

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 4TH. FEBRUARY 2019

Present : Councillor J Edwards (Mayor)
Councillor G James (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors Z Hammond, C Erasmus, R Mills, D Davies, N Turner, R Weeks, T Evans
& M Gwynne

Prior to the start of the meeting a minutes silence was observed in respect of Steffan Lewis, our friend and former colleague and Leonard Jones (Cllr. Darren Jones father) who had sadly both died recently.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Jones, A Short, J Griffiths & P Cook

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor reported his attendance at the Acid Attack Kit presentation at Blackwood Police Station on 15th. January with Councillor Z Hammond

4. 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 RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly Area Committee Meeting on 30th.
January 7.00pm at Maescwmmer OAP Hall

Notification of Larger Council's Meeting on 6th. February at Llandrindod Wells

Wales Audit Office Current Standards of Financial Management is disappointing at too many
Town & Community Councils in Wales

Urgent Improvements needed to Internal Audit arrangements at Town &
Community Councils in Wales
(Copies of both reports forwarded to members via e mail)

Daniel Allen Notification of Training Event – PREVENT – on Monday 11th. February
(Gwent Police) 11.00am. at Caerphilly Social Club

Caerphilly C.B.C. Community Cleansing

As you may be aware the community cleansing team will be working in your area during the week commencing 25th February 2019. You will of course appreciate that most wards are served by more than one councillor so it is essential that you identify, and prioritise, any areas that require additional cleansing so they can be incorporated in a schedule of works for the week concerned.

Please note the primary aim is to cleanse public land (land contained in the cleansing contract) so it would be useful to only list these areas and known areas of illicit tipping which cause concern to you and/or your constituents. It would assist if you could prioritise the work, detailing the most important areas at the top of your list, as it may not be possible to undertake all cleansing identified in the limited time available. As detailed above the primary purpose of this initiative is to target cleansing resources to areas that are not regularly cleansed as part of the street-cleansing programme or are classified as lower priority which may now need to be incorporated on to the work schedule.

Unfortunately we rarely have sufficient time within the week to undertake all the work requested and in the past it has nearly always proved impossible to cleanse parks, sports grounds, river banks, private land, etc. or to undertake cutting back of heavy branches (we are only geared up to undertake drashing small amounts of brambles etc.). If however you have concerns with the areas identified above you should be able to arrange cleansing/cutting back of these areas with Grounds Maintenance or Highways. Areas for inclusion on the schedule should be forwarded to Mr Mark Miller, Tir-y-Berth, either in writing, e mail or via fax on 01495 235014 (14 days in advance of the date detailed in the 1st paragraph).

In addition to the cleansing service detailed above, during this week, there are enforcement officers who can work in the area concentrating on the following issues, dog fouling, littering, illicit dumping, and illegal disposal of commercial waste. With your local knowledge, and that of your constituents, it would be useful if you could identify areas that are of concern so we can concentrate this additional enforcement service to reduce anti social behaviour and improve our environment. Please forward information regarding this matter to our enforcement hotline on 01495 235276. If I can be of any further assistance in this matter do not hesitate to contact me on the number detailed above.

Would suggest members either contact the Clerk or Borough members to identify problem areas

C.C.B.C. Notification that Borough members home addresses are to be removed from C.C.B.C. website for the foreseeable future due to potential of door stepping by Brexit extremists on both sides.

C.C.B.C. Copy of Byelaws relating to Land Drainage which should now be made available for public inspection at all reasonable times and without payment.

In respect of the PREVENT training event it was ***agreed*** Councillor Z Hammond attend.

With regard Community Cleansing, members highlighted a few areas they considered worthy of inclusion, namely rear of High Street (New Look & Costa), steps leading down to Pierhead buildings, area between Studio 54 and the Institute.

With regard the removal of C.C.B.C. member's addresses from the website, after some discussion it was ***agreed*** the Clerk ask for Town Councillors addresses be removed from our website until further notice.

It was also ***agreed*** the Byelaws information be posted on Town Council facebook page

5. *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	282.66
John Hold	January Salary / Reimbursements	973.60
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Room Hire/ printing (incl. £10.47 VAT)	134.05
Elsbury's	Christmas Lighting – erect/ take down, repairs & storage (incl. £835.80 VAT)	5,014.80
Velindre	Donation in lieu of flowers – Steffan Lewis	50.00

6. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 7th January 2019*

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

7. *Matters Arising*

There were no matters arising

8. *To Receive the Minutes of the Events Committee Meeting held on 21st January 2019*

Councillor Z Hammond, Chair presented the minutes and it was *agreed* they be received

9. *To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 28th. January 2019*

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

Members *agreed* to award a grant of £250 to Blackwood 1st. Brownies to enable them to introduce a new programme which delivers a varied range of activities, new skills and topics to broaden the girls horizons

Other matters where the Committee had made recommendations to Council were on the agenda for discussion, namely Application for additional Interest Free Loan to Blackwood Little Theatre, Budget Monitoring Report and Budget Requirements 2019/2020 & Precept Setting.

