

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 15TH. AUGUST 2016.

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

Prior to the start of the meeting, Past Mayor Councillor Noel Turner handed over cheques totalling £1,315 to his nominated charity CLAPA – Cleft Lip and Palate Association. Representatives of the Charity thanked the Mayor for his support and stated an amount like this will make a great difference to a small charity like theirs.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Cook, L Thomas, G Hale, M Gwynne & R Moore.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. Policing Matters

The Clerk reported that he had received apologies from both Inspector Jason White (holidays) & Sergeant Anthony Watkins(other commitments)

4. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor announced that he had attended the 100th. birthday celebrations of Mrs Eva Bram at Gilwern House, and had had an enjoyable couple of hours.

The Clerk reported that he had ordered flowers for the Mayor to present on the day, and whilst strictly out of our area, was conscious that as part of the schools history project for the Literature Festival, organisers were looking for individuals who might be interviewed by children.

The Clerk's actions were supported by members.

The Mayor also reported that he had raised £161 for his Charity at a Social Evening held at the Moose Hall, Blackwood and thanked those who had supported the evening.

5. Correspondence

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

Caerphilly C.B.C. Offer for Borough Officers to address Town Council on Well Being of Future Generations Act 2015 at October meeting - workshop session approx 1 hour
It was **agreed** the Clerk make the necessary arrangements

Notification of The Caerphilly You Want workshops being held across the borough to give residents, organisations & groups a chance to say what makes the biggest difference to their Wellbeing and what is good and bad about the area.

Mid Valleys West being held at Siloh Christian Centre in Ystrad Mynach on Thursday 25th. August (10.00am – 1.00pm.) & Lower Islwyn at Coleg Gwent Crosskeys Campus on Tuesday 20th.September (6.00pm- 8.00pm)

Booking required – Workshop packs are available for groups to use and return directly

Aneurin Bevan UHB Request to attend Town Council meeting to introduce the work of the Health Board Engagement team and talk about local NHS services – approx 15 minutes
It was **agreed** the Clerk make arrangements for attendance at the November or December meeting

One Voice Wales Letter from newly appointed Chair of Rhondda Cynon Taff/ Merthyr / Caerphilly Area Committee (Cllr. Brian Hancock) encouraging attendance at meetings and notifying of October meeting on Wednesday October 12th. 7.00pm. at Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen Offices

Conference/ Exhibition & AGM on Saturday 1st. October at Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, Registration from 9.30am for 10.15am. start– Bookings by 2nd September

It was **agreed** the Clerk make the necessary booking for Councillor Jim Criddle to represent Council

Police & Crime Comm. Invitation to attend an event for all Community & Town Councils in Caerphilly being held at 6.15pm on 6th. September at Ty Penallta, Caerphilly. Three places available when the Commissioner will outline his strategic direction for the force and provide an opportunity for Councillors to comment on his proposed police & crime priorities

Councillors W Baber, J Weeks, Z Hammond & C Erasmus indicated their interest in attending, and it was **agreed** the Clerk try to get an additional place

Disability Advice Project Request to advertise services available to Carers and those with Work- limiting Conditions

Blackwood Musical Theatre Society Letter of thanks for Town Council's continued support

6. *Schedule of Payments*

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

		£. p
Blackwood Little Theatre	Grant	1,000.00
John Hold	July Salary + Reimbursements	836.34
Playworks	July Tax/ N.I.	484.70
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Sponsorship Beach Party + Room Hire	892.75
Gibbon Equip Hire	Carnival – Equipment hire	78.00
CLAPA	Mayor's Charity	1,185.00
W Baber	Mayors Allowance	400.00
Poppy Appeal	British Legion Hosting at carnival	100.00

7. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 4th. July 2016*

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

8. *Matters Arising*

Item 11 Councillor J Criddle voiced his disappointment that the Town Council's grant of £1,000 had not been acknowledged in the recent press coverage.

The Clerk agreed with the Councillors sentiments but did confirm that the financial support had been greatly appreciated and acknowledged at the recent Vicar of Dibley production he and the Mayor had attended.

