Ms Palmer explained her department had been undertaking a Local Well-Being Assessment to try to understand what the residents of the Caerphilly Borough wanted. They had engaged with residents and stakeholders via numerous methods – surveys, questionnaires, workshops and discussions with Delivery Groups, Business forum, looked after children, voluntary sector and Town/ Community councils. The outcome of these, together with research and data collection relating to national indicators and future trends were assisting in identifying emerging themes namely –

A Prosperous Caerphilly – skills/education (low educational achievement & high levels of long term sick)
entrepreneurship, integrated transport (the Metro/ City Deal)

A Resilient Caerphilly - greenspace (balancing protection of greenspace needs with development needs)
fly-tipping, dog fouling & litter (individual responsibility & respect for environment), climate change, longer term global pressures (food, water & energy security)

A Healthier Caerphilly – current inequalities across the borough, wider determinants (adverse childhood experiences), lifestyle behaviours (exercise, diet, smoking etc), access to health services

A More Equal Caerphilly – inequalities across the borough (areas of multiple deprivation), equal access for all to education, transport, housing, employment

A Caerphilly of Cohesive Communities – hate crime & tolerance, community responsibility (anti-social behaviour), older adult loneliness, immigration

A Caerphilly of Vibrant Culture - cuts to cultural/arts funding, unable to access services in Welsh, gaps in & Thriving Welsh Language data

A Globally Responsible Caerphilly – renewable energy/ energy efficiency, education for Sustainable Development & Global Citizenship, resource consumption

Common/Cross cutting themes - recognition that many issues/themes are interrelated/ individuals taking responsibility, education and raising awareness of issues, need for a approach

The next steps are –

- * Draft Local Well-Being Assessment to Public services Board by 6th. December
- * Develop Well-Being Objectives
- * Begin process to develop Well-Being Plan – Completion by May 2018

The Mayor thanked Ms Palmer for her attendance and she left the meeting

5. Letter of Resignation – Cllr. Leigh Thomas - Resultant Vacancy Blackwood Central Ward

The Clerk read a letter from Councillor Leigh Thomas tendering his resignation. He cannot see his workload lessening in the foreseeable future and this will impact on his ability to attend meetings let alone support events as he feels he should as a town councillor. He expresses his gratitude to Council for their support in allowing dispensation to meet work commitments, but feels he now needs to take a responsible view. He has advised Cwm Derwen School to request a new nomination for Governor. He sends best wishes to Town Council and wishes them the very best of luck in the future execution of duty.

The Clerk reported that Town Council now needs to decide whether the necessary Notice of Vacancy in the Blackwood Central Ward be posted (with agreement of Caerphilly C.B.C.), or given that the elections are due in May 2017, Town Council continues with the 15 existing members.

After some discussion it was *agreed*, given the forthcoming elections, not to advertise the Notice of Vacancy, and continue with the existing 15 members

6. Police Report

The Clerk reported that given the large agenda he had asked the Police for a written report on this occasion and had requested their attendance at the November meeting. The attached report forms part of the minutes.

7. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor announced his attendance at the following –

Opening Night of the Velvet Coalmine Children’s Literature Festival and several other events throughout the week at the Black Sheep and Blackwood Primary School. He stated that he had thoroughly enjoyed each event he had attended, and commented on the undoubted talent we have in the area. He had been in the company of the Lord Lieutenant for most of the Opening Night, and he had also enjoyed the evening.

The Mayor reported that he had held a Charity Night at the Moose Hall on 12th. August, and raised £797, the total to date now standing at £1,278

8. Correspondence

The Clerk presented his report on correspondence received since the last meeting and all were noted.

Caerphilly C.B.C. Notification of 2nd. Instalment of precept £27,507.34

Consultation received from BT re. removal of payphones throughout the Borough – consultation ends 3rd December

Council Highway owned Car Parking Task & Finish Group – review being carried out of car parks in towns & villages throughout the borough. There is a meeting on October 27th. with an opportunity for representatives from town/community councils to nominate a representative to speak to the Task & Finish Group on their behalf or submit written evidence for consideration. It was *agreed* this be discussed at the next Policy & Finance Committee Meeting