The Clerk informed the meeting that he had been advised the additional costs of logos/sponsorship on kits of Blackwood Boys & Girls Football Club was £90, and members *agreed* the revised grant of £340.

10. *To Consider Town Council Representation on Schools Governing Bodies*

The Clerk reported that he had contacted Governor Support, but relevant officers were unavailable, but had been subsequently informed a vacancy existed at Blackwood Primary.

He was, however, fairly certain vacancies may also exist at Ysgol Bro Sannan & Ysgol Cwm Derwen.

Given the continued uncertainty it was agreed to agenda this item for discussion at a future meeting.

11. Review of Internal Controls

The Clerk presented his report, which highlighted the following –

Members are required to Review the adequacy of Internal Controls

Current practice -

Schedule of Payments to each meeting highlighting the Payee/ Reason for Payment/ Amount.

Payments are currently made via Bank Transfer albeit cheques require the signature of the Clerk together with two other signatories (currently Councillors A Farina-Childs, A Short & P Cook)

Meetings of Policy & Finance Committee

Budget Monitoring Reports to Town Council three times a year – comparing spend to budget, bank reconciliation etc.

Internal Auditor audits Accounts during May/Early June in readiness for Annual Return to be completed and forwarded to BDO LLP (current external auditors) by 30th. June

After some discussion, when members acknowledged the Clerks sound financial stewardship of the Council's affairs and that no major issues had ever been highlighted at Audit, members ***unanimously agreed*** to further strengthen Internal Control by recommending that any payment in excess of £1,000 must receive written confirmation by two of the three signatories referred to earlier. Furthermore, that budget monitoring reports should also be accompanied by bank statements for members perusal.

12. Review of Risk Management

The Clerk presented his report, which highlighted the following –

Members are required to review the adequacy of Risk Management

The misappropriation of funds by the Clerk (as the only employee is an obvious risk, but hopefully the Internal Controls highlighted above would greatly negate that risk.

Little of the rest of the work of the Town Council, other than the Organisation of Events is considered to carry much of a risk.

Regular meetings of the Events Committee highlight any risk areas.

We are required to submit a Risk Assessment in respect of the Carnival Parade and the Site Activities each year to Caerphilly County Borough, and attend the ESAG Events Organisers Forum to discuss same with members of C.C.B.C. and the Emergency Services prior to event.

After some discussion it was ***unanimously agreed*** Risk Management was considered adequate and proportional given the risks identified

13. Review of Insurance Provision

The Clerk presented his report, which highlighted the following –

Currently Mandatory Cover in respect of Public Liability & Employer's Liability stands at £10 million each, whilst Fidelity Guarantee, Official's Indemnity, Crossed Cheques (and other non-negotiable money) & Libel & Slander are £250,000 each.

Christmas Lighting, Chains of Office are also insured, at reported costs, whilst any equipment hired for a specific event is insured separately if required.

After some discussion it was ***unanimously agreed*** that current cover is considered adequate

14. Review of Reserves Position/Policy

The Clerk presented his report, which highlighted the following –

It is a requirement that the Town Council determine and review the level of reserves and how they are to be used. Local Government Legislation requires Town/Community Councils to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure, when calculating their budget. However, there is no specified minimum or maximum level of reserves that an authority should hold, and it is the responsibility of the Responsible Financial Officer to advise the Council about the level of reserves, and to ensure that there are key protocols for their establishment and use.

Reserves can be categorised as General (held to cushion the impact of uneven cash flows or unexpected events) and Earmarked (held for specific purpose)

General reserves is a sum of money not earmarked for a specific purpose, but rather set aside to deal with unexpected events or emergencies, and to provide a working capital cushion to deal with cash flow problems.

Whilst there is no amount specified, it is considered an amount equivalent to approx 25% of the Precept to be acceptable ie. approx £15,000.

Earmarked reserves are those held for specific purposes, or to meet known or projected liabilities. In the past Town Council has identified a sum of £10,000 in respect of Coed Duon and a further approx £13,000 to support other Environmental projects.

Furthermore, Town Council have also over the past few years identified and invested approx £25,000 in respect of Renewal of Christmas lighting .It is thought prudent to budget an amount of £2,000 per annum to ensure a reasonable sum is available to replace/renew in the future.

With the upcoming Bi-Centenary of the town and the likelihood of significant celebrations being planned it is thought prudent to set aside reserves to assist the funding of same. An amount of £1,000 is proposed from potential savings for the current year, and with the sponsorship of the Velvet Coalmine no longer being required it is proposed to earmark the existing £7,500 allocated for 2019/20 & 2020/21 to the Bi-Centenary Celebrations also – resulting in £16,000 being readily available.

