

**MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON 9TH MAY 2016.**

Present : Councillor N Turner (Mayor)
Councillor W Baber (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, J Criddle, G Hale, M Veater MBE, J Weeks, J Edwards

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors C Erasmus, P Cook, M Harris, M Gwynne, Z Hammond & L Thomas

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. Policing Matters

Inspector Jason White was welcomed to the meeting. He informed members there had been staffing shortages, but that the new neighbourhood sergeant Tony Watkins would be starting on 23rd May, and other officers policing the Blackwood area would be Adam Laing, Andy Bruckner & Kevin Donovan. The Inspector gave a comprehensive report on policing matters in the town, a copy of which is attached and forms part of the minutes.

Included in his report was an item relating to Anti Social Behaviour by Matthew Davies, at which point Councillor D Davies declared an interest, as Matthew's father, and left the meeting.

After giving his report, he invited questions from members.

Councillor A Farina-Childs queried whether the police had received many complaints in respect of problems occurring at the Showfield with young drivers congregating in the car park and causing nuisance.

The Inspector responded by stating he was aware of a few issues, but that they had not seemed to constitute a major problem to neighbours in the area.

He was then questioned regarding the closure of Ystrad Mynach police cells, and he confirmed this was correct, and that in future prisoners would be taken to Newport, where they would stay until charged.

The Inspector was thanked for his attendance, and he promptly left the meeting to attend another meeting in Markham.

4. To Elect a Mayor

It was **resolved** that Councillor William (Bill) Baber be elected as Mayor. He then took the Chair and thanked fellow members for the honour they had bestowed upon him and stated he would do the best he possibly could for the people of Blackwood.

He then announced that his nominated Charity would be The Poppy Appeal.

5. To Elect a Deputy Mayor

It was **resolved** that Councillor Jan Weeks be elected Deputy Mayor.

6. To Nominate Members to the following –

(a) Policy & Finance Committee

It was **resolved** the following members be nominated – Councillors J Criddle, L Thomas, D Davies, A Farina-Childs, N Turner, P Cook & G Hale.

Councillor J Criddle was elected as Chair of the Committee and Councillor A Farina-Childs as Vice Chair.

(b) Planning & Licensing Committee

It was **resolved** the following members be nominated - Councillors J Criddle, A Farina-Childs, D Davies, G Hale & J Edwards

Councillor J Criddle was elected as Chair of the Committee and Councillor A Farina-Childs as Vice Chair.

(c) Environment Committee

It was **resolved** the following members be nominated – Councillors A Farina-Childs, D Davies, , Z Hammond, C Erasmus, J Criddle, M Veater MBE & G Hale.

Councillor A Farina-Childs was elected Chair of the Committee and Councillor Z Hammond as Vice Chair.

(d) Newsletter/ Web Page Committee

It was **resolved** the following members be nominated – Councillors A Farina-Childs, L Thomas, J Criddle & G Hale.

Councillor A Farina-Childs was elected Chair of the Committee and Councillor LThomas as Vice Chair

(e) Twinning Committee

It was **resolved** the following members be nominated – Councillors J Criddle, D Davies & M Veater MBE.

Councillor J Criddle was elected Chair of the Committee and Councillor D Davies as Vice Chair.

(f) Events Committee

This Committee is open to all members of the Council.
Councillor Z Hammond was elected Chair of the Committee and Councillor C Erasmus as Vice Chair.

7. To Nominate Councillors to the following -

(a) Town & Community Council Joint Liaison Committee

It was ***resolved*** Councillors J Criddle and D Davies be nominated.

(b) Caerphilly C.B.C. Community Council Liaison Sub Committee

It was ***resolved*** Councillor J Criddle be nominated with Councillor D Davies his deputy.

(c) Blackwood Town Centre Management Group/Blackwood Retail Partnership

It was ***resolved*** Councillors Z Hammond and C Erasmus be nominated.

(d) Mid Valleys East Steering Group

It was ***resolved*** that Councillor N Turner be nominated with Councillor J Criddle his deputy.

(e) One Voice Wales Area Committee & Larger Councils Committee

It was ***resolved*** Councillor J Criddle be nominated for both Committees

(f) Blackwood Town Centre Arts Panel

It was ***resolved*** Councillor C Erasmus be nominated with Councillor M Veater MBE her deputy.

(g) Plas Mawr Community Centre Committee

It was ***resolved*** Councillor Z Hammond be nominated.

8. *Outgoing Mayoral Report*

Councillor N Turner reported that he had enjoyed a fabulous year in office, and thanked members for their support throughout the year.

He also placed on record his thanks to his wife Pauline and the Clerk for ensuring that he had attended the various functions throughout his year on time.

He wished the new Mayor a successful and enjoyable year in office.

Members congratulated Councillor Turner on an excellent job representing the town throughout the past year.

9. *Correspondence*

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

In respect of the Model Financial Regulations, it was agreed that when the revised copy is received it be discussed by Policy & Finance Committee and then reported to Council.

In respect of the Pay Policy Document it was agreed same be posted on the Town Council Website.

Members discussed the approach for assistance towards the Welsh International Documentary Film Festival (possibly to help finance large outdoor screens), but agreed official approaches should have been made much sooner. Furthermore, members were of the opinion that this seemed a very specialised niche market event, and wondered how Blackwood people would receive any significant benefit.

It was agreed to wait to see if this becomes an ongoing annual event.

Regarding the request for consideration of funding to ensure locking of gates at the Showfield, several members queried whether this was as much of a problem as reported, as the Inspector had reported earlier that they had not received many complaints from residents, and that after canvassing residents in the area there was no understanding of this being a major problem.

