

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

Present : Councillor G James (Mayor)

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies or Absence were received from Councillors P. Cook, A Farina-Childs, R Weeks, A Short & J Griffiths (Deputy Mayor)

2. Declarations of Interest

The following Declarations of Interest were made –

Item 11 Applications for Financial Assistance - Councillor Mark Gwynne (Member of Mynyddislwyn Choir), Councillor Delwyn Davies (Resident at Fitzroy Lodge), Councillor Gerwyn James (Attended Concert by Blackwood Musical Society), Councillor Jim Edwards (Mayor's Charity)

Item 15 Coed Duon - Councillor Jim Edwards (Member of Blackwood & District Heritage Society)

3. Mayoral Announcements

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

Arbed am Byth - Launch Evening at Blackwood Comprehensive School

GAVO Volunteers Awards Evening at Blackwood Miners' Institute - All awards made were for outstanding reasons and very well deserved. With Town Council as a sponsor, he had the privilege to make the award for the Most Inspirational Person Award

Civic Awards Evening at Blackwood Miners' Institute – He placed on record his thanks to Councillor Zoe Hammond and the Clerk for organising what was a great evening, and to those members who attended and assisted on the evening. He also commented on the young local talent who entertained the audience

Blackwood P.E. Display at Blackwood Comprehensive School – another outstanding and breathtaking display

4. County Borough Report

The Clerk reported that he had received a brief report from Councillor A Farina-Childs namely -

The next Council Elections will be held in 2022 extending the period by one year. Councillors will serve a 5 year term of office in future.

He had attended a MAG meeting re. Chartist Bridge They are now at the design stage for proposed new fencing, however, it will be at a significant cost to install.

He has received confirmation from Cornerstone that there are only 3 homeless people registered in Blackwood.

Members were aware this last point seemed to be at odds with what Councillor Andrew Short had reported. The Clerk stated he would try and arrange a meeting with all interested parties in the near future.

Members referred to the recent damage to the bus timetables at the bus station, and it was reported that they were to be replaced/ updated in the near future.

Councillor Zoe Hammond informed the meeting that the Positive Futures (Youth Service) was back in town and working with youths.

5. Correspondence

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

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Aneurin Bevan UHB | Letter of thanks for £250 donation to their Appeal
Blackwood was absolutely fantastic with their support for Turn the Town Pink, led by Beverley from Tidals who had worked so hard |
| Coun. Kevin Etheridge | Copy of letter to Wales Online – Thanks and appreciation to Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Assoc. and positive contribution from Town Council in ensuring the toilets were reopened at Bus Station |
| Coun. A Farina- Childs | Barriers at Showfield – information via Cllr. N Dix, that the volunteer (a police officer) who lives across the road from the showfield, monitors each evening and liaises with colleagues regarding any anti social behaviour. He reports it has been quiet lately and closes barriers when needed. |
- Damage to workhorses mural on entry to Bus station – reported to CCBC And Police – no CCTV coverage to assist in finding culprits – awaiting quotation from the Artist for repair of same

Gwent Police

Response from Kramer Sloman,(Ward Manager) in response to issues raised by County members

We are aware of the damage caused to the mural as well as other incidents reported on Friday evening. I can assure you that we are exploring investigative and enforcement opportunities.

Blackwood NPT actually have an initiative in place designed to combat problems in and around Blackwood Bus Station. **Operation Footfall** began last weekend and will run until December. Our operation is based on techniques that have been utilised in Lansbury Park recently, resulting in a dramatic decrease in ASB incidents.

The below extract is taken from the dedicated Operational Order:

“The peak times of demand for ASB/Drugs-related activity is 6pm – 9pm each day, with a peak on Fridays and Saturdays. Officers should be deployed and undertake activity in line with this operational at any and all times, but can be directed especially in line with this demand pattern.

As one of the objectives of the operation is to provide a visible presence during the period all officers will be required to wear full uniform and PPE.

Officers will carry out high visibility patrols on the route in pairs. A zero tolerance approach will be adopted in regards to any Anti-Social Behaviour that is witnessed.

Officers will commence patrols at 6pm and cyclically follow this route every hour

- ❖ Park a marked police vehicle at Blackwood Bus Station*
- ❖ Walk through the Bus Station and into the Market Place*
- ❖ From the Market Place, walk down into the town and to ASDA Blackwood*
- ❖ From ASDA, go back up onto the town and into Wesley Road car park*
- ❖ From there, walk back up through the town and to the Bus Station*
- ❖ From the Bus Station, walk up Gordon Road and take a left onto Ladysmith Road into Libanus Fields*
- ❖ From Libanus fields, walk back to the Bus Station and repeat*

The premise here is that this circle should be completed once an hour until 10pm Further to this officers will utilise their body worn cameras in order to record any on-going Anti-Social Behaviour.

