

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5TH. FEBRUARY 2018

Present : Councillor J Weeks (Mayor)

Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, Z Hammond, A Short, W Baber, R Weeks, C Erasmus,
G James & N Turner

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Griffiths, M Gwynne , D Jones, P Cook & J Edwards.

Apologies were also received from County Councillor K Etheridge

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor A Farina-Childs Declared an Interest in respect of Minutes of Special Meeting (Closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre) as Chair of Blackwood Comprehensive School Governors.

Councillors W Baber & D Davies Declared an Interest in the Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee Meeting (Applications for Financial Assistance) as members of the Islwyn Comrades Association.

3. Police Report

The Mayor welcomed Inspector Steve Drayton to the meeting, and members introduced themselves to him. The Inspector apologised that he had not attended previous meetings due to staffing issues but hoped he would be attending on a regular basis in the future.

He stated that he started his policing career in Blackwood 18 years ago, and was pleased to be back after served most recently as an Inspector in Maindee Newport.

He was pleased to announce crime in our area was down when compared to last year, but unfortunately violent crime – assaults, damage together with shoplifting was a problem for the town. There had been 21 cases of shoplifting last month, and it was an area of crime the police were focussing on, with planned meetings between businesses and members to be introduced. He informed members that the Police & Crime Commissioner had visited the town on Friday 3rd. and feedback had been positive.

Several members raised their concern regarding the ongoing parking problems in the High Street and the Inspector admitted he shared their frustration. Some 124 tickets had been issued in December and he said he uses Social media as a way of trying to get the message out, but unfortunately due to reduced staffing and other more pressing priorities he was never going to be in a position to have officers patrolling the High Street to tackle the problem head on.

The Inspector pointed out that the police are now likely to continue responsibilities for parking until December 2018, whilst Caerphilly C.B.C. and other local authorities decide on how to proceed. Councillor G James questioned whether the police might still have some responsibilities as some Parking issues were subject to points on your licence which presumably local authorities were not able to issue/administer. The Inspector agreed this is a current anomaly and presumably will be visited during the ongoing discussions.

Councillors D Davies & A Short reported the significant problems that Relay Taxi's were causing by parking anywhere in the High Street, sometimes in Disabled Parking and Loading bays and also on the Bus Station approach, hampering the free flow of buses arriving and departing.

The Inspector reported that this particular issue had been raised at a recent meeting of the After Dark Group (policing the Night Time Economy), and partners on that Group, the Licensing Section of Caerphilly C.B.C. were now looking into the issues raised.

Members queried whether the Licensing Section should be invited to a future meeting to update members on progress and after some discussion it was *agreed* the Clerk invite a representative to the next meeting.

The Inspector reported that additional resources would be available throughout the 6 Nations Rugby Championship.

Councillor Z Hammond informed members of a recent problem/craze – Fundraisers, where invitations are sent via social media to a party, normally in an empty house or building. People automatically think this is all or a good cause, but as Inspector Drayton confirmed it's merely an opportunity to sell alcohol and drugs, often to underage youths.

The Mayor thanked the Inspector for his attendance, and he left the meeting.

4. *Mayoral Announcements*

The Mayor reported that she had no visits to report.
She did, however, ask that congratulations be sent to the following schools –

Cefn Fforest Primary for keeping their Green Status for the 3rd. year running
Blackwood Primary, Libanus Primary & Ysgol Cwm Derwen for moving from Yellow Status to Green
Ysgol Bro Sannan for sustaining their Yellow Status
Blackwood Comprehensive for also sustaining their Yellow Status and also having recently satisfied Estyn and are now no longer under monitoring.

The Mayor also asked if the Chain of Office could be repaired.

