

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL HELD  
REMOTELY ON 12<sup>TH</sup>. JANUARY 2021**

**Present:** Councillor G James ( Mayor )  
Councillor R Mills ( Deputy Mayor )  
Councillors D Davies, J Edwards, A Davies, C Erasmus, A Farina-Childs, D Jones, P Cook &  
M Gwynne

**1. To Receive Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Z Hammond & A Short  
Late apologies received from Councillors T Evans & N Turner

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

**3. Mayoral Announcements**

The Mayor reported that he had presented Angelo with his Civic Award Certificate, whilst maintaining social distancing and that the others would be presented when safe to do so.

Cllr. A Farina-Childs thanked the Mayor for organising the presentation and reported that the award currently took pride of place in his shop.

**4. County Borough Report**

Cllr. A Farina-Childs reported that the Free ASDA bus service had ended despite numerous protestations to the Company.

He also reported that several complaints had been received regarding the over flowing litter bins in and around the area. This was apparently due to only a skeleton staff being available due to self isolating due to COVID.

**5. Correspondence**

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

**Audit Wales** Notification that under the new Audit regime, Town Council will be subject to a Full Audit for 20/21, and Basic Audits for 21/22 & 22/23

Notification that they will be undertaking a survey entitled Your Town Your Future, a review on the future of Welsh Towns and seeking support for same (forwarded to members )

**One Voice Wales** Notification of RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly Remote Area Committee Meeting to be held on 13<sup>th</sup>. January ( forwarded to Council representative )

**C.C.B.C.** Notification of Council Tax Base for 2021/22 Precept purposes - £2,952.00 at Band D ( £2,955.96 for 2020/21 )

**Wales Air Ambulance** Request for Financial Assistance - Application form completed on-line together with copy of their Financial Report - Town Council has been a regular supporter of this Charity for many years

### **Correspondence regarding ASDA decision to dispense with Free Bus Service**

In respect of the request for financial assistance, members were pleased to continue to support this most worthwhile and crucial service, and it was *unanimously agreed* that £250 be awarded.

## **6. Schedule of Payments**

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

		£. p
John Hold	December Salary plus reimbursements	965.63
Playworks	Fee December	20.00
HMRC	December Tax/N.I. Contributions	291.45
P.D.S.A.	Financial Assistance	200.00
Family Fund	Financial Assistance – Mayors Charity	250.00
Gerwyn James	Mayors Allowance	400.00

## **7. To Confirm the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Town Council held remotely on 7th. December 2020**

Cllr. D Jones requested that Minute 15 be amended to include that the next Policy & Finance Committee ( to which he has been co-opted ) consider a Town Council Strategy & Vision for the Future.

*Accepting this addition, it was resolved the minutes be agreed as a true record*

## **8. Matters Arising**

The Clerk reported that he had contacted Caerphilly C.B.C. for details of the Secretary of Plas Mawr Community Centre but was still awaiting a response.

Cllr. P Cook informed the Clerk that Kay Presley served as Treasurer, and would be in a position to forward details of the Secretary.

Cllr. R Mills, as an officer of Pentwynmawr Community Centre offered to try and find the information

## **9. Vacancy on Town Council – Blackwood North Ward**

The Clerk presented his report as follows -

Following our last meeting, I sought advice from C.C.B.C. Electoral Services

Good afternoon Dave, I trust you and the family are keeping well throughout the pandemic.

You have recently received an email from Councillor Kevin Etheridge regarding a vacancy on Town Council.

The vacancy was reported to Town Council at the March meeting ( member resignation) .

We reported on our web page there was a vacancy but due to the uncertainty of meetings during the pandemic we were not progressing the filling of the vacancy at that point in time.

We had our first remote meeting in October, and this was raised at the December meeting earlier this week and agreed to agenda the vacancy at January meeting.

Some members are concerned that if we advertised the vacancy and there was no call for election, the co- option via remote meeting whilst feasible might actually put some people off putting their names forward - but wondered if delaying until we are able to physically meet in person might be illegal??

