

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 15TH APRIL 2019

Present: Councillor J Edwards (Mayor)

Councillor G James (Deputy Mayor)

Councillors A Short, J Griffiths, Z Hammond, C Erasmus, R Mills, T Evans, M Gwynne,
P Cook, D Davies & R Weeks

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor A Farina-Childs and also from County Councillor Kevin Etheridge

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. County Borough Report

In the absence of Borough members, Councillor Z Hammond gave a brief update on the Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre closure position.

Cabinet had made the decision that the Centre closes on 30th June. A Call In request with cross party support had failed, and she informed members there was the likelihood of a Legal Challenge coming forward from the Action Group.

4. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor reported on the following visits –

Blackwood Primary School to discuss their proposed garden works

Mynyddislwyn Choir's 50th. Anniversary Concert with James Dean Bradfield & Into the Ark
DYT Dance & Drama's Concert (with Deputy Mayor) at Fleur-de-Lys Institute

5. Correspondence

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

Elinor Shipley Request for content for a new website –Understanding Welsh Places to be
launched in Summer 2019

One Voice Wales Notification of Larger Councils Meeting being held on Wednesday 17th.
April at Llandrindod Wells

C.C.B.C.	Copy of Off Street Parking Orders in readiness for new Civil Parking Enforcement
	Copy of request form for Civil Parking Enforcement
	Notification of Caerphilly Public Services Board Annual Conference being held on 5 th . July at Llancaiach Fawr
	Opportunity to support Caerphilly Volunteer Awards being held on Thursday 10 th . October at Blackwood Miners Institute -£250 to sponsor specific award (Young Volunteer, Adult Volunteer, Environmental Volunteer, Group, Trustee, Personal Journey, Corporate Social Responsibility, Inspirational Volunteer of the Year or General Sponsorship of the event
	Notification by Andrew Highway that he is leaving his post as Town Centre Development Manager
DYT	Thanks to Mayor & Deputy Mayor for their attendance at their recent show at Fleur de Lys Institute
Mynyddislwyn Choir	Application for Financial Assistance towards purchase of defibrillator for their chapel premises
Marilyn Pask	Thanks to Town Council especially Cllr. Andrew Short for the time and effort taken to renovate Alun's commemoration seat at Cwmgelli. This was a really kind gesture and the excellent job done hopefully should last for many years to come.
British Heart Foundation	Thanks for donation via Cllr. Jan Weeks Mayor's Charity Fund
Blackwood Brownies	Thanks for donation
Blackwood Boys & Girls F.C.	Thanks for sponsorship
Wales Audit Office	Notice of Audit for financial year ended 31 st . March 2019 – Annual Return and all requested information to be sent by 1 st . July 2019

In respect of the request for information re. Understanding Welsh places, it was *agreed* the Clerk précis information from our web page and submit.

In respect of the Caerphilly Volunteer Awards, it was *agreed* the Clerk enquire whether it might be possible to sponsor a Blackwood Inspirational Volunteer of the Year Award.

Members acknowledged the contribution that Andrew Highway had made as Town Centre Development Manager to Blackwood, and wished to place on record their thanks and best wishes in his future role.

The Clerk added his personal thanks for Andrew's assistance and advice over the years.

6. Schedule of Payments

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

		£. p
British Heart Foundation	Mayor's Charity (Jan Weeks)	250.00
C.C.B.C.	Room Hire/Printing/Web host	801.66
John Hold	March Salary + reimbursements	931.40
Playworks	March Tax/N.I.	369.06
C.A. Hold	Admin. Duties	324.30
One Voice Wales	Membership Fee 2019/2020	1,164.00
Zurich Insurance	Renewal 2019/2020	1,246.17

Plus if recommendations from Policy & Finance Committee are agreed -

		£. p
Blackwood ATC	Financial Assistance	250.00
Llangollen Int. Music Eisteddfod	“ “	50.00
Blackwood Neighbourhood Police	“ “	250.00
Noah's Ark (Children's Hospital)	“ “	50.00
DYT Dance & Drama	“ “	500.00

7. To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 4th. March 2019

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

8. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

9. To Receive the Minutes of the Bi-Centenary Committee meeting held on 11th. March 2019

The Clerk presented the minutes and it was **agreed** they be received

10. To Receive the Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee Meeting held on 18th. March 2019

The Clerk presented the minutes and it was **agreed** they be received.

Given their recent attendance at an event hosted by DYT Dance & Drama, both the Mayor & Deputy Mayor (Councillors J Edwards & G James) declared an interest and did not vote.

Members **agreed with the recommendation** to award financial assistance to the following –

		£. p
Blackwood ATC	Financial Assistance	250.00
Llangollen Int. Music Eisteddfod	“ “	50.00
Blackwood Neighbourhood Police	“ “	250.00
Noah's Ark (Children's Hospital)	“ “	50.00
DYT Dance & Drama	“ “	500.00

11. To Receive the Minutes of the Community Council Liaison Sub - Committee meeting held on 21st. November 2018

It was *agreed* the minutes be received

12. To receive the Minutes of the Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Meeting held on 13th. November 2018

It was *agreed* the minutes be received

13. Closure of Bus Station Toilets in Blackwood and possible interim solutions

The Clerk circulated copies of various correspondence between himself, Caerphilly C.B.C. and One Voice Wales regarding our perceived lack of proper consultation. He had requested the item be raised at a meeting of the Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Meeting (reported on later) and they had agreed Town Council would be contacted regarding possible take over by ourselves. The Clerk reported he had received no such contact, but had been trying to gain further information on the breakdown of the costs previously identified - £20,500, as costs of water usage do not appear to have been included, and that the maintenance/repair figures quoted might be high, based on significant works in previous years due to the vandalism issues.

