MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL HELD BY REMOTE ACCESS ON MONDAY 19TH OCTOBER 2020

Present: Councillor G James (Mayor)

Councillors R Mills, Z Hammond, A Farina-Childs, D Davies, J Edwards, D Jones, A Davies

& M Gwynne

The Clerk reported that the meeting was being held on a *remote basis* in accordance with the provisions of The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

The Mayor welcomed members to the meeting and thanked all for their attendance, whilst thanking Councillor R Mills for hosting this meeting from his Zoom Account

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors C Erasmus, A Short & R Weeks. Late apologies were received from Councillors P Cook & T Evans

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor reported that for obvious reasons he had little to report regarding visits since the last meeting, but that he had represented Town Council at the 75th Anniversary Service of VJ Day at Blackwood War Memorial on 15th. August and also laid a wreath.

4. County Borough Report

Councillor A Farina-Childs reported briefly on the following –

Free car parking in Blackwood – he informed members that Plaid Cymru & Independent councillors have called on the Borough to extend the free parking through to the first six months of next year throughout the borough.

Members *unanimously agreed* to support this request, albeit the motion has been delayed until the outcome of the cross party task and finish group on car parking charges complete their review

Return of night time street lighting – albeit the request had gained significant local support there was no change to the current position

Proposed new play area adjacent to Blackwood Road to accommodate removal of existing play area at the Sir Harold Finch Park to allow the development to proceed

5. Correspondence

The Clerk reported that he had been forwarding important correspondence to members throughout the pandemic, and would continue to do so, but also now include same in reports to future remote meetings.

Members thanked the Clerk for continuing to keep them informed throughout the past 6 months.

6. Schedule of Payments

The Clerk presented his report on payments made/to be made since the last meeting on 2nd. March 2020, and albeit members had been informed monthly of these payments, and agreement received formal approval was required –

		£. p
Blackwood R.F.C.	Financial Assistance – Flooding	1,000.00*
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Recharge Carnival/ Beach Party	10,509.44*
D.H. Andrews	Bi-Centenary Banners	108.00
John Hold	March Salary + reimbursements	1,011.80*
Playworks	March Tax /N.I.	374.19
C A Hold	Admin Assistance (Oct – March)	324.30
One Voice Wales	Membership fee 2020/21	1,225.00*
Zurich Insurance	Insurance Renewal 2020/21	1,318.05*
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Website Maint. /Civic Awards Evening/ Room Hire/ Printing	1,185.85 *
Aneurin Bevan UHB		1,000.00 *
British Stroke Assoc.		250.00 *
John Hold	April Salary + reimbursements	941.00
Playworks	Tax/N.I. April	285.99
John Hold	May Salary + reimbursements	940.80
Playworks	Tax/N.I. May	286.19
Blackwood Primary S	•	100.00
J S Lee	Floral Provisions - error not forwarded last year	482.40
John Hold	June Salary/Reimbursements	941.00
Playworks	June Tax/NI	285.99
Blackwood Town Cri		250.00
Beatrice Webb Home		250.00
Bowel Cancer U.K.	" "	100.00
Boverton Nurseries	Provision of Hanging Baskets	1,307.40*
John Hold	July Salary/Reimbursements	940.80
Playworks	July Tax/NI	286.19
	Watering of Hanging Baskets May to July	2,376.00*
	Electricity charges – Christmas lighting	238.31
John Hold	August Salary/reimbursements	941.00
John Hold	September Salary/reimbursements	970.80
HMRC	Tax/N.I. Aug	280.99
HMRC	Tax/N.I. September	281.19
J S Lee	Hanging Baskets	1,627.20*
Playworks	Admin Fees - Aug/Sept	40.00

Per our internal controls the payments in excess of £1,000 were referred to Councillors A Short, A Farina-Childs & P Cook and the required approval was received prior to payments being made.

All payments were unanimously agreed

7. Other Issues requiring Formal Agreement

The Clerk presented his report on various issues previously reported to members via e mail, and with the majority of members agreeing had been acted upon, but now requiring formal retrospective agreement by Town Council

Financial Assistance

To *formerly agree* to Blackwood Little Theatre & Studio 54 being offered the opportunity to delay payment of their monthly instalments of their interest free loans given that both are currently under lockdown. (following the sort of mortgage holiday initiative introduced). While BLT are likely to continue making payments, Studio 54 are likely to take advantage of the offer (£100 per month)

To *formerly agree* on the Applications received, albeit reported and agreed by majority of members –

	£. p
Aneurin Bevan UHB	1,000.00
British Stroke Assoc.	250.00
Blackwood Primary School School Hub VE Day Celebrations	100.00
Blackwood Town Cricket Club	250.00
Beatrice Webb Residential Home	250.00
Bowel Cancer UK	100.00

Applications were also received from Friends of Cefn Fforest Institute, Fleur de Lys Institute & Libanus Lifestyle Centre.