9. *To Receive the Minutes of the Events Committee Meeting held on 12th. July 2016 – Carnival De-brief*

Councillor Zoe Hammond, Chair of the Committee presented the minutes, and it was **resolved** they be received

10. To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 16th. July 2016

Councillor Jim Criddle, Chair of the Committee presented the minutes, and it was ***resolved*** they be received.

The recommendation that an interest free loan of £10,000 be made to Blackwood Little Theatre was the next item on the agenda.

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

	£
St. Margaret's Church	150
KLA Dance Institute	250
Marie Curie Hospice	100
Blackwood Town Football Club	100
Homestart Caerphilly Borough	250
Valleys Eisteddfod	250

It had been agreed the following applications be deferred to Town Council for decision –

St. Margaret's Church
Libanus Lifestyle Centre

Each was discussed in some detail, with Councillor Margaret Veater MBE declaring an interest as a Committee member of the Libanus Lifestyle Centre, and took no part in the discussion or decision making.

It was then ***unanimously agreed*** that £250 be awarded to both St. Margaret's Church & Libanus Lifestyle Centre

11. To Discuss the proposed Interest Free Loan to Blackwood Little Theatre

The Clerk reported that he had received a copy of a quote for heating system replacement in the sum of £9,100 and had been informed others had been requested. Councillor Farina-Childs confirmed he had forwarded detail of other contractors that might be able to assist in heating and other necessary building renovation works.

The Clerk also reported that he had sought advice from One Voice Wales who confirmed such a transaction was within its powers, and had also researched how same should be recorded in the Council's Accounts. Furthermore, he had contacted Caerphilly C.B.C. who were forwarding a basic loan agreement, similar to those used by C.C.B.C. in the past. He reiterated that sufficient balances were available, and noted that given current interest rates, there would be very little financial cost to the authority in loaning £10,000 over either 2 or 3 years.

After some further discussion it was ***unanimously agreed*** to make an interest free loan of £10,000 to Blackwood Little Theatre, over a maximum of 3 years, and that the Clerk agree repayment details with B.L.T. and arrange for Agreement document to be drafted.

12. To Receive the Minutes of the One Voice Wales RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly Area Committee Meetings held on 13th. July 2015 (A.G.M.) & 20th. April 2016

It was *resolved* the minutes be received

13. Notice of Motions to be discussed at One Voice Wales AGM on 1st. October 2016

The Clerk apologised to members that he had omitted to include the Notice of Motions for the One Voice Wales AGM in with his reports.

It was *agreed* that plenary powers be given to Councillors W Baber & J Criddle to peruse the said notices of motions and decide how Councillor J Criddle will vote at the AGM.

14. Budget Monitoring Report – Period 4 – to 31st. July 2016

The Clerk presented his report for the period to 31st. July 2016 , which identified anticipated savings of £2,330, the majority, some £2,000 in respect of the Carnival, which was this year combined with the Beach Party weekend.

Members thanked the Clerk for his report which was *accepted*.

15. Annual Report for Year Ended 31st. March 2016 – Requested Amendment

The Clerk reported that BDO the new Auditors had requested certain amendments to the Annual Return for 2016 which excludes VAT from boxes 3 & 6, albeit in the past no previous Auditor had identified this as an issue.

Furthermore, they had identified other issues that needed attention, albeit not considered worthy of qualifying the certificate or report –

No engagement letter with the internal auditor

Internal auditor appointment

Budget

The Clerk apologised for not being able to produce an engagement letter, and that there was no formal minute confirming the appointment of the internal auditor, again never queried by previous auditors over the eight years the internal auditor has been used.

Furthermore, it was considered that although the precept was set by the due date and the council did prepare a budget to support this, the budget document did not take into consideration the level of reserves held by the Council.

Several members commented that at each budget setting process, the Clerk always identified the level of balances held by the Council, and felt this comment somewhat unwarranted.

After some discussion, where members felt the new Auditors were out to make an impression, it was *agreed* the Annual Return be amended as requested, with box 3 amended to show £2,328 & £1,792 (March 2015 & March 2016 respectively) and box 6 to show £26,346 & £45,072 (March 2015 & March 2016 respectively) and signed by the Mayor.

16. Verbal Report on Velvet Coalmine Children's Literature Festival

The Clerk, together with Councillors Criddle & Hammond updated members on plans for the Festival being held September 12th – 16th.