If a crime is identified then a Police officer is to be requested to attend and deal if appropriate.”

Officers have been assigned for the duration of this operation and have been designated tasks to complete throughout.

In addition, our Problem Orientated Policing (POP) Plan is discussed fortnightly at partnership meetings. In attendance we have a cross-section of departments within policing (NPT, CSE/CCE, Licensing etc.) CCBC (Housing, Community Safety, YOS), Education... plus others! There are clearly underlying issues to address which are not necessarily matters in which the police should take primacy, therefore we value the contribution of our partners in such areas. Safeguarding is an area in which all agencies can *and should* contribute, therefore collaboration between partner agencies is essential! There is a lot going-on behind the scenes and we will of course endeavour to patrol outside of the operation hours when resourcing allows.

Again, I would urge residents/constituents to report matters directly to the police. It's only when reporting figures are assessed that we can paint a true picture of the problems.

Reporting via 101, 999 or social media should be commonplace.

Alternatively, drugs/crime intelligence can be submitted anonymously via CrimeStoppers.

I'd certainly recommend this method for those who might be intimidated by interaction with the police.

If you have any questions about this operation or any other matters, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Caerphilly C.B.C.	Copy of One Way Traffic Order – Gordon Road to Coronation Road (Rear Lane) - Circulated to Members by e mail Essential Carriageway Repair/ Maintenance Work on Sirhowy Enterprise Way - Circulated to Members by e mail
Governor's Support	Community/Town Council Vacancy on Bro Sannan Governors. As this is a share position with Bargoed Town Council we are asked how we wish to proceed
Town & Comm Councils	Notification of revised meeting of Community Councils Liaison Sub Committee date of Wednesday 20 th . November 6.00pm start with Pre Meeting for Community Councils at 5.30pm in Council Chamber
Arbed Am Byth	Additional information following presentation – forwarded to members Invitation to Launch event with contractors/ Steve Martin CCBC/ Crispin Jones/possibly AM – forwarded to members
One Voice Wales/ Town & Comm Councils	Environmental (Wales) Act 2016 –All Town & Community Councils and Principal Councils have a duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience.

Independent Remuneration Panel Draft Annual Report – Consultation up to December 10th. Agenda For December meeting

Leon Gardner Letters of Thanks & Congratulations on organisation of
Sarah Griffiths Civic Awards Evening
Beverley & Ian Edwards
Lyn Pask

In respect of the correspondence from the Education Support Unit, the Clerk was asked to make contact regarding our previous request that Community representatives might be allowed to be nominated where no Town Council representative position had been filled.

6. *Schedule of Payments*

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

		£. p
Purchase & Hobby Catering	Civic Awards – Buffet	714.00
Aneurin Bevan NHS	Financial Assistance	250.00
Traditional Signwriting	Honours Boards	150.00
J S Lee Ltd.	Watering of Hanging Baskets	3,009.60
Kristie White (KLA)	Entertainment Awards Evening	60.00
John Hold	Civic Awards – B in B/ Refreshments	475.93
C.C.B.C.	Room Hire/ Printing	111.65
Playworks	Tax/N.I. – October	287.79
John Hold	October Salary & reimbursements	941.00
Blackwood RFC	Sponsorship Firework Display	1,000.00

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

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

8. *Matters Arising*

With regard the proposed meeting with Borough Officers to discuss possible Community Asset Transfer of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and the notification that a Scrutiny Committee had been called for 16th. October (Civic Awards Evening) to discuss the future of the Centre.

The Clerk reported that after sending a rather curt e-mail to the Chief Executive Officer expressing yet again Town Council's disgust at the decision and outlining the fact that the community's confidence in the Borough Council had been severely tested over the past few years, he had received an invitation to meet with the Chief Executive to discuss matters on October 15th., a day before the planned Scrutiny Committee.

Given that we were still trying to organise a date to meet with officers, and that he did not want to compromise any input by the Leisure Centre Support Group at Scrutiny, he sought advice from Councillors Zoe Hammond, Rhys Mills and the Mayor. Being a little suspicious of the timing, and again not wanting to be accused of not engaging with the Borough, it was decided he attend, but not offer any information.

The meeting was very positive, with the Chief Executive stating that perhaps the meeting regarding the Leisure Centre might not be as urgent as we thought, and that we should await an imminent announcement.