However, given the current uncertainty surrounding Friends of Cefn Fforest Institute and Fleur de Lys Institute following up on Welsh Church Fund, these applications have been deferred for the time being. Having requested financial information from Libanus Lifestyle Centre, they have decided to leave things at present

Members formally agreed the actions taken

Members were informed that Friends of Cefn Fforest Institute had now received Charitable status.

The Clerk reminded members that when requesting their support for Aneurin Bevan UHB Covid 19 donation, a few had queried that perhaps we should look to support people more directly within the town, and given these obvious concerns regarding the welfare of the most vulnerable in our area and the current dire situations in residential care homes, he had made contact with Beatrice Webb , Highfields Nursing Home, Cefn Glas & Cwmgelli Lodge.

On behalf of Town Council he had thanked each in turn for the amazing work they are doing in looking after their residents in these unprecedented times and whist presuming they have everything they required from Caerphilly C.B.C. and Aneurin Bevan UHB at this time, asked that if they felt Town Council might in any small way be able to enhance the lives of their residents and/or carers to please make contact. Beatrice Webb was the only home that responded, and ultimately a £250 donation was agreed.

Contact had also been made with the local food bank, who at the time were both financially and volunteer wise in a good position, but again were asked to make contact if they felt Town Council could assist.

After some discussion, and in recognition of the difficulties local groups and organisations will have been experiencing during this ongoing pandemic, in not being able to meet as they normally would, Councillor D Jones suggested Town Council try to encourage them to contact us to see if we may be able to assist, being conscious that many of these groups are a lifeline to the most vulnerable in our community, and not being able to meet increases the sense of isolation and loneliness.

Some groups have been keeping in touch with each other remotely via various social media platforms, and perhaps a relatively small grant could assist others to do the same.

It was *agreed* to invite applications by including on our web and facebook pages, and it was also *agreed* that since the current COVID Pandemic has totally devastated the Council's events programme throughout the summer and over the forthcoming Christmas period we invite residents to forward suggestions /ideas as to how this might best be invested to benefit the town.

Furthermore it was *agreed* that Town Council consider setting up a working group, to deliberate on any suggestions/ideas received, together with any identified by members, and to set ourselves SMART objectives covering both the young and old in our community as to our priorities for the future. This would be an agenda item for the next meeting.

Boundary Changes

To formerly agree Town Council's formal objection to the following streets - Addison St, Bevan Crescent, Greenwood Road, Twynyffald Road, Ty Isha Terrace, Wheatley Place, School Way, Bloomfield Road from 35 to 115 and Cefn Road from 35 to 121, and the whole of Grove Park Estate- currently in the Blackwood Ward for Caerphilly Borough Council elections, being transferred into the Cefn Forest Ward. (whilst acknowledging Town Council is not affected)

Members unanimously agreed the actions taken

Planned Events

To formally agree that in the interests of both the public and Town Council we take a decision to postpone/cancel the Civic Awards Evening for 2020.

Similarly, the Social Distancing restrictions mean our Christmas Events – Christmas Lights Switch On/Blackwood Christmas Market/ Lantern Parade & Carol Concert are also cancelled. The very nature of these events means inevitable crowds, whether at the Market or indoors for the Carol Concert, and social distancing becomes an impossibility.

The switch on of the Christmas Lights will go ahead, and is arranged for Saturday 28th November and it is *also recommended* we work with Studio 54 to look to erect a Christmas tree in their ground near the main road, as an additional attraction over the festive period.

The Clerk updated members on a meeting he had held with Jenna Curtis (Studio 54). The proposal is for the provision of a 25ft. tree, fully decorated with lights, and at an estimated cost of £750. He reminded members that we had tried for many years to provide a tree at the northern end of town. Councillor Z Hammond informed members that the Group were currently involved in 100 Days of Kindness project in and around the area. After some discussion, members *agreed* to purchase the tree and lights up to a cost of £750, and to also *formerly agree* the actions taken by the Clerk (in conjunction with Chair of Events and the Mayor) in cancelling the Christmas Events programme.