Furthermore, he had been in contact with Clerks from other town/community councils and they were of the same opinion, that any decision on actual closures would follow the production of the Borough Toilet Strategy and that more detailed consultation would be held regarding possible alternative service delivery. They are also considering the way forward, but all will have budgetary problems needing serious consideration.

He pointed out that he had prepared the accounts for year ending 31st. March 2019, and if members were agreeable to vire some monies from the 2019/2020 budget and also utilise monies from balances Town Council might be in a position to at least consider a temporary solution until the planned toilet provision within the Artisan Market Scheme is completed.

Members again expressed their disgust at the closure decision.

Councillor Andrew Short reported that many people were now availing themselves of the toilets at his premises, as the alternatives suggested by the Borough – the library and/or Blackwood Miners' Institute – were totally impracticable. He also raised his concerns that significant work might be needed to bring the toilets up to an acceptable standard prior to any ongoing service provision being considered.

There had also been numerous reports from Adam Oldham (Market Place Manager) of people urinating against the wall at the rear of the market place, used nappies being left on the ramp walkway leading down into the market square, (as there is nowhere for young parents to change their children in comfort and safety unless they use local cafes and restaurants) and there is nowhere for them to dispose of nappies or other sanitary items.

Market Traders are also complaining about the lack of facilities and there is a possibility that they will take their stalls and their trade elsewhere due to the lack of public conveniences close by.

Councillor Hammond informed members that Karl & Emma Breeze (Café), after meeting with Council officers had been handed keys to the disabled toilets for use by their customers. Furthermore, the Stagecoach bus company has one toilet for use by their drivers.

During a prolonged discussion, some members queried the possibility of holding a special meeting to consider the problems more fully, but this was dismissed as others thought we would only go over exactly what had already been discussed.

Members mentioned various examples of town/ community councils having taken over responsibility for the running of public toilets – Abertillery & Porthcawl locally, and queried whether the Clerk should make contact to see how they went about tackling the problem

The possibility of getting outside contractors to undertake the service was highlighted, as was the possibility of an approach to the Café to see if their staff might take on the responsibility of cleaning the other toilets in addition to the disabled toilet they now had responsibility for.

It was ultimately agreed that the Clerk and Councillor Hammond make initial contact with the Café regarding their possible assistance, whilst we also await the promised contact from Blackwood Town Centre Management Group and the additional costing information. It was further agreed that we should try and establish a potential date for the promised provision of new public toilets from the Consultant for the Artisan Market Scheme, especially now planning agreement has been obtained.

14. Planning Applications

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

Case Ref. 19/0164/FULL

Site Area: 270m²

Location: 7 Cwmgelli Villas, Cwmgelli Blackwood NP12 1BU (UPRN 000043086542)

Proposal: Erect two storey rear extension

Case Ref. 19/0172/FULL

Site Area: 111m²

Location: 229 High Street, Blackwood (UPRN 000043090352)

Proposal: Replace old brown UPVC shop front to new grey UPVC shop front and doors

Councillor Z Hammond reported that she had studied the above, and whilst there were no apparent grounds to object recommended that Town Council voice our concerns regarding the closeness to the neighbouring property and the disruptive effect the works might have on an already congested access - perhaps officers might advise the builders to ensure access is kept free for emergency vehicles at all times during completion of said works.

This approach was **agreed** by members.

15. Reports

Representatives gave a brief update on the recent Blackwood Town Centre Management Group meeting.

Regarding the Blackwood toilets situation Councillor Zoe Hammond had referred to the Clerks correspondence with One Voice Wales regarding proper consultation as per our Charter Agreement, but the Monitoring Officer was unable to add anything further to his original response, and in fact left the meeting.

After much discussion, when officers present made it clear they would welcome any interest from Town Council in running the public toilets, it was agreed that the BTCMG would write to Town Council regarding this matter.

The update on our Bi-Centenary plans had been well received, and officers present had offered to assist wherever possible.

Councillor Hammond reported that we had a new PCSO for the town, namely Ceri Vaughan, who is aiming to pilot a Safe Place Scheme, working closely with local autism groups to assess their additional needs. A safe place helps vulnerable people if they feel scared or at risk while they are out and about in the community and need support right away. Councillor Gerwyn James welcomed this initiative and all members were very supportive, and would await progress with interest.

She also informed members that Easter Eggs donations were being collected at Studio 54, which would then be distributed to any children in hospital.

16. *Date of Annual General Meeting*

It was *confirmed* that the Annual General Meeting of Town Council will be held on Monday 13th.
May 2019