5. *Correspondence*

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

Cllr. K Etheridge	Notification that he has requested proper consultation with Blackwood Comprehensive & Islwyn High School regarding their ability to fulfil bookings from Clubs currently using Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre. Furthermore, requesting the proposal is discussed by the Health & Well Being Scrutiny Committee & Caerphilly Public Services Board
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Request for Review of current Recycle Bins charging policy

Regarding Persimmon Development at Grove Park – No date as yet for Planning as officers are considering the Traffic Impact Survey. Information has also been requested regarding Sewers capacity/capability

Notification of likely meeting with Police and all local businesses etc. regarding a new Shoplifting initiative in Blackwood

One Voice Wales Notification of Review Panel Drop In event at Red House, Merthyr Tydfil on 12th. February 12.00-12.30 & 12.30-1.00

An Invitation to attend meeting with Review Panel on 15th. March 9.30-12.30 at the Old St. Mellon's Village Hall, Newport Road, Old St. Mellon's, Cardiff

Notification of new Future Generations Framework document

Copy of Law Commission presentation

The Clerk also reported verbally on other correspondence received since preparation of the report

Councillor A Farina-Childs nominating Blackwood Street Pastors for a Civic Award

Loyal Order of the Moose an application for funding towards the provision of a Defibrillator

It was agreed the nomination for Civic Award be considered at a later date, and that the application for financial assistance be considered by the Finance & Policy Committee at its next meeting.

6. *Schedule of Payments*

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

		£. p
Don Elsbury	Storage/erection etc. of Xmas Lights (incl. £688.72 VAT)	4,132.32
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Contribution to Winter fair	750.00
John Hold	January Salary + Reimbursments	1,193.74
Playworks	January Tax/ N.I.	278.31

7. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 15th. January 2018*

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

8. *Matters Arising*

Regarding the proposed Memorial Garden, the Clerk reported that he had contacted Graham Hilditch (Sunningdale) but unfortunately they no longer undertake these works (He did however mention that perhaps Rotary Clubs might be interested in supporting this very worthwhile project, and it was **agreed** this be bourn in mind).

The Clerk had then contacted Groundwork Caerphilly and is now awaiting a call back from their horticulture officer who should be able to offer advice. It was **agreed** the Clerk try to arrange an on site meeting asap with Councillors A Farina-Childs, Z Hammond & W Baber

It was also **agreed** the Clerk contact Allan Dallimore (CCBC) regarding the Rights on Land referred to in meetings.

The Clerk reported that he had received information that one of the volunteer barrier attendants had been unwell for the past month or so, and hence the gates had occasionally been left open. Another volunteer who lives opposite the Showfield will undertake the role. It had been stated it had been quiet and that he has been locking the barriers when he finished work.

Our proposals regarding the duties being undertaken by existing workers had been explored previously, and likely costs if met by a third party would be approx £4,313 per annum.

The Mayor and other members disagreed with what had been stated and were of the firm opinion problems still existed due to the non locking of said barriers.

After some discussion members queried whether Town Council should seek volunteers to ensure the regular locking of barriers.

The Clerk agreed to make contact with CCBC, County Councillor Nigel Dix (who had originally organised the volunteers) and our Insurance Company to check any restrictions.

The Clerk reported that he had not been able to obtain a copy of local map identifying the Town Council boundary, but he had details of all streets in each ward which he will circulate to those members who require same.

With regard the outstanding lanyards – Councillors J Weeks, J Edwards & N Turner – Councillor A Farina-Childs had kindly agreed to take photographs this evening and forward to Granville Hale who will then arrange lanyards.

9. *To Receive the Minutes of the Special Meeting of Town Council held on 29th. January 2018*

It was **agreed** the minutes be received and confirmed as a true record

10. *To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 31st. January 2018*

The Clerk presented the Minutes and it was **resolved** they be received.

Councillor D Davies pointed out that he had arrived late at the meeting and the decision had already been taken regarding Islwyn Comrades, hence no Declaration of Interest.

Councillors W Baber & D Davies having Declared an Interest earlier took no part in any discussion or decision making.

In respect of the applications for financial assistance, it was **agreed** the following grants be awarded –

	£
Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod	50
Relate Cymru	50
Urdd National Eisteddfod	100
Tenovus Cancer Care (South East Wales)	100
Islwyn Comrades	150

11. To Receive the Notes of the Inquorate One Voice Wales Area Committee Meeting held on 4th October 2017

The Clerk apologised for the error on the Agenda and it was **resolved** the Notes of the Inquorate Meeting held on 4th. October 2017 be received.