Boundary Commission For Wales	Notification that representations on Initial Proposals Report published 13/9/2016 should be made by 5 th . December It was agreed this be discussed at the next Policy & Finance Committee Meeting
Markham & District Colliery Band	Invitation to Mayor & members of town council to attend their annual Remembrance Concert being held at Blackwood Methodist Church at 7.30 pm. on Saturday 12 th . November with Treharris Male Voice Choir
Blackwood Street Pastors	Invitation to Mayor & members of town council to attend their 7th. Year Anniversary Service on Thursday 20 th . October at St. Augustine's Church Pontllanfraith, commencing at 7.00 pm. During the evening there will be an update on the work of the Street Pastors and will conclude with a buffet
St. Margaret's Church	Invitation to Mayor & members of town council to attend the Thanksgiving Service for our Armed Forces on Sunday 16 th . October at 11.00 am
National Assoc. of Local Councils	Notification that agreement has been reached for new pay scales for clerks and other employees for 2016/2017 to be implemented immediately and backdated to 1 st . April 2016 (equivalent to approx 1%) and also new scales for 2017/2018 to be implemented from 1 st . April 2017 (approx 1 %) It was agreed the new rates be implemented
Libanus Primary School	Head Teacher keen to become fully involved in Blackwood town activities. Looking forward to lantern parade/ carol concert and requesting date of market place remembrance event – offering services of choir to sing at event
Elsbury	Notification of price increases for Christmas decorations. There was no increase last year - Fitting/removal & storage per figurine £ 65.00 (4%) PAT testing per figurine £ 1.60 (6.67%) Figurine repair £ 49.00 (4.25%) Fitting/removal & storage cross street £ 320.00 (2.56%) Other costs – bulbs/ strobe lights etc. invoiced as appropriate It was agreed the new rates be accepted
Western Power	Temporary unmetered connections for Christmas Lighting requirements - Passed on to Elsbury
COAL	COAL is a Dance Theatre show that takes a nostalgic but honest look at the hard hitting realities of life at the coal face. On Thursday 24 th & Friday 25 th November COAL comes to Blackwood Miners' Institute. In each tour location COAL are looking to provide four women with a unique opportunity to make their own contribution to the story as they join dancers and musicians live on stage to perform in the show. Request to spread the word.
Co-operative Bank	Notification of refund of overpaid charges (£23.77)
Post Office	Notification that Markham Post Office (53 Abernant Road, Markham) will remain temporarily closed, as no suitable solution has been identified

Chris Evans MP Keep Wales Tidy are seeking nominations for Community Transformation Award, Rivers & Coast Award, Sustainable Futures Award, Cleaner Communities Award, Biodiversity Award, Eco Schools Award & Green Key Award. Further info at <http://www.keepwalestidy.org/tidy-wales-awards> - Nominations to be submitted by 21st. October

Access Group	Request for funding
1 st . Cefn Fforest Scouts	Request for funding to install internet into Scout hut
Peter Karrie Productions	Request for funding
Blackwood R.F.C.	Request for funding – to assist in provision of Fireworks Display

It was **agreed** the above requests for funding be considered at the next Policy & Finance Committee Meeting

9. *Schedule of Payments*

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

		£
St. Margaret's Church	Sponsorship 140 th . Ann. Flower Fest.	150.00
KLA Dance Institute	Grant	250.00
Marie Curie Hospice	Grant	100.00
Blackwood Town Football Club	Grant	100.00
Homestart Caerphilly Borough	Grant	250.00
Valleys Eisteddfod	Grant	250.00
John Hold	Salary & Reimbursements – August	710.39
Playworks	Tax/N.I. August	484.70
K & R Print	Printing Costs – Literature Festival	160.00 *
Elsbury Ltd.	Erection/taking down bunting – Carnival	360.00
C.C.B.C.	Room Hire	33.25
One Voice Wales	Conference/ Meeting Fees	135.00
Erin Julian	Venue Hire – Literature Festival	40.00*
John Hold	Salary & Reimbursements - September	687.94
Carole Hold	Administrative Assistance (Half Year)	292.00
Playworks	Tax/N.I. September	562.70
St. Margaret's Church	Grant	250.00
Libanus Lifestyle Centre	Grant	250.00

10. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 15th. August 2016*

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

11. *Matters Arising*

The Clerk reported that 8 additional figurines had been ordered in the sum of £4,129 + VAT, and that discussions were ongoing with Caerphilly C.B.C. to identify suitable and acceptable lamp posts at the northern end of town from the Institute on.

12. To Receive the Minutes of the Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Meeting held on 26th. February 2016

It was **resolved** the minutes be received

13. Interest Free Loan to Blackwood Little Theatre

The Clerk reported, that after slight amendment, the Draft Agreement is now being prepared by Solicitors acting on behalf of Blackwood Little Theatre

Blackwood Little Theatre have asked for the Loan over 3 years, with the following payment schedule –
£100 Direct Debit every month plus
£530 Quarterly payments starting 1st. January 2017 to coincide with their planned productions
With an option to increase payments throughout the term of the loan.

After some discussion it was **unanimously agreed** the above terms be accepted, and that the Agreement be signed by the Mayor and witnessed by the Clerk, and the cheque handed over at the planned policy & Finance Committee Meeting

14. Annual Return For Year Ended 31st. March 2016

The Clerk circulated copies of the Annual Return for Year Ended 31st. March 2016 and after a little discussion it was **resolved** it be approved and accepted.

The Clerk then referred to the Issues Arising Report, which he had reported back in August. The following had been identified as issues that needed attention, albeit not considered worthy of qualifying the certificate or report –

No engagement letter with the internal auditor
Internal auditor appointment
Budget

The Clerk apologised again for not being able to produce an engagement letter, and that there was no formal minute confirming the appointment of the internal auditor, never queried by previous auditors over the eight years the internal auditor has been used.