Additional Reserves will be accrued via the Community Infrastructure Levy. There are restrictions on the use of these funds, and further discussions with C.C.B.C. officers will be required to ensure plans meet the required criteria.

After some discussion it was *unanimously agreed* that the Reserves position as outlined be considered adequate

15. Consider Application by Blackwood Little Theatre for additional £5,000 Interest Free Loan

The Clerk presented his report and highlighted that the Policy & Finance Committee had recommended that an additional loan of £5,000 be made to enable the repair works to be undertaken, and that the terms of this loan be pro-rata to the existing loan ie. monthly payments of £50 per month over 3 years, plus quarterly payments of £250 with a final payment of £450.

After some discussion it was *unanimously agreed* an additional 3 year Interest Free Loan of £5,000 be made to Blackwood Little Theatre on the proviso that the building is identified as collateral against the loan.

16. Budget Monitoring Report 2018/2019 & Consideration of Budget & Precept requirements for 2019/2020

The Clerk presented his budget monitoring report for the current year which indicated a number of variances to the original budget, resulting in an anticipated net effect of an over spend of £4,881 meaning £3,949 being taken from balances as opposed to £932 put into balances as originally planned (albeit £7,100 in respect of Community Garden is included in figures).

A previous decision that this be funded via Community Infrastructure Levy & Reserves means overall, that this gives Town Council the opportunity to identify an amount of £1,000 towards our Bi Centenary Celebrations.

After some discussion, it was ***unanimously agreed*** that the Budget monitoring report as presented be accepted, and that £1,000 is earmarked to reserves towards planned Bi Centenary Celebrations

The Clerk presented a budget for 2019/2020 which reflected 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 Voluntary Organisations. A contribution of £2,000 is also included towards Replacement fund for Christmas Lighting.

The cessation of the Children's Literature Festival gives Town Council the opportunity to start earmarking necessary funds to enable celebrations to be planned for the Bi Centenary during 2020.

Furthermore, with the information that Caerphilly C.B.C. (due to budgetary constraints) will no longer be running the Beach Party, it is proposed an additional £2,000 be allocated to the Carnival this year (over and above the £6,000 budget originally requested by the Events Committee). It is also proposed that the £1,500 identified as Contributions towards C.C.B.C. Events be now reallocated to the Carnival/ Beach Party One Day Event.

With the Borough now likely, after our request, to consider the Christmas Market as a One Day Event, we may after further discussions with the Borough officers look to vire monies from the £2,750 currently allocated to the Christmas Market/Fair.

After some discussion it was ***unanimously agreed*** the budget as presented be adopted and that the Precept for 2019/2020 remain at £20 per Band Property.

17. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on Planning Applications received since the last meeting.

Case Ref. 18/1059/NCC

Site Area: 58898m² Location: Land At Gelli Farm Tredegar Road Cwmgelli Blackwood (UPRN 000043085950)

Proposal: Vary condition 2 of planning consent 15/0252/OUT (Erect residential development, public open space, landscaping, highway improvements and associated engineering works with all matters reserved except for access) granted on appeal reference APP/K6920/A/15/3137884 to extend the period for the submission of reserved matters by a further three years

Case Ref. 19/0002/FULL

Site Area: 4523m² Location: 12 The Market Place Blackwood (UPRN 000043166586)

Proposal: Redevelop the former Somerfield Supermarket, including the partial demolition of the existing structure and construction of 47 No. 1 and 2 bed apartments over three storeys; and development of 21 permanent artisan market units, to be located on the existing market square to the south of The Market Place shopping centre

Case Ref. 19/0019/CLPU

Site Area: 132m² Location: 36 Apollo Way Blackwood NP12 1WB (UPRN 000043047797)

Proposal: Obtain Lawful Development Certificate for proposed erection of a single storey dining room extension at rear of dwelling

After some discussion it was ***agreed*** that in respect of Case Ref. 18/1059/NCC the following be submitted -

Blackwood Town Council opposes the above mentioned planning application on the same basis as our original objection namely - the development is visibly obvious to anyone crossing the Chartist Bridge, it therefore represents a potentially damaging intrusion into open countryside to the north of Blackwood, overdeveloping and eroding the green belt and blurring the boundary between Blackwood and Argoed.

18. Reports

There were no reports

19. To Consider Date of April Meeting Of Town Council

The Clerk reported that he would be on leave for 2 weeks from Sunday 24th. March until Sunday 7th. April and would therefore miss the April meeting scheduled for April 1st.

After some discussion it was ***agreed*** the April meeting be held on Monday 15th.April, with the Annual General Meeting to be held on Monday 13th. May (6th. May being a bank holiday)