

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7TH. OCTOBER 2019

Present : Councillor G James (Mayor)

Councillor J Griffiths (Deputy Mayor)

Councillors A Farina-Childs, T Evans, J Edwards, R Weeks, R Mills, Z Hammond, C Erasmus,
N Turner, A Short & M Gwynne

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors D Davies & P Cook

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Zoe Hammond declared an Interest in an item to be reported under Mayoral Announcements as she works for the Company that the Mayor was asked to re-launch, namely Active Together who manage residential homes for adults with additional needs

3. Presentation on Welsh Government's Warm Homes Scheme by Andrew-Ross Whitney (Arbed Am Byth)

The Mayor welcomed Andrew-Ross Whitney from Arbed am Byth, who gave a brief presentation on the Welsh Government's Warm Homes Scheme who were looking to provide energy efficiency measures such as solar panels, central heating systems and boilers, draught proofing, lighting and controls with a view to reducing energy bills. The scheme is area based and not means tested – if the property is E,F or G rated under the Energy Performance Certificate and can be lifted to C or above, then the property should be eligible for assistance, whether owner occupied or privately rented (only 2 properties per landlord per scheme and must be registered on Rent Smart Wales).

Andrew also reported that they were to hold a Launch event with contractors/ Steve Martin CCBC/ Crispin Jones/ Possibly AM at Blackwood Comprehensive School on Tuesday 22d. October between 3.30pm – 7.00pm

All local town council are invited to also attend and represent their Wards.

Councillors are also welcome to refer customers to the scheme through our contact centre on 03300 414647 or email info@arbedambyth.wales. He was obviously keen to hear from any members willing to work with the scheme to promote its benefits for the people of Blackwood.

He thanked members for the opportunity to address them, and then left the meeting.

4. Police Report

The Mayor welcomed Inspector Aled George to the meeting, who apologised that he had not been able to provide copies of his report due to printing issues, but promised to forward a copy to the Clerk for distribution onwards asap.

Copy of Report (Appendix 1) included as part of these Minutes

Councillor A Short raised the problem of homeless/rough sleepers in town, and the Clerk reported that he would be trying to organise a meeting of all interested parties, including the Police over the coming weeks when a suitable date could be mutually agreed.

An additional matter discussed was how residents can raise non-emergency matters, and the Inspector reported that -

Anything not suitable for a 999 call can be raised by:

- Calling 101
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/gwentpolice/
- Twitter: @gwentpolice
- Emailing the local team: Blackwood@gwent.pnn.police.uk and Risca@gwent.pnn.police.uk

5. *Mayoral Announcements*

The Mayor reported on the following visits –

Blackwood Little Theatre to a production of Caramba's Revenge in the newly decorated theatre, where he enjoyed a thoroughly entertaining evening.

Re launch of Achieve Together, a company who runs residential housing for adults with additional needs. The company had amalgamated two existing companies so they are in a better position to support their residents. He remarked he had been well looked after by both residents and staff with a lovely afternoon tea, and that residents were all in good spirits.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Janet Griffiths took the opportunity to inform members that she has resigned from the Labour Party, having become disillusioned with National & Local policies, and now intended to serve as an Independent member.

6. *County Borough Report*

County Councillor A Farina-Childs reported on the following –

Apologies from County Councillor Kevin Etheridge, currently recovering at home from major surgery. Members requested the Clerk send Town Council's best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Recent decision by Caerphilly C.B.C. to sack the Chief Executive Anthony O'Sullivan for Gross Misconduct (having been suspended since March 2013) , but he has already indicated he would be appealing that decision at an Employment Tribunal

He reported that he had received numerous enquiries/complaints regarding the switching off of street lighting from midnight to save money, and had requested the Cabinet member to reconsider given the impact this was having on residents safety in the community, especially the vulnerable and visually impaired.

He also confirmed that the Closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre was the only item for discussion at the Scrutiny Committee called for Wednesday 16th. October (Civic Awards Evening), and had contacted the Clerk requesting he write to C.C.B.C. to seek a postponement, since Town Council's representation at that meeting could be compromised given it was the same date as our Civic Awards Evening. There was also a request from some Borough members that the decision be referred to Town Council.

