

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9TH JANUARY 2017.

Present : Councillor W Baber (Mayor)

Councillors J Criddle, Z Hammond, C Erasmus, J Edwards & N Turner

P.C. Adam Lang

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished all a happy and healthy new year.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, G Hale, M Veater MBE, R Moore, P Cook, M Gwynne, J Weeks, M Harris & P Cook

2. Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were made at this point

3. Policing Matters

P.C. Adam Lang was welcomed to the meeting, and commenced by giving a brief introduction to the proposed Breathalyser initiative planned under the Pub Watch Scheme.

This scheme had been introduced in Devon/Cornwall and had resulted in a diminished reporting of violent crime in the area. It is known as RU2DRUNK, and is intended to counteract the perceived preloading at home, where groups tend to drink at home and then visit pubs, already well intoxicated and potentially cause problems at the pubs attended.

The planned initiative would give trained door staff the ability to breathalyse individuals before entering the pubs to ensure they are not too intoxicated, thereby reducing potential problems later. Trained bar staff might also be able to use the device to refuse serving customers they consider too much the worst for drink.

He stated that he hoped the pubs in Blackwood & Bargoed under the existing Pub Watch Scheme might be interested in trialling the initiative. Breathalyser units could be purchased for approx. £100 each, with 5 being required in Blackwood. Members queried whether this might be funded via the Police & Crime Commissioners Fund.

After some discussion, members felt there was merit in the initiative, and Councillor Z Hammond queried whether it might be possible to introduce same in readiness for the upcoming Six Nations Rugby Championships.

After further discussion it was agreed Town Council support the initiative and earmark £500 towards the cost of breathalyser units for pubs in the town, furthermore that the Clerk make contact with Bargoed Town Council, as their involvement, or at least the involvement of the pubs in the town seems critical to the success of the initiative.

P.C. Lang then gave an update on other policing matters –

Shoplifting had seen a slight increase during December, with 6 reported incidents down to one individual, who had subsequently been apprehended, sentenced and convicted.

P.C. Lang indicated that if at all possible, he would be looking to re-energise Shop Watch which had proved very successful in town a number of years ago.

He reported that 50 parking tickets had been issued during December, and that despite concerns by raised by some County Borough members, Car cruising was not considered a problem. He also stated that there would be a policy of Pro active policing during February, targeted against known troublemakers in town, especially in and around the bus station/ car park areas.

Issues were highlighted regarding ongoing problems in and around the bus station/ car park, and members encouraged the officer to make better use of CCTV in town. The officer in turn asked that individuals should contact the police as soon as possible regarding any perceived problems.

4. *Mayoral Announcements*

The Mayor reported on his attendance at the following –

Lantern parade/ Carol Concert on December 8th.

National Statistics Office Christmas Party for Pensioners and Veterans on December 15th.

5. *Correspondence*

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

Caerphilly C.B.C.

Notification that Council Tax base is £2,922.66 per Band D equivalent dwelling for 2017/18 compared with £2,895.51 for current year.

Precept requirements requested by 1st. February

Well-being of Future Generations – Community Engagement Meetings to filter and prioritise issues raised during initial assessment, so they can become the building blocks on which the Well-being Plan will be written – Wed. 8th. February 6.00pm – 8.30pm at Blackwood Methodist Church.

Copy of Communities First Mid Valleys East delivery plan for financial year 2016/2017

Responses to Items raised at Town & Community Council Liaison Committee on 2nd. November

One Voice Wales	<p>Publication of links to Principles and guidance for the appropriate use of non guaranteed hour arrangements in devolved public services.</p> <p>Battle's Over – A Nation's Tribute 100 Years of Remembrance / 11th. November 2018 – A chain of beacons will be lit throughout the country at 7.00pm. on Sunday 11th. November 2018 – a century after the guns fell silent ??? Involvement</p> <p>Notification of RCT/ Merthyr/ Caerphilly Area Committee meeting being held a 7.00pm. on Wed. 18th. January in the offices of Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen Community Council, Newport Road, Bedwas</p>
National Assembly for Wales	<p>Consultation on changing the name of the National Assembly. Subject to the passing of the Wales Bill currently before Parliament, the Assembly will have power over the majority of its own internal and practical arrangements including the name by which the institution is known. Current suggestions in consultation document are Parliament or Senedd . Consultation ends 3rd. March</p>
Welsh Government	<p>Notification of Appropriate Sum under Section137(4)(A) of Local Government Act 1972 – Section 137 Expenditure Limit for 2017/2018 is £7.57per elector compared with £7.42 for the current year.</p> <p>Copy of poster/leaflet to assist efforts to raise awareness and encourage participation in the local government elections for town & community councils in May 2017</p> <p>Notification of Consultation on Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance 2017</p> <p>Notification that work has commenced on preparation of the National Development Framework – a national land use development plan which will replace the existing Wales Spatial Plan and sets out 20 year spatial framework for land use in Wales providing context for provision of new infrastructure and growth and setting out how the government's land use objectives will be taken forward at all levels</p>
Ind. Remuneration Panel	<p>Invitation to a round table discussion event on its remuneration framework for community and town councils – 15th. February 2017 at St. Michael's Centre, Abergavenny</p>
Elsbury's	<p>Apologies for not responding to defective lighting over Christmas period. Also what do Council want to do with old rope style lights, currently stored in their yard. They cannot be economically repaired as they are now unavailable.</p>

Aneurin Bevan Univ. Health Board Invitation to share views and ideas with the people who plan and provide health services in Gwent – Friday 17th. February 9.30am - 1.00pm at Christchurch Centre, Malpas

Roger Evans Freedom of Information request – How much the council spent in the financial year 2015/2016 against each of its statutory functions as listed in Schedule he provided.