The Clerk reminded members of their invitation to the opening night, and said he hoped each would make every effort to attend.

He reported that he had invited the same dignitaries as to the Launch Evening (M.P., A.M.'s, Police Commissioner, Mayor, Leader and members of Caerphilly C.B.C.) together with Lord Lieutenant of Gwent.

Given the tie in with Senghenydd, invitations were also to be forwarded to Aber Valley Community Council members and given the Launch of Never Such Innocence, invitations to local British Legion Branches, Army Cadets and similar organisations.

Pontllanfraith & Blackwood Rotary Club members would also be invited.

Funding partners, sponsors etc. would be invited directly by Velvet Coalmine Directors.

Given the much higher profile of the event than originally anticipated, it is now anticipated the Opening Night will be held at the Methodist Church, Blackwood and Mynyddislwyn Male Choir had also agreed to attend.

Councillor Criddle gave an update on the History events he was arranging and reported that Rhiannon Phillips from Gwent Archives had agreed to lead the sessions.

Councillor Hammond reported that Peter Karrie's Younger Generation would be performing a 100 Voices of Roald Dahl on the Tuesday evening (13th. September) at the Methodist Church ,with the possibility of a further performance later in the week.

17. To Consider Nominations for Civic Awards Evening to be held on Wednesday 9th. November 2016

The Clerk reminded members of the Civic Awards Night to be held on Wednesday 9th. November, and requested nominations by the next meeting – 3rd. October so they might be considered and decisions made to ensure all is in place for the evening.

There was also a request that the Awards to the Winners of the Velvet Coalmine Literature Festival be included on the evening, and this was **unanimously supported**, as it was agreed this would give the evening a higher profile.

It was **agreed** nominations be discussed at the next meeting.

18. Christmas Celebrations – Light Switch On & Lantern Parade /Carol Concert

Councillor Zoe Hammond reported on a meeting with Sarah Kate Ackerman of Caerphilly C.B.C. Events team where the possibility had been broached, after the successful joint working of the Beach Party Weekend/Carnival, of us working together again on the Christmas Market Weekend and consider the Switch – On of the Christmas Lights on Saturday 3rd. December.

If this was accepted, it was proposed the Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert could be held on the following Thursday 8th. December, with the possibility of workshops throughout Saturday for children to make their own lanterns, thereby further highlighting the parade.

Councillor Hammond stated it had been a wish of hers to make more of the Switch – On, and this offers the opportunity. It was hoped that space near the Old Post Office could be arranged for the Town Council to provide a stage and arrange a more comprehensive programme of entertainment throughout the day, culminating in Santa arriving on his Sleigh and the Switching On of the lights.

Councillor Farina-Childs whilst agreeing we should try to make more of the Switch – On event, had concerns given that we tried this arrangement several years ago, and due to noise generated from the rides, nobody could hear what was being said at the switching on of the lights.

It was suggested that perhaps C.C.B.C. request all rides to cease for a short period whilst Santa arrives and the lights were being switched on, and it was agreed we approach C.C.B.C. with this proposition.

The Clerk stated that his impression was that perhaps the rides were to be moved further up the High Street, with the market stalls nearer our proposed staging, thereby possibly negating some of the problem, but agreed further discussions with C.C.B.C. was a priority.

It was **agreed** to hold further discussions with Caerphilly C.B.C. and also to the Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert being held on Thursday 8th December.

19. Planning Applications

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

Councillor J Criddle, Chair of Planning proposed he make enquiries in respect of 16/0453/ FULL to erect a new dwelling with associated access at Rosebank Cottage, Brookside Bungalows, Cwmelli, with planning officers, but that there appeared to be no issues regarding the other applications. This was **agreed**.

20. Reports

Councillor D Davies asked the Clerk whether any progress had been made in respect of additional Christmas figurines for lamp posts in the High Street.

The Clerk responded that contact had been made to identify possibly eight additional locations, and a request had been made to Blacheres for a quotation for said figurines, and discussions regarding additional costs to provide energy to these lamp posts.

It was **agreed** that if costs were similar to last year, an order be placed to ensure delivery by Christmas