Some discussion took place which queried how the report to Scrutiny Committee could be valid when no further consultation or public engagement had taken place for them to produce the Equalities Impact Assessment that they were required by the Courts to produce and the fact that our requested meeting regarding possible Community Asset Transfer had not yet taken place, and should surely have major bearing on any recommendation to Cabinet

7. *Correspondence*

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

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Lloyds Bank | Request that the hanging basket which had been identified during a Compliance Audit as blocking their CCTV coverage and therefore a potential risk to security be removed. |
| Caerphilly CBC | Notification of change of date to the next planned Community Council Liaison Sub Committee, now to be held at 6.00pm on Wednesday 20 th . November |
| Leanne Meek | Request for Application form for Financial Assistance |

8. *Schedule of Payments*

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

		£. p
John Hold	Salary/ Reimbursements for September	1,006.52
Carole Hold	Admin duties to April to September	324.50
Playworks	Tax/N.I. for September	373.99

9. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 2nd.September 2019*

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

10. *Matters Arising*

The Clerk reported on the following –

An invitation had been sent regarding the meeting with Caerphilly C.B.C. in respect of a possible Community Asset Transfer of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre, and a response received from Mark Williams (Interim Corporate Director of Communities) stating he and his officers are willing to meet, and we are now trying to arrange a mutually convenient date.

However, it had been reported that a Scrutiny Committee to consider the future of the Leisure Centre has been called for Wednesday 16th. October, the date of our Civic Awards Evening, and so the Clerk had written to request re-scheduling of same, as Town Council representation might be compromised.

With regard the Bus Station Toilets, the Clerk updated members that

- Approval is now in place for the Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association to manage the toilets via a tenancy at will, and the necessary documents will be signed later this week
- An order has been placed by Caerphilly C.B.C. for the coin meter system and installation is confirmed for week commencing Monday 21st. October
- Legal Services at Caerphilly C.B.C. are drafting a document regarding ownership of coin meter system remaining with Town Council. The Clerk has spoken to Mr George Edwards (CTDA) and he has no problem with this, stating this was a similar issue with Caerphilly Town Council

11. To Confirm the Minutes of the Events Committee Meeting held on 17th.September 2019

The Clerk presented the Minutes of the Events Committee which was inoperative, but as no significant decisions were likely to be required and not to have wasted Emma Wilkins (Aneurin Bevan UHB) time went ahead.

It was ***agreed*** the minutes be received.

The Clerk identified two requests from the meeting, namely a Vice Chair of Events be appointed, and that Town Council consider making a donation of £250 towards the Charity Appeal for UHB's Breast Services Unit.

After some discussion, Councillor R Mills ***agreed*** to serve as Vice Chair of the Committee until January 2020, when the position will be discussed again .

It was also ***unanimously agreed*** a donation of £250 be made to the Charity Appeal

12. To Receive the Minutes of the Bi Centenary Committee Meeting held on 9th. September 2019

It was ***agreed*** the minutes be received

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

The Clerk reported that with the recent resignation of Town Councillor Jan Weeks due to ongoing health issues, a vacancy now exists for the Blackwood North Ward.

After some discussion Members ***agreed*** that the Clerk should contact Caerphilly C.B.C. and gain agreement to advertise the vacancy and that the appropriate Notice be served regarding Election.

14. Completion of Audit for Year Ended 31st. March 2019 - Annual Return/ Issues Arising Report

The Clerk presented his report which identified that Notice has been received from our External Auditors BDO (on behalf of Auditor General for Wales) that the Audit for Year ended 31st. March 2019 has been completed.

The Annual Return (previously presented to members) was presented again to members and it was ***unanimously agreed*** to approve and accept same.

The issues arising report was also presented, which identified that for larger contracts the Town Council does not advertise for invitations to tender.

Town Council are advised to contact One Voice Wales who will supply an updated model set of Standing Orders & Financial Regulations, which Council should review, amend and if necessary formally adopt.