The Clerk also reported that he had contacted Elsbury's to ask them if they could give some advice on the feasibility of lighting the conifer at the southern end of town adjacent to Absolutely Fabulous over the Christmas period, and it was *agreed* the Clerk agenda same for the next meeting.

CCTV Review

To formally agree that there is a continued need for surveillance cameras in town.

They have proved time and again to be most worthwhile and with the unfortunate minority of individuals still intent on anti social behaviour are a vital link (with the police) in helping to keep our community protected.

It was *unanimously agreed* to support the Clerks letter of support in favour of continued use of CCTV in town.

Blackwood in Bloom

To formerly agree the following as this years winners –

13 Tree Tops Avenue24 St. Tudors View62 Cefn Road18 Thornecombe Road8 Twynyffald58 Beaumaris Way7 Greenwood Road52 Bloomfield Road

8 Derwen Close (Newcomer Award) 35a Bloomfield Road (Newcomer Award)

Whilst there can be no formal Civic Awards Evening at present, winners will be notified of their success and that certificates and prizes will be presented as soon as it is safe to do so.

The remaining unsuccessful nominations, namely –

10 Sunnybank Road6 Tree Tops Avenue60 Cefn Road4 Derwen Close49 Twynyffald13 Caernarvon Place8 Manorbier Close14 Manorbier Close1 Dolwyddelan3 Dolwyddelan38 Montclair Avenue7 Gordon Road87 Gordon Road1 St Tudors View

20 St Tudors View 14 Thornecombe Road

will be contacted and told Blackwood Town Council would like to place on record their appreciation of their sterling efforts in producing a beautiful display in their front garden this year, and hope they will continue their hard work in future years, and trust that maybe will be one of our winners in 2021.

The winners as listed were formally agreed by members

8. To Formally Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 2nd. March 2020 (previously forwarded & agreed by majority of members)

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

9. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

10. Audit of Accounts/Annual Return for Year Ended 31st. March 2020

The Clerk presented his report and reminded members that the Annual Accounts had been forwarded in early April, with copies of the completed Statement of Accounts (Page 2) as required by Audit together with completed Annual Governance Statement (Pages 3 & 4), an Explanation of Variances between 2019/20 & 2018/19, as required as part of the Audit in his Report forwarded on 10th. June 2020

Members acknowledged their responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the accounting statements, and also confirmed to the best of their knowledge and belief the accuracy of the 9 Statements on Page 3 and the additional 2 Statements on Page 4 regarding minutes being prepared and approved, and published electronically for public inspection.

The Internal Auditors report had now been received, and was attached for their information, together with copies of everything previously forwarded for ease of reference

It was *unanimously resolved* the Accounting Statement be approved and accepted. It was also *unanimously resolved* the Annual Governance Statements together with the Annual Internal Audit Report be approved and accepted.

The Clerk reported that he would arrange for the Mayors signature approving confirmation that the Accounting Statements and Annual Governance Statements had been approved by Town Council, and would also arrange for the Internal Auditors signature as required.

The Clerk also ensured members that all other supporting information requested by the External Auditors would be collated and forwarded.

The Clerk was thanked for his sound financial stewardship of Town Council, and also for his hard work over the past 6 months under very difficult and isolated conditions as the only member of staff.

11. Budget Monitoring Report for Period 4 – to 31st July 2020

The Clerk presented his Budget Monitoring Report to 31st. July 2020, which had previously been forwarded to members during August, and was attached for ease of reference

To Clerk reported that due in the main to the cancellation of the Events Programme there was effectively an additional £15,562 likely to be added to the General Reserves at the end of March, and that at the next budget setting round he would propose members consider utilising some of these additional reserves to reduce precept requirements for 2021/2022.

It was unanimously agreed the report be accepted

12. Alfresco Dining Blackwood

The Clerk presented his report, and reminded members that Town Council (via himself) and C.C.B.C. Blackwood Ward members had been invited along to the original meeting with Mark Williams, Caerphilly C.B.C. who outlined the plans for assisting businesses with additional outside space to compensate for reduced business indoors due to imposed social distancing measures. He had assured those present all businesses would be contacted to gauge their views before implementing proposals

Most town councillors contacted were in favour of the proposals, albeit some were concerned about the barriers currently in place. These were/ are a temporary measure, whilst more permanent ones were on order.

Given the shorter daylight hours and the more inclement weather we are now experiencing, CCBC have been approached to see if they would consider provision of overhead cover, and/or patio type heaters. Furthermore, all businesses have been contacted again to gauge their views on the success of the proposals. It had recently been announced that 80% grants will become available for businesses to assist in purchase of this type of this type of equipment, and further details are awaited.

