

# ***MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 6<sup>TH</sup>. FEBRUARY 2017***

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

## ***1. Apologies for Absence***

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors G Hale, M Veater MBE & R Moore

## ***2. Declarations of Interest***

Declarations of Interest were made by  
Councillors W Baber, A Farina-Childs & D Davies as members/potential members of Moose  
International Blackwood

Councillor A Farina-Childs as Chair of Governors of Blackwood Comprehensive School  
Councillor D Davies as Chair of Governors of Blackwood Primary School

## ***3. Mayoral Announcements***

## ***4. Correspondence***

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

Caerphilly C.B.C. Consultation on Revised Supplementary Planning Guidance LDP1 – Affordable Housing Obligations. This SPG as been prepared within the context of the LDP to give greater guidance on how policies and proposals within the LDP aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing will be implemented.  
Comments requested by 22<sup>nd</sup>. February

Notification of re-convened meeting of Task & Finish Group carrying out a countywide review of the operation and management of highway owned council car parks at 2.00pm.on 13<sup>th</sup>. March at Penallta House. Offer to nominate a representative to speak to the group or make a written submission. The original response/submission was attached for members information.

Information relating to forthcoming elections – timetable, information sheet and information pack. Already forwarded to most members via e-mail

Open Invitation for members to attend Cllr. Diane Price, Mayor of Caerphilly CBC Charity Concert at the Blackwood Methodist Church on Friday 24<sup>th</sup>. February starting at 7.15pm. in aid of Velindre Cancer Centre - £5 ( includes refreshments ) – pay at the door

Auditor General for Wales Press release stating that too many community councils in Wales are Receiving avoidable qualified audit opinions. Thankfully Blackwood are not one of these councils, and hopefully the items to be discussed later will prove financial management and governance are properly undertaken.

Blackwood Crime Prev. Panel Invitation for Mayor to attend performance at the Stute during week commencing 6<sup>th</sup>. March

Girl Guides Invitation for Mayor to attend the West Mon Guiding Thinking Day Service at Blackwood Methodist Church on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup>. February 3.00pm start

One Voice Wales Innovative Practice National Awards 2017 - Revised deadline 6<sup>th</sup>. February

Invitation to renew membership subscription for 2017/2018 in the sum of £1,045 ( £1,016 for current year )

Notification of Larger Local Councils Committee being held at Media Resource Centre, Oxford Road, Llandrindod Wells on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup>. February – 10,00am

GAVO	Application for Financial Assistance		
Caerphilly Comic Convention	“	“	“
Tenovus Cancer Care	“	“	“
Dance Unity Parent Support Group	“	“	“
Oakdale R.F.C.	“	“	“

Welsh Government White Paper – Resilient & Renewed Community Councils – Consultation  
 The Welsh Government believe there are things that can be done now to help build resilience & renewal in the sector in the short to medium term and would welcome comments on the following points that could be taken in the short term to help the sector be more effective/resilient and views on any other actions which could be taken  
 Responses by 11<sup>th</sup>. April

- Many of these are actions we can take together using existing powers.
- Producing a toolkit to support Community Councils in working through what is required in taking on new services and assets, building on experiences of the key ingredients.
  - Re-energising ties between Community Councils and Local Authorities and provide a platform to share the good examples across Wales, bringing the new cadre of County and Community Councillors together after the Local government election next year at a conference focused on strengthening these key relationships.
  - Facilitating the creation of clusters of smaller Community Councils, by Making some modest funding available to support the initial setting up of joint arrangements.
  - Commissioning the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales

to draw up guidelines for Local Authorities to secure consistency in the manner in which community reviews are conducted.

- Supporting Community Councils to raise awareness of and encourage participation in Community Council elections, and to increase diversity.

In respect of the Task & Finish Group, it was *agreed* Councillor Z Hammond represent the Town Council, and that the Clerk supply her with details of our initial submission.

In respect of the One Voice Wales membership, it was *agreed* to renew in the sum of £1,045

In respect of the Consultation on the Welsh Government White Paper – Resilient & Renewed Community Councils, members were in general agreement of the actions outlined.

## 5. *Schedule of Payments*

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

		£. p
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Room Hire	14.25
Don Elsbury	Christmas Lighting – Placement, removal & storage	3,830.88
John Hold	January Salary + Reimbursements	884.06
Playworks ( Katherine Watkins )	January Tax/ N.I. + o/standing	975.28
SWALEC	Unmetered Christmas lighting	105.93
Welsh Audit Office	Audit Fee 2015/16	253.50

## 6. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup>. January 2017*

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

## 7. *Matters Arising*

***Policing Matters*** – Councillor Z Hammond informed members that it had proved impossible to introduce the RU2DRUNK initiative in time for the Six Nations Rugby Championship, but it was hoped that by identifying Blackwood Town Council as willing partners, the Police were hopeful in gaining other local town support and to initiate matters in the near future.