With regard the issues arising report, this was the only matter listed and had been anticipated by the Clerk, who had already **recommended the course of action outlined above** which had been agreed by Town Council, with our Standing Orders & Financial Regulations to be discussed and reviewed by Policy & Finance Committee initially.

No other matters came to the Auditors attention.

The Clerk was thanked for his continued sound stewardship of the Council's finances

15. Aneurin Bevan UHB Community Network Event – 12.30pm.Thursday 21st. November @ Rodney Parade, Newport

Details of the event had been forwarded to members by e-mail.

Aneurin Bevan UHB are aware that there is much information that needs to be shared with the communities across Gwent and South Powys about how services are changing and how they should be used when they do. They realise that an excellent way of sharing information in many of our communities is via word of mouth and by people already connected to their communities, hence this invitation to become a member of their community network event to share key messages about how their services are transforming in the hope we might help in sharing them widely in our area.

Being a champion will mean that -

- *You receive factual information on a regular basis from the Health Board about health services and how they are changing
- *You will have a direct contact with the Health Board to raise any questions or share an community thoughts/ concerns
- *They will host a few discussions a year to keep you updated and offer the opportunity for your ideas to be heard and questions to be answered.

Having contacted the Health Board, they suggest a maximum of four representatives, however, they may consider additional if required once they have a better idea of spaces available

After some discussion the following members were **agreed** as the Town Council representatives, namely Councillors C Erasmus, R Mills, Z Hammond & G James

16. B.T . Phone Box Closures – Consultation ends 28th. October

The Clerk presented his report, which highlighted that the following phone boxes in our locality are planned for closure

01443 830211	Fair View	95 calls
01443830499	Cefn Fforest Avenue	0 calls
01495 221910	High Street (near Cinema)	260 calls

BT's own overriding criteria for payphone retention states one of the following must be met –

- No mobile coverage
- Suicide hotspot
- Accident blackspot
- Coastal location

Their reasonable needs criteria states all of the following must be met –

- The public call box in question is the only one within 800 metres
- There are at least 500 households within 1 kilometre
- At least 12 calls have been made from the call box within the previous 12 months

After some discussion, members *agreed* that representation be made via Caerphilly C.B.C. for the retention of the phone box on the High Street, near the Cinema, as it appears to meet all the needs criteria

17. Civic Awards Evening - Wednesday 16th.October

The Clerk reported that everything was well in hand. He anticipated 120/130 people attending and entertainment had been confirmed as Gracie Jayne, the young finalist of the TV Kids Voice Competition and Dancers from KLA Dance Institute which were runners up in the Greatest Dancer TV Competition.

He presented members with the following citations for the proposed awards, and all were unanimously *agreed*

CIVIC AWARDS

PRESENTED IN APPRECIATION OF LEON GARDINER BEM

In recognition of his immeasurable service to the town and neighbouring communities over many decades. A much loved and respected politician Leon holds the unique honour of being Mayor on three occasions – Islwyn Borough Council 1988/89, Blackwood Town Council 1999/2000 & Caerphilly County Borough Council 2015/2016 and is a tireless supporter and fund raiser of Ty Hafan Children's Hospice & Macmillan Cancer Support

PRESENTED IN APPRECIATION OF BLACKWOOD BASEMENT YOUTH PROJECT

In recognition that for over 20 years they have provided support, advocacy and general information for young people aged 11-25 within the town and neighbouring communities. The team continually helps empower our young people and provide them with the services they need in order to fulfil their potential and make sound life choices

PRESENTED IN APPRECIATION OF RUTH POWELL

In recognition of her hard work and dedication as Chairperson and coach in helping to re launch Rhymney Valley Athletics Club in 2014, into the much respected and successful community club it is today with over 240 youngsters aged 4-17 enjoying the opportunity of participating in track, field, cross country and road running under the supervision of over 50 volunteers, including 37 qualified coaches.

PRESENTED IN APPRECIATION OF COLIN DAVIES (CSO 10)

In recognition of his 16 years service as Community Support Officer with Gwent Police. Colin has been a vital link within Blackwood and neighbouring communities, and has worked extremely hard to engage with the youth of the area by introducing the junior football and netball tournaments which have now become popular established annual events, and the pop up skate parks. He has also always been very supportive of all Town Council Events, whether manning road closures or heading our various parades.