Members were concerned that all such businesses be treated similarly, identifying Woodies, Plaza Café, Precinct Café & Le Café as possibly not classed as being directly on the High Street.

After some discussion members agreed many businesses were taking advantage of the scheme, and it realistically would be up to them as to whether it continued on a more permanent type footing.

13. Proposed Skateboard Park at the Show Field Blackwood

The Clerk reported that members responses to the proposal have been supportive, albeit full details are still awaited. The local community are currently being consulted, and Councillors A Farina-Childs & R Mills reported that they had both received very positive feedback, with only a few negative comments. Members raised some concerns regarding this becoming a magnet for anti social behaviour, especially given the previous problems at the Showfield.

After further discussion it was *unanimously agreed* to support the proposal especially bearing in mind that Town Council have for the past two years fighting leisure facility closures affecting our local communities.

14. Civic Awards – Nominations

Town Council agree a Covid 19 Award to recognise individuals and/or organisations who have assisted the community during the Pandemic, the following nominations have been received –

Blackwood Comprehensive School – having made some 4,000 Facemasks for the NHS and other Businesses

Sue Gallent from Cefn fforest – for being an absolute angel, each week helping to feed key workers from donations – nurses, doctors, shops, carers, families that have lost their jobs due to Covid and struggling, the list goes on (received from a resident of Atlee Road)

Members also agree to the provision of a memorial planter to recognise/commemorate Blackwood School's time as a Childcare Hub during COVID 19

Members *formally agreed* to these proposals, and the Clerk was tasked to liaise with Blackwood Primary School regarding costs of proposed planter

Nomination for Young Persons Award received in respect of -

Elly-may Smart, she is 7yrs old and she goes to Blackwood Primary School.

She is taking part in the month of miles for diabetes UK, she will be walking 2 Miles every day in the month of October to raise money for Diabetes UK.

Elly-may lost her big brother Zach, who was only 22yrs old suddenly last year in August from DKA which is a life threatening complication of type 1 Diabetes, it has really hit Elly-may hard as she was extremely close to her big brother and she has insisted in taking part in this challenge in Memory of her beloved brother.

Nomination for Civic Award received in respect of -

Angelo Carpanini, Angelos Food Store. Angelo lives in Blackwood and his shop serves both the residents of Blackwood and Cefn Fforest. The shop celebrates 40 years of trading this year and has become a lifeline to local residents especially through the recent crisis. Angelo always goes the extra mile and takes deliveries to the most vulnerable in our community. Angelo has also sponsored local sports teams giving the youth of our community the opportunity to participate in playing and enjoying sport and has also supported the Town Council by publicising events held in the Town by allowing the Town Council to utilise his shop window (Free of Charge to put posters up etc)

After some discussion, members *formally agreed* the Awards to Elly-may Smart (Young Persons Award) and Angelo Carpanini

15. Planning Applications

The Clerk reported that Planning Applications had been reported upon each month since lockdown, and were copied here for ease of reference. None have been considered contentious enough to warrant objection, albeit some observations have been forwarded

Case Ref. 20/0081/FULL

Location: 12 Parc Plas Blackwood NP12 1SJ Proposal: Erect a single storey rear extension

Case Officer: Mr M W Jones (01443 864528): jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 20/0148/FULL

Location: 49 Cefn Road Blackwood NP12 1JB

Proposal: Erect part single storey, part two storey rear extension

Case Officer: Miss E Rowley (01443 864776): rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 20/0217/RM

Location: Land At (former) 3 Isycoed Cottages Cwmgelli Blackwood

Proposal: Seek approval of the reserved matters regarding access, appearance, layout and scale of planning

consent 17/0431/OUT (Erect residential development of three units)

Case Officer: Miss E Rowley (01443 864776) rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 20/0279/FULL

Location: 4 Lon Pennant Cwmgelli Blackwood NP12 1EL

Proposal: Erect dormer side extension

Case Officer: Mr M W Jones (01443 864528 : jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 20/0306/FULL

Location: 12 Pembroke Close Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1JL

Proposal: Erect single storey extensions to the rear and side of the property Case Officer: Miss E Rowley (01443 864776) rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 20/0344/TPO

Location: 34 Rhodfa Glascoed Blackwood NP12 1GW

Proposal: Carry out crown raise on Oak tree to remove limbs and any unstable deadwood over 30mm

diameter (Tree Preservation Order 66/72/MCC)