***Planning*** - Councillor J Criddle informed members that having studied the plans for the Red Lion Development in some detail, he was pleased to report that concerns raised regarding the proposed outside elevation, having due regard to the nearby Institute building and adequacy of parking provision had been allayed. In consultation with the Clerk, a response stating Town Council had no comments to make at present, but reserved our right to comment further on receipt of final plans had been forwarded by the required deadline.

**8. To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 23rd. January 2017**

It was *agreed* the minutes be received.

Furthermore it was *agreed* the following grants be awarded –

DYT Dance	£250
Blackwood & District Crime Prevention Panel	£250
Mia Rose Lewis	£100
Blackwood Comprehensive School	£200

It was also *agreed* £350 Environmental Grant be awarded to Blackwood Comprehensive School towards equipping and furnishing the garden area of the old caretaker's bungalow now used as a well-being block at the school.

Councillor A Farina-Childs, having declared an interest earlier, took no part in any discussion or decision making

The Clerk identified that most other issues discussed and agreed by the Policy & Finance Committee were identified as separate Agenda items to be discussed later.

**9. Application for Financial Assistance – Moose International Blackwood– deferred by Policy & Finance Committee**

Councillor J Criddle informed members this item had been referred by Policy & Finance Committee for discussion and decision, as after declarations of interest on this matter at Committee, there were insufficient members to make a decision.

Councillors A Farina-Childs, W Baber & D Davies having already declared an interest took no part in the discussion that followed or the decision taken.

After some discussion, it was unanimously *agreed* to award a grant of £250 to assist security measures at their meeting place.

**10. To Receive the Minutes of the One Voice Wales RCT/Merthyr/ Caerphilly Area Committee Meeting held on 12th. October 2016**

It was *agreed* the minutes be received

**11. Consultation Document – Reform of School Governance**

## ***12. Review of Internal Controls***

The Clerk presented his report, which highlighted that Members are required to Review the adequacy of Internal Controls.

He identified current practice, namely-

A Schedule of Payments being presented 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 & J Criddle )

Fairly frequent meetings of Policy & Finance Committee

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

The 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 30<sup>th</sup>. 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 highlighted that Members are required to review the adequacy of Risk Management

The misappropriation of funds by the Clerk ( as the only employee ) was seen as an obvious risk, but given the Internal Controls highlighted above , it was agreed these would greatly negate that risk.

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

Regular meetings of the Events Committee highlight any risk areas.

Town Council 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.

Furthermore, with the increased joint working with the Borough Council at the Beach Party/ Carnival weekend, and the Christmas activities, we are able to call upon the expertise of council staff in the planning and running of the events, thus managing any identifiable risk areas.

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 on Insurance Provision, which showed that currently Mandatory Cover in respect of Public Liability & Employer's Liability stands at £10million 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 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 on the Reserves position, which identified that it is a specific 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.

The Clerk also referred to the Medium Term Financial Plan he had circulated, which estimated expenditure and income for the next 5 years based on current commitments allowing for inflation at 1.55% per annum, and anticipated precept income as per 2017/2018 planned level.

After much discussion, it was agreed that Reserves of £38,000 in total ( General & Earmarked ) be considered adequate, together with an additional £2,000 per annum from 2017/2018 onwards for Christmas lighting replacement/update.

## **16. Budget Monitoring Report 2016/2017 & Consideration of Budget & Precept Requirements for 2017/2018**

### **17. Planning Applications**

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

16/1023/FULL	Libanus Chapel	Form a new main entrance off the side extension and fire exit off the main hall 206 High Street, Blackwood
17/0024/FULL	R Isaacs	Erect double storey extension to rear of property 4 Gordon Close, Blackwood
17/0015/FULL	Mr & Mrs T Brewer	Erect extension to side of property to form restaurant and function room Brewers Lodge, Gordon Road, Blackwood
17/0048/FULL	Blackwood Working Men's Club	Renew Planning Permission 15/075/FULL ( locate catering trailer in car park ) to sell hot & cold foods Working Men's Club, Woodbine Road, Blackwood

Councillor J Criddle reported that he would seek further clarification regarding 4 Gordon Close and Brewers Lodge and also queried whether the siting of the trailer at the Woodbine Club had resulted in any parking problems nearby.

The Clerk also reported that notification has been received from Caerphilly C.B.C. of its intention to sell a parcel of land at Coronation Road to the Pobl Group for the development of affordable housing. The land is surplus to the operational requirements of the Council, and an affordable housing scheme that meets with the needs identified within the Council's Housing Market Assessment and Housing register will be delivered.

No details of the proposed scheme are yet available.

After some discussion, members agreed they had no objections to the sale of the land, albeit we would reserve our rights to comment/object when planning application is made for the development.

## ***18. Reports***