After some discussion, it was **resolved** that Andrew Jervis be re-appointed as Internal Auditor, and that the Clerk arranges an updated engagement letter outlining the Councils requirements and expectations, ensuring they are proportionate to the needs, the size and circumstances of the Council.

Furthermore, it was considered that although the precept was set by the due date and the council did prepare a budget to support this, the budget document did not take into consideration the level of reserves held by the Council.

Several members commented that at each budget setting process, the Clerk always identified the level of balances held by the Council, and felt this comment somewhat unwarranted.

However, it was **resolved** that for the next budget setting exercise, the level of reserves held be taken into consideration, and the minute to reflect that position.

The Clerk informed members that the Notice of Conclusion of the Audit has been displayed on the Notice Board in the Precinct, and will be displayed for 14 days. The requisite information has not been displayed, but it has been noted they are available by appointment at his home address.

15. Confirmation of Arrangements for Remembrance Day Services

The Clerk confirmed via the Mayor, that the following were the confirmed arrangements –

Friday 11th. November - 11.00 am Market Square Blackwood, Static Parade no Wreaths

Saturday 12th. November - 1.30 pm Pontllanfraith Council Offices, Static Parade/ Wreath laying followed by Service at St. Augustine's Church

Sunday 13th. November - 10.00 am - Service in Moose Hall (Off Pentwyn Road), Static Parade followed by Wreath laying at War Memorial at 11.00 am

Sunday 13th. November - 10.00 am Service in St. Thomas's Church, Cefn Fforest, followed by short march through village to Cefn Fforest War Memorial with Wreath laying at 11.00 am

16. Nominations for Civic Awards

The Clerk reminded members that it was imperative decisions were reached this evening to ensure the necessary is achieved prior to the Civic Awards Evening on Wednesday 9th. November.

After much discussion it was ***unanimously agreed*** the following be worthy recipients of a Civic Award –

Geoffrey Wright

Pete Hong MBE

Iain Richards & Estelle Wilkinson (Directors of Velvet Coalmine)

It was also ***unanimously agreed*** a Posthumous Award be made to Peter Dash

Furthermore, it was ***unanimously agreed*** that Alice Mee Bishop be a worthy recipient of the Young Citizen Award recognising not only her attaining a place at the prestigious BRIT School but also her participation and support over many years of Town Council Events

17. Christmas Celebrations – Verbal Update

The Chair of Events (Councillor Zoe Hammond) and the Clerk reported on an initial meeting with Sarah Kate Atkinson of Caerphilly Events team, who had made approaches regarding the possibility of us collaborating for this years Christmas Market Weekend, given the success of our joint Carnival/Beach Party Weekend earlier in the year.

An obvious option was to include the Switch On of the Christmas Lights into the Christmas Market on Saturday December 3rd.

Councillor Hammond stated she had over the past two years thought more could be made of the Switch On, rather than confining it to a 45 minute event which involved the need for Street Closure, and the resultant costs attached. The opportunity now presented itself for Town Council to maybe provide a stage/ area at the southern end of town from where we could provide entertainment throughout Saturday, culminating in Santa arriving on his Sleigh and the Switch On of the lights. It was hoped we could approach many of the local community groups that performed at the Carnival.

If this approach was agreed by Town Council, then it would then make more sense to postpone the Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert by a week and hold that on Thursday 8th. December.

Councillors Andrew Farina-Childs and Delwyn Davies expressed their concerns as they stated we had tried this several years ago, and due to the noise from the large rides in town, nobody could hear the countdown to the switch on of the lights and our event was totally overshadowed.

Other members suggested perhaps the rides be asked to lower the volume for a short period whilst the Sleigh came through town and for the switch on – realistically 10/15 minutes maximum.

After some further discussion, it was eventually *agreed* to hold the Lights Switch On during the Christmas Market on Saturday 3rd. December and the Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert on Thursday 8th. December.

It was also *agreed* that further meetings be held with Caerphilly Events Team to try and ensure fairground rides reduce the volume of their music for the period identified, and to discuss in more detail the proposed entertainment.

18. Planning Applications

The Clerk apologised for not reporting on the Planning Applications received since the last meeting.

Councillor J Criddle stated from his recollection there were no major issues requiring comment, albeit he would check with the Clerk.

19. Reports

Councillors Z Hammond & C Erasmus reported on the Blackwood Town Centre Management Committee Meeting held on 9th. September.

Numerous complaints received in respect of water leaking from former Pound Stretcher site. The issue has been reported and is being dealt with – apparently a burst utilities pipe.

Ongoing Anti Social Behaviour problems at the Bus Station

The ongoing issues relating to poor state of the Red Lion & Toilet Block sites has now been passed to the legal section for action

Councillors referred to the recent Event hosted by the Police & Crime Commissioner, and it was agreed the Clerk forward a copy of the presentation

Members raised the issue of the Waiting Area and Toilets at the Bus Station and commented that it would benefit from a Deep Clean.

Members also commented that wheel chair users in town were hampered by uneven pavements and lack of dropped kerbs at crucial crossing points.

Councillor A Farina-Childs queried the outcome of the Blackwood in Bloom Competition, and asked the Clerk to forward details of winners to members.