12. Review of Internal Controls

The Clerk presented his report which identified Members are required to Review the adequacy of Internal Controls

He outlined the current practice, namely –

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

All 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, it was unanimously **agreed**, that the current practice is considered adequate and proportionate to risks identified.

13. Review of Risk Management

The Clerk presented his report which identified Members are required to review the adequacy of Risk Management.

The misappropriation of funds by the Clerk (as the only employee) was seen 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 *agreed* Risk Management was considered adequate and proportionate given the risks identified.

14. Review of Insurance Provision

The Clerk presented his report which showed that currently Mandatory Cover in respect of Public Liability & Employer's Liability stands at £10million each,(albeit increased to £15million per recently received schedule for 2018/2019 renewal) whilst Fidelity Guarantee, Official's Indemnity, Crossed Cheques (and other non-negotiable money) & Libel & Slander are £250,000 each.

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

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

15. Review of Reserves Position/ Policy

The Clerk presented his report which identified that 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 flows.

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

Additional Reserves will be accrued via the Community Infrastructure Levy (currently standing at £5,789.53) albeit not yet received from Caerphilly C.B.C.

There are restrictions on the use of these funds, albeit the Proposed Commemorative Garden Area at the bottom of Gordon Road does meet the required criteria.

After much discussion, it was **agreed** that Reserves of £48,260 in total (General & Earmarked) be considered adequate, together with an additional £2,000 per annum onwards for Christmas lighting replacement/update.

16. Budget Monitoring Report 2017/2018 & Consideration of Budget & Precept Requirements for 2018/2019

The Clerk presented his report which highlighted that the net effect of the various over and under spends for the current year 2017/18 results in £8,340 being transferred to balances.

It is anticipated that at 31st. March 2018, reserves will total approx £48,260 –
General Reserves £15,000 & Environmental/Project Reserves £33,260 (Coed Duon £10,000, Xmas Lights £10,000, Other £13,260)

Members then scrutinised the budget for 2018/2019, which reflected current spending patterns, plus inflationary increases on some expenditure heads, but also reflecting the Council's decision to continue the provision of hanging baskets in the High Street, the sponsorship of the Velvet Coalmine Children's Literature Festival, the continued sponsorship of the Blackwood RFC Firework Display and the ongoing Events Programme and our Grants to Voluntary Organisations. A contribution of £2,000 towards a reserve for future renewals/ upgrades of Christmas Lighting (in addition to the £1730 remaining of the original £25,000 earmarked for 2nd. Cross Street)

17. Planning Applications

The following planning applications have been received since the last meeting –

Case Ref. 17/1086/FULL

Site Area: 403m² Location: 51 Addison Street Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1EN
(UPRN 000043049580)

Proposal: Erect part two storey, part single storey rear extension

Applicant: Mrs N Kajzer-Hughes 51 Addison Street Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1EN

Case Ref. 18/0014/COU

Site Area: 89m² Location: 257 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AW (UPRN 000043168582)

Proposal: Change the use from retail premises to a tattoo shop

Applicant: Twisted Chilli Tattoo Mr N Howell 20 Millbrook Road Springfield ,Pontllanfraith
Blackwood NP12 1AL

Case Ref. 18/0036/COU

Site Area: 485m² Location : 15 Woodbine Road Blackwood NP12 1QF (UPRN 000043055046)

Proposal: Convert existing commercial property into a residential dwelling

Applicant: Mrs S Fletcher 20 Parc Bryn Pontllanfraith Blackwood NP12 2RA

After some discussion it was *agreed* Councillor Z Hammond (Chair of Planning) contact the Planning Section to seek further information regarding 51 Addison Street and 15 Woodbine Road, where members had considerable concerns regarding parking that would add to the existing problems in the area and might also affect access to Tuckers Villas.

Councillor Hammond also reported that Cabinet had approved the Planning application for development at Coronation Road, despite objections from local members and residents.

18. Reports

There were no reports.