Case Officer: Miss E Rowley (01443 864776: rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 20/0471/FULL

Location: 87 - 89 High Street Blackwood NP12 1PN FORMERLY STORE 21 adjacent to Barclays Bank & HSBC

Proposal: Redevelop existing large commercial unit into a series of smaller commercial units together with

nine new apartments over 2 storeys

Case Officer: Miss E Rowley (01443 864776: rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 20/0406/TPO

Location: 11 Y Cedrwydden Blackwood NP12 1FD

Proposal: Fell 3 No. Italian Stone Pine trees (Tree Preservation Order 66/72/MCC)

Case Officer: Mr J Cooke (01443 864347 : cookej1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 20/0541/FULL

Location: 27 Bevan Crescent Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1EW

Proposal: Erect part single storey, part two storey rear extension, front porch and associated alterations

Case Officer: Mr J Cooke (01443 864347 : cookej1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 20/0672/FULL

Location: 13 Denbigh Close Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1JH

Proposal: Replace and extend the existing hardstanding to the front/side of the property

Case Officer: Mr M W Jones (01443 864528: jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 20/0678/FULL

Location: Blackwood Cricket Club Gordon Road Blackwood NP12 1DS

Proposal: Erect ball stop fence

Case Officer: Mr M W Jones (01443 864528 : jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 20/0588/COU

Location: 184-186 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AH

Proposal: Change the use from first floor office accommodation into two self-contained 2- bedroom flats,

along with change of use from office accommodation to retail on part of the ground floor

Case Officer: Miss E Rowley (01443 864776 : rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 20/0273/TPO

Location: 33 Parc Plas Blackwood NP12 1SJ

Proposal: Reduce overhanging branches (Tree Preservation Order 66/72/MCC) Case Officer: Mr M W Jones (01443 864528 : jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 20/0601/COU

Location: Libanus Christian Community Centre Libanus Road Blackwood

Proposal: Change the use of the mezzanine floor and roof space to provide three residential units of accommodation together with erecting dormer windows, raised balconies and external staircases

Case Officer: Miss E Rowley (01443 864776 : rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 20/0693/FULL

Location: 13 Pembroke Close Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1JL

Proposal: Erect two storey side and rear extension with single storey rear extension

Case Officer: Mr M W Jones (01443 864528: jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 20/0659/COU

Location: New Mode 195 - 197 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AA

Proposal: Change the use from commercial office and storage spaces to 6 new flats (existing shops to

remain)

Case Officer: Miss E Rowley (01443 864776 : rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 20/0788/FULL

Location: 7 Gordon Road Blackwood NP12 1DW

Proposal: Demolish garage and erect two storey extension to rear and side of dwelling

Case Officer: Mr M W Jones (01443 864528 : jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Councillor Z Hammond stated that we were seeing an increase in change of use applications on the High Street, and whilst not wanting to object to the proposals would request the Borough pay particular attention to the work on these developments and the potential disruption on the High Street.

Members *agreed* the report

16. Reports

The Mayor reported that an additional 20 lamp post poppies had been purchased, at a cost of £60 to replace some existing ones that had become damaged, and that it was planned, that after a Covid risk assessment had been undertaken, the poppies would be erected on Thursday evening with the assistance of Councillors A Farina-Childs & R Mills.

Councillor R Mills informed members that Councillor A Short was planning to tidy up the Memorial Garden over the next week.

The Clerk informed the meeting that Councillor C Erasmus had attended a remote meeting of the One Voice Wales Committee and wished to two points in particular –

• One Voice Wales remote training events - possibility of 2 free training courses on a variety of topics including Code of Conduct, Asset Transfers etc.

The Clerk suggested this should be placed on Agenda for next meeting, and this was *agreed* by members

• A request that any positive/ interesting things that members and or Town Council have done, especially during recent months, be reported to Shan Bowden for the OVW e bulletin – pictures and or comments

The issue of the Annual General Meeting was raised, and the Clerk reported that special dispensation had been given for the Clerk as the Responsible Officer to call the AGM anytime during 2020. Given we have now successfully held our first remote meeting he had anticipating calling the AGM late November/ early December, and would be recommending to members that existing representation on Town Council Committees and various Outside Committees/Groups remain until the 2021 Annual General Meeting.

It was *agreed* that the date of the 2020 AGM be discussed at the next remote meeting, which was provisionally agreed for Monday November 9th. at 6.00pm