YOUNG PERSONS AWARD

PRESENTED IN APPRECIATION OF ZAK GRIFFITHS

In recognition of his strength, courage and determination over the past two years in tirelessly campaigning and fund raising with his mother, Sarah, for the Dreams & Wishes Charity, having help raise over £40,000 in memory of his beloved sister Daisy who tragically lost her life to cancer. He recently successfully completed his first 10k Challenge with the students of Bridgend Military College, RAF, Navy & Police.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

PRESENTED IN APPRECIATION OF SALI DANIELS

In recognition of her being a founder member of Blackwood Action on Litter Community Group in September 2018 and through her commitment, dedication and hard work the voluntary group, who meet every month for regular litter picks in and around Blackwood, have collected over 450 bags of litter, thus improving the appearance of the area for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

PRESENTED IN APPRECIATION OF DONNA SZARUN

As Above

PRESENTED IN APPRECIATION OF DARREN WILLIAMS

In recognition of his community minded actions in ensuring the flower bed on Bloomfield Road, designed and planted by students of Blackwood Comprehensive School, was tended and watered on a daily basis throughout the school holidays to ensure the display continued to improve the appearance of the area for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

18. Planning Applications

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

Case Ref. 19/0728/RET

Location: 202 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AJ

Proposal: Retain and complete the change of use of ground floor from Former Employment Agency (A2 use) to Funeral Directors Office (A1 use) and first floor to a residential flat

Case Ref. 19/0746/RET

Location: 9 Sunnybank Road Blackwood NP12 1HY

Proposal: Retain and complete single storey rear extension

Case Ref. 19/0752/COU

Location: Relay Taxis Unit A 111 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AD

Proposal: Change the use from taxi office to beauty salon

He also verbally reported on the following, received since his report, namely

Case Ref. 19/0801/RET

Location: Unit A 83 High Street, Blackwood NP12 1PN

Proposal: Retain the change of use from A1 shop to taxi booking office

Case Ref. 19/0807/FULL

Location: 19 Pembroke Close, Cefn Ffoest, Blackwood NP12 1JL

Proposal: Erect two storey side extension

Councillor Z Hammond reported that in her opinion the only query was the possible access issues relating to Case Ref. 19/0752/COU, with no other significant issues relating to the other applications, and it was *agreed* that whilst no objections be raised, our concerns should be raised regarding Unit A 111 High Street

19. Reports

Councillor A Short reported that he had received a request from a member of the British Legion for Town Council to arrange for the Remembrance Garden to be tidied/improved prior to Remembrance Day Services.

Some members were disappointed that the request had been made to a member and not through the Clerk. Furthermore, the area had only recently been tidied (thanks to Councillor Short), and for the scheme, which was initially supposed to be a Joint Venture between Town Council and the Royal British Legion, all responsibility and ongoing maintenance (and almost the whole Design and Construction works costs) appeared to be left to Town Council.

The Lamp post poppies were discussed, and several members offered their support to erect same in readiness for Remembrance Day

Councillor R Mills suggested that given the recent issue relating to the Declaration of Interest of County Councillor David Poole, Former Leader of the Council, that all Town Councillors should complete a new form to ensure every thing is up to date and above board. This was agreed, and the Clerk was asked to circulate new forms as soon as possible.

Councillor Mills also took the opportunity to inform members that he had been selected as the Plaid Cymru Assembly Member candidate for the 2021 Elections. Members congratulated him on his selection.

Members asked the Clerk on progress regarding . He responded that he had been hoping to submit all applications together, and that there were still a number outstanding. Members requested that progress be made, and those received be forwarded to Caerphilly C.B.C.

The Clerk reported briefly on a visit he had made to Studio 54 (based in the former Jehovah's Witness Hall) next to the Institute Car Park. Jenna Curtis has exciting plans for the building which has a large function room and several smaller rooms. She is hopeful of fitting out one of the rooms as a Community Radio Station and has had several promises of assistance from people in the industry.