We now know that the announcement was made by the new Interim Leader, Councillor Barbara Jones shortly afterwards that the decision to close the leisure centre be deferred to consider new options for the future of the site as part of the council's broader transformation plans for the authority and county borough as a whole. Notification was then received that the planed Scrutiny Committee be cancelled.

The Chief Executive being genuinely eager to build bridges with Town Council and in recognising the current strength of feeling has offered to attend Town Council in December, and possibly bring along the new Leader of the Council who will be appointed mid November to answer questions on any issue members have concerns.

The Clerk was thanked and congratulated by members on his actions.

After much discussion, it was *agreed* the Clerk invite both the Chief executive and the new Leader to the December meeting. The Clerk asked that members consider questions they would wish to ask, so he might forward in advance.

With regard the Bus Station toilets, the Clerk reported that he had had conversations with George Edwards (Caerphilly Taxi Association) who had informed him that he had taken the difficult decision to close the Disabled Toilet due to constant misuse by taxi drivers and bus drivers. He advised that if any disabled person required access the café proprietor would open them. Apparently the very same issues had occurred in Caerphilly with a similar outcome. Members were very disappointed that this situation has arisen and some were demanding we take action to get the disabled toilet reopened. The Clerk and other members pointed out that the running of the toilets was as agreed at the outset, the responsibility of the Taxi Association.

After much discussion it was *agreed* the Clerk write to the Association expressing our disappointment, and asking whether a Notice could be posted at the toilets outlining the problems/issues. Furthermore, the Clerk was asked to seek advice as to whether there was a specific duty of care to disabled users and/or whether the current situation contravened any equality issues.

With regard the approaches in respect of the Remembrance Garden, the Clerk reported that he had forwarded the following letter to The Chairman, Blackwood & District Royal British Legion via Councillor Delwyn Davies, but had not received a response to date.

Dear Sir,

28th. October 2019

Remembrance Garden - Gordon Road

It has come to my attention via Councillor Andrew Farina-Childs, that at a recent event the Mayor of Caerphilly County Borough Council, Councillor Julian Simmonds was approached, presumably by members of your Association, regarding the condition of the Remembrance Garden, this following several approaches to Town Councillor Andrew Short regarding the same issue.

It would be appreciated if in future there are any issues you wish to raise with Town Council they are communicated through me, either to my home address above, or even better via my email account – john.hold1@gmail.com

As you are probably aware the Remembrance Garden has nothing to do with Caerphilly Borough Council, and was supposed to have been a Joint Venture between Town Council & Blackwood & District Royal British Legion. I say supposed, because to date we have seen very little input – financially or otherwise from your Association. (The total cost of the Garden amounting to £7,100 – with a £150 contribution from the British Legion (certainly not we were anticipating when the scheme was originally planned). You now appear to consider that all ongoing maintenance of the Garden is also Town Council’s responsibility. Indeed due to the kindness of Town Councillor Andrew Short the site was tidied up a few weeks ago, something presumably some members of your Association might have considered undertaking. I was tasked by members at our last meeting to contact you regarding all requests being made through myself, but unfortunately due to other important issues I have been dealing with I had not got around to it, but trust you will now contact me with your issues with regard the Remembrance Garden.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Rhys Mills expressed his disappointment and frustration at the British Legion’s apparent distancing from what was a definite gentleman’s agreement that the Remembrance Garden was a joint project, and asked Councillor Delwyn Davies to pass on this sentiment, which was supported by other members.

9. Vacancy on Town Council – Blackwood North Ward – following resignation of Cllr. Jan Weeks

The Clerk reported that the advice & necessary documentation had been received from Caerphilly County Borough Council and that the following has been posted on Notice board –

Blackwood Town Council
Blackwood North Ward
Notice of Vacancy

Notice is hereby given that a vacancy has arisen in the Blackwood North Ward of the above mentioned Council.

An election will be held to fill the vacancy if notice is given in writing to the Returning Officer, at the address below, by TEN Local Government Electors from that ward within fourteen days from the date of this notice.

If such notice has not been received by 22nd November 2019 , the above council will fill the vacancy by co-option.

Anyone interested in co-option to the Council should contact the Clerk to the Council at the address below.

Dated 4th. November 2019

Signed

Christina HARRY
Returning Officer
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Gilfach House
William Street
Gilfach
Bargoed
CF81 8ND

John Hold
Clerk to Blackwood Town Council
Heddfan
12 Aspen Avenue
Blackwood
NP12 1WW

10. Remembrance Services

The Clerk reported the following details of proposed Services -

Friday 8th November Market Place, Blackwood 11.00 a.m. Service only, no wreaths

Saturday 9th November Pontllanfraith House 1.30 p.m. Service & Laying of Wreaths followed by Remembrance Service at St Augustine's Church, Pontllanfraith, 2.00 p.m.