It was *resolved* that no consideration be given towards funding.

Some members did, however, highlight problems regarding the speed some drivers approached and drove around the mini roundabout outside the gates to the Showfield.

10. *Schedule of Payments*

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

		£. p
John Hold	April salary & reimbursements	785.52
Playworks	April Tax/N.I.	484.70
K & R Print	Carnival application forms	30.00
SWALEC	Electricity Charges – Xmas Lighting (incl. VAT)	168.69

11. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 4th. April 2016*

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

12. Matters Arising

Item 8 - Matters Arising

The Clerk reported that no one had requested an election, and that he had received one expression of interest in respect of Co-option for the Blackwood North Ward from Mr Roger Moore, 3 Rock Villas, Argoed . After some discussion it was ***agreed*** to invite Mr Moore to the June meeting for interview.

The Clerk reported that the plaque had been repaired/repainted at a cost of £60 and that he had returned to the occupants of 242 Blackwood Road who were delighted with the outcome. Later in the summer it is planned that the Mayor unveil the plaque once replaced on the boundary wall.

Councillor D Davies reported that unfortunately the planned defibrillator for the Moose Hall would not now be going ahead, due to costs.

Item 9 - Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee

Councillor A Farina-Childs placed on record the thanks of Blackwood Comprehensive School for the Town Council's generous donation of £1,500 in support of the WRFU Coaching Scheme at the school.

Item 10 - Minutes of Special Planning & Licensing Committee

Councillor J Criddle informed members that the Planning Inspector had allowed the Appeal on Housing development on the Cwmgelli Farm Site.

Members expressed their disappointment at the decision

Item 13 - Velvet Coalmine Children's Literature Launch

Councillor A Farina-Childs stated that the Launch had been very successful with very positive feedback and good press coverage. He placed on record his thanks to Councillor J Criddle and the Clerk for driving this important project forward.

13. To Receive the Minutes of the Events Committee Meeting held on 13th. April 2016

It was ***resolved*** the minutes be received

14. Welsh Government Amended Model of Conduct for Local Government

The Clerk apologised that due to problems with the printer, he had been unable to print copies for members attention and deliberation.

It was ***agreed*** the matter be deferred until the next meeting.

15. Financial Accounts for Year Ended 31st. March 2016

The Clerk presented the Accounts for the year ended 31st. March 2016, and reported that figures showed an underspend of approx. £3,500 when compared to figures quoted at budget setting. The majority of the saving was in respect of the newsletter which was not produced (£1,000), grants to voluntary organisations (£1,345), Christmas celebrations (£480), Office furniture (£200), administrative expenses (£490)

He explained that this resulted in a sum of £11,440 being earmarked towards the Christmas Lighting Project.

The Annual Return would be presented to the next meeting to meet the end of June deadline of submission to our External Auditors.

It was ***resolved*** the Annual Accounts be approved

16. Review of Internal Controls

Members reviewed the current practice regarding internal controls, namely –

Schedule of payments made/due to each meeting highlighting the Payee/ Reason for Payment/ Amount

All cheques still require signature of Clerk, together with two other signatures (currently Councillors A Farina-Childs & J Criddle)

Meetings of Policy & Finance Committee throughout the year

Budget Monitoring Reports to Town Council three time a year – comparing spend to budget together with bank reconciliation and balance sheet

Internal Auditor audits Accounts during May/ early June in readiness for completion of Annual Return to be forwarded to External Auditors by end June/ early July

It was unanimously ***agreed*** the current practice is considered adequate for Town Council

17. Review of Risk Management

Members reviewed the current level of Risk Management –

It was considered the misappropriation of funds by the Clerk (as the only employee) is an obvious risk, but that the Internal Controls reviewed earlier would greatly negate that risk

Little of the rest of the work/responsibilities of the Town Council, other than the organisation of Events was considered to carry much of a risk

With regards the Events, regular meetings of the Events Committee highlighted any risk area.

In respect of the Carnival, Town Council are required to submit separate risk assessments in respect of the Carnival Parade and the Activities on Site each year to Caerphilly County Borough Council. Furthermore, the Clerk and members of the Events Committee are required to attend the ESAG Events Organisers Forum to discuss proposals with officers of the Council, Emergency Services and other interested parties prior to the Event.

Adequacy of Insurance cover, which was discussed at previous meeting.

It was unanimously *agreed*, given the work/responsibilities of Town Council, risk assessment is considered adequate

18. Planning Applications

Councillor J Criddle (Chair of Planning) presented the report on Planning applications received since the last meeting, and reported that other than checking with CCBC planning officers regarding 16/0288/FULL – Conversion of garage to study and erection of single storey porch at 17 Harlech Close, Blackwood, there were no issues to be raised.

19. Reports

The Clerk gave a brief report on the Launch Night at the Institute on 29th. April and thanked those members that had been able to attend.

As reported earlier the evening was very successful with close on 100 people attending, including Chris Evans M.P., the Mayor and Leader of Caerphilly C.B.C., together with 3 Cabinet Members, our own Mayor and several town councillors, head teachers and representatives from local schools, representatives from local Rotary Clubs, the Freeman of the City of London in Islwyn Association and local Writers Squad based at the Institute.

Contributions from Chris Evans M.P., Festival Directors Estelle Wilkinson & Iain Richards together with some readings from original poems/stories from Claire e Potter and youngsters Kaylee Beth Murphy, Naimh Esau & Holly Williams from the Writers Squads were all very well received, and there was a genuine enthusiasm about the forthcoming Children's Literature Festival that all present agreed we should build upon.