6. *Schedule of Payments*

The Clerk presented his report on payments made/to be made and the following were agreed for Payment -

Cwm Bakery	Refreshments – Carol concert	150.00
D Cushing	Carol Concert	50.00
Caitlin Nedahl	Carol Concert	50.00
Mynyddislwyn Choir	Carol Concert	100.00
Oakdale Silver Band	Carol Concert	100.00
Blackwood Meth. Church	Carol Concert	100.00
Velvet Coalmine	Part Sponsorship	2,500.00
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Awards Evening	235.02
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Christmas Market Contrib. + Lantern workshops	925.00
John Hold	December Salary + Reimbursements	746.67
Playworks	December Tax/N.I.	490.58

7. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 5th. December 2016*

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

8. *Matters Arising*

Councillor C Erasmus asked the Clerk if an order had been placed for the new cross street decoration.

He responded that he had still not been able to ensure the additional fixing points would be available/suitable, but hoped the figure quoted would be held for a month or so to enable proper discussion and negotiation to take place with proposed respective parties.

9. Verbal Report on Lantern Parade & Carol Concert

The Clerk and Councillor Z Hammond reported that the event had gone as planned, and had been very well received by all present.

The absence of a road closure had not proved an issue, and the reduced refreshments had still been more than sufficient, with little left over at the end of the evening. The entertainment on offer with the Libanus & Blackwood schools, Mynyddislwyn Choir, Oakdale Silver Band, Daniel Cushing & Caitlin Nedahl had been first class.

Councillor Z Hammond reported that she felt we should ensure sufficient lanterns are produced in future to ensure the majority of children in the parade are supplied.

10. Planning Applications

The Clerk reported that whilst no Planning Applications had been received, we had received a pre-application consultation notice from Mike Southall of GVA Grimley Ltd. acting on behalf of Ixion Developments in respect of an application to demolish the Red Lion Inn to provide residential development comprising 17 No. Apartments together with associated works.

Members were pleased that something was finally planned for this eyesore of a site, that Town council had complained about for many years.

After some discussion, which identified concerns regarding the proposed outside elevation having some regard to the nearby Institute building and the adequacy of the proposed parking provision, it was agreed plenary powers be given to Councillor J Criddle, Chair of Planning and the Clerk to seek further clarification on these issues and make a response on behalf of the Town Council by the required deadline of 20th. January.

11. Reports

Councillor Z Hammond gave an update on the very successful Homeless for Blackwood initiative prior to Christmas.

She reported that 160+ bags of clothing had been donated, together with 150 rucksacks, 20+ sleeping bags, yoga mats, waterproof ponchos, television, microwave, 3,000 bottles of water, cinema tickets and food vouchers. Other donations of toiletries, books, sweets, chocolates etc. had meant that approx 300 Gift Bags had been made up and delivered.

She stated that this had surpassed all expectations, and that after all local issues had been dealt with, surplus donations had been delivered to Merthyr & Cardiff to assist their homeless problems. It was also anticipated that some items, including the water would be forwarded to Syria to assist the plight of individuals there.

On Christmas eve, she together with Councillor Criddle and the Clerk, at the request of Jenna Curtis & Rev. Sue Phillips had visited the Elim Baptist Church Night Shelter to distribute the gift bags to those individuals at the shelter. Their reaction had been overwhelming.

The Clerk placed on record his thanks to Councillor Zoe Hammond & Jenna Curtis for all their efforts in organising this initiative, and felt the Town Council, whilst not necessarily having contributed a great deal had received many plaudits for their support.

The Clerk reported that unfortunately he had not been able to satisfy our insurance company into agreeing to provide cover on the units kindly donated at the Precinct for delivery and sorting of donations received. We could not prove it was a specific responsibility of the Council or a specified Committee, and perhaps this is something we might re-visit in the future, given that the homeless problem is by all accounts likely to increase given the Government's proposed benefit reforms.

Councillor W Baber, whilst fully supportive of the initiative and its very positive outcomes had concerns that the Precinct Manager had gone out on a limb to support the initiative, but was having difficulty in contacting certain individuals regarding the clearance of the units kindly donated.

It was agreed that approaches be made to Andrew from the Cornerstone Homeless Project, who was heavily involved in this local project, to see if he would be prepared to attend the next Town Council meeting to highlight the current problems and outline what provisions/ services are available.