Sunday 10th November Moose Hall, Pentwyn Road, Blackwood 10.00 a.m. Service followed by Laying of Wreaths at Blackwood Memorial, 10.45 a.m.

Sunday 10th November

St Thomas' Church, Cefn Fforest 10.00 a.m. Service followed by parade to Cenotaph for Service and Laying of Wreaths

11. Applications for Financial Assistance (usually via Finance & Policy Committee)

The Clerk presented his report on applications received ,and explained that due to the unlikelihood of a Policy & Finance Committee being held prior to Christmas, had consulted with the Mayor to agenda same for discussion and decision by full council.

The Declarations of Interest in respect of Councillors Mark Gwynne (Member of Mynyddislwyn Choir), Delwyn Davies (Resident of Fitzroy Lodge), Gerwyn James (having attended concert by Blackwood Musical Theatre Society) and Jim Edwards (Mayor's Charity) were noted, and the members took no part in the discussion or decision making in respect of the respective applications.

Mynyddislwyn Male Choir (£250 – May 2015)

Request for funding towards cost of Defibrillator £1,000 for Chapel premises used for numerous functions and events benefitting the community. Very supportive of all Town Council events.

Fitzroy Lodge Residents Group (£200 – November 2015)

Request for funding for gardening tools & plants at a cost of £500 for benefit of residents & visitors at the address, which is not strictly within the Town Council boundary.

Blackwood Town Cricket Club (£250 – December 2018)

Request for funding of Youth & Ladies cricket teams – teams for 7, 8, 9 ,13 and under 19's together with ladies team and possibility of over 60's team in the future

Blackwood Musical Theatre Society (£200 – April 2018)

Request for funding towards cost of Hire of Band, lighting and costumes (£850) for performances of an evening of an ensemble of music by BMTS with the support of Gwent Police Choir (attended by Mayor). Very supportive of Town Council events and Bi Centenary celebrations

Bobath Children's Therapy Centre (£50 – February 2012)

Request for donation towards general costs

Libanus Lifestyle Centre (£500 – July 2018)

Request for funding towards provision of Christmas trees for the Centre – Awaiting further information

Studio 54 (£200 - October 2016 as Peter Karrie Productions)

Request for funding towards cost of new dance floor at a cost of approx £3,000 at their new Studio in the former Jehovah Witness Church building. Studio has approx 120 children and 40 adults attending various classes. Offer of use of their facilities for meetings etc. Plans to introduce Local Radio Station which could be beneficial to Town Council. Very supportive of all Town Council events. ***Also request that Town Council consider granting an Interest Free Loan so new floor can be installed in readiness for early 2020.***

For members information £500 was donated to DYT towards purchase of mirrors for their dance studio in Fleur de Lys Institute

Mayor's Charity (Cllr. Jim Edwards)

Custom and practice a £250 donation be made to Mayor's Charity - Alzheimer's Society

Each application was discussed in turn, and after much deliberation, the following were agreed -

	£
Mynyddislwyn Choir	250
Blackwood Town Cricket Club	250
Blackwood Musical Theatre Company	250
Bobath Children's Therapy Centre	50
Studio 54	500
Mayor's Charity (Alzheimer's Society)	250

It was ***agreed*** that the application from Fitzroy Lodge Residents Group be revisited at a future date, given the application did not strictly meet criteria and it seemed time sensitive (garden panting etc.) and that the application from Libanus Lifestyle Centre be deferred pending further information/ costs.

Furthermore, after due consideration, members ***agreed*** that an Interest Free Loan of up to £3,000 be offered to Studio 54 to enable the installation of a new dance floor at the Studio. The Clerk was tasked to gain assurances that the funding was to be used for the specified purpose, and negotiate the terms of the loan with Ms Jenna Curtis

12. Christmas Activities

Councillor Zoe Hammond Chair of Events Committee reminded members that Town Council had agreed to organise the Entertainment Stage and the Parade as part of the C.C.B.C. Xmas Fair and asked members for their support on the day. The programme of entertainment would include brass/silver bands, choir, local dance & theatre groups and young local singers and was hopeful that the majority of the groups would then take part in the parade led by a Pipe & Drums Band and with Santa's Sleigh bringing up the rear, with the switch on of our xmas lights scheduled for 430pm. She also outlined that on Thursday 5th. December that Town Council would be arranging the Lantern Parade (7.00pm from the Market Square) followed by the Carol Concert at the Methodist Church. She would be e-mailing members nearer the date for confirmation of their assistance.

13. Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre – Update

Having already reported on the current situation under Matters Arising, there was little more to add. However, with the likely attendance of the Chief Executive Officer at the December meeting, the Clerk suggested that perhaps it might be opportune to call a Special Meeting of Town Council and invite along representatives of the Campaign Group to discuss what questions we should ask and/or what issues required clarification.

After some discussion it was *agreed* this meeting be by invitation only and not be advertised and be called within the next two weeks to enable the questions to be forwarded to the Chief Executive

14. Civic Awards Evening - Wednesday 16th.October - Verbal Report

Councillor Zoe Hammond reported that feedback on the event had been very positive, with many on the evening congratulating Town Council on a first class evening, and commenting specifically on the entertainment on offer, namely Gracie Jayne the young vocalist and the KLA Dancers, proving what a vast array of talent we have locally.

She placed on record her thanks to Councillor Gerwyn James for producing the Blackwood in Bloom & Environmental Award Certificates, and the Clerk for his efforts in helping organise the event.

Councillor Rhys Mills added his congratulations for a superb evening, but requested that the Jim Criddle Award be discussed in readiness for next years event, and that consideration be given to perhaps identifying the Young Persons Awards the Steffan Lewis Young Persons Award. After some discussion it was agreed to defer this proposal to a future meeting.

15. Coed Duon – Notification from Caerphilly C.B.C. of an Expression of interest from The Trustees of Blackwood and District Heritage Association, who are seeking a lease for the area known as Coed Duon woods, an area of approximately 1.7 hectares. They are looking to secure a 25 year lease.

Councillor Jim Edwards who had Declared an Interest as a member of the Heritage Association, took no part in the discussion or decision making.

The Clerk presented a copy of the letter received from Caerphilly C.B.C. with regard the Heritage Association's aim to take over responsibility of Coed Duon.

Good afternoon John

We are in receipt of an expression of interest from a community group; The Trustees of Blackwood and District Heritage Association, who are seeking a lease for the area known as Coed Duon woods.

I believe this approximately 1.7 hectares. They are looking to secure a 25 year lease.

The area is currently held by Parks and Grounds Maintenance. Mike Headington advises that he has no objections or comments at this early stage. A full business case application will gather more in depth information for consideration.

I have consulted Planning but await their response.

I would be grateful if you could consider their initial application and provide any comments before we progress the application to Business case submission; For community lease applications we operate a two stage approach where we receive an expression of interest, this is considered and if supported, we then seek approval to invite a full business case application. As such, I would look to invite a full application so that we have details for the proposal etc. for consideration. I am hoping that we will have planning comments but do not wish to delay the consultation process if possible; If you can let me know by Monday, 21st October I will progress. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that you are in agreement at this stage and will seek approval to invite their application; If this is not sufficient time for you to consult with the members of the Town Council, please advise when you anticipate a response and I can adjust my timescales to fit

Kind regards

Brodie

Brodie Thomson-Payne

Property Review Officer | Caerphilly County Borough Council

After much discussion, during which the Clerk identified that on two separate occasions Town Council had previously attempted to make improvements within the wood and had been frustrated by the opposition of residents whose properties border it.

Members stressed the importance of public consultation and their support as being pivotal to the success of the association's plans.

Members were generally in agreement with the proposal, and it was *agreed* the Clerk write to say Town Council had no real comments to forward at this early stage, but would take the opportunity at a later stage, when the business case is presented and the outcome of the proposed public consultation has taken place

16. Planning Applications

The Clerk reported on the following application that had been received since the last meeting, and after some discussion members *agreed* to support same -

Case Ref. 19/0809/ADV

Location: Unit 1A Cliff Road Blackwood NP12 0NT (UPRN 000043078688)

Proposal: Install 1 No. fascia and 1 No. totem sign Case Officer:

17. Reports

Councillor Delwyn Davies wished to place on record the sincere thanks of British Legion to Councillor Andrew Short for the work he has undertaken at the Remembrance Garden. All members supported these comments.

Councillor Gerwyn James asked that Town Council place on record their thanks to the Little Theatre for organising/ arranging the making of the Silent Soldier placed at the Garden.

With regard the Lamp post poppies, Councillor Rhys Mills queried why he hadn't been approached to assist, especially since he had offered his services. The Mayor apologised for not making contact.