Any advice - realising these are unprecedented times - would be very much appreciated.

Take care stay safe

John

Clerk to Blackwood Town Council

John ,

In terms of giving notice of the vacancy the law is a bit vague. It says notice should be given in a ‘reasonably practicable’ time. It’s worth pointing out that the vacancy occurs (for a resignation) immediately on receipt of the letter of resignation by the appropriate person (usually Chair) and not when it’s reported to the council. It’s also the clerk who is personally responsible for issuing the notice.

You could argue that it’s not reasonably practical to advertise because of the pandemic – but my personal view would be why not advertise and then go through a longer co-option process – if for example they wanted to meet them face to face.

Does that help?

Dave

I have recently received the following from the Head of Welsh Local Government Elections Team  
Dear all,

As you are aware Wales entered level 4 Covid-19 related restrictions on Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup> of December. While these restrictions will be reviewed regularly the Minister for Housing and Local Government has been considering the implications of the current, and likely future, situation on elections. In particular the re-scheduled local government by-elections are of concern. The Minister has therefore decided that in the New Year she will bring forward new Regulations that will move the window for postponed by-elections to **1<sup>st</sup> March 2021 – 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021**. This means that the holding of by-elections in February will no longer be possible once the Regulations have come into force. As these Regulations will be made early in the New Year we ask Returning Officers and administrators to consider carefully whether it is within the public interest to issue notices of elections at the end of December as the current Regulations allow for. This change has been made in order to provide the electoral community with a longer period of time to prepare for the by-elections and also to move the dates toward the spring.

As ever the Welsh Government elections team will be happy to help with any queries, please email: [Etholiadau.elections@gov.wales](mailto:Etholiadau.elections@gov.wales)

Angharad

**Angharad C Thomas-Richards**

Pennaeth tîm Etholiadau Llywodraeth Leol / Head of Local Government Elections team

Yr is-adran Democratiaeth Llywodraeth Leol/ Local Government Democracy Division

After much discussion, regarding whether the vacancy be advertised now or at a later date, it was finally ***agreed*** the process be started over the next week or so, with the necessary Notice of Vacancy being posted on the Notice board and our web page. If an election is called to fill the vacancy, by the required ten local government electors writing to the Returning Officer, then the responsibility of when the election is called rests with her.

If, however, no such request be made, then Town Council can set it's own timetable for co-option.

#### ***10. Consider request for Christmas Lighting at Cefn Fforest Square***

Councillor A Farina-Childs who had requested this item be placed on the Agenda, had informed the Clerk that the issue had now been resolved, with the Cefn Fforest Community Centre now willing to assist.

## ***11. C.C.B.C. Car Park Task & Finish Group Report***

The Clerk reported that the review group was provided with a list of all car parks, the tariffs charged for pay and display, for which the group agreed to only consider car parks with 25 or more spaces. The group agreed to contact Town and Community Councils to inform them that the group had been established to outline the terms of reference and invite them to submit their views and attend a meeting of the group to give evidence.

The review group received a variety of responses during its consultation on car parks, our views were expressed as outlined below:

Blackwood Town Council – In 2017 the town council highlighted that 64% of annual car park income is generated by Blackwood and didn't feel that the town benefitted and mentioned that the town council has recently taken over floral displays in the summer. The town council felt that other towns were treated far better and if charges were introduced in line with Blackwood the level of charges could be reduced. Suggested short term free parking at the Bus Station Car park to assist people using the Library & Cash office and 2 hours free parking at Christmas. In 2020 the town council welcomed the free parking during the pandemic.

### ***The Report recommendations are as follows***

#### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 The Environment and Sustainability and Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committees are asked to consider the findings of the Caerphilly County Borough Council Car Parks Task and Finish Group. The scrutiny committees are asked to consider the following recommendations and make their recommendations to Cabinet.

3.2 Current hourly tariffs at pay and display highway owned car parks available for the public should be standardised across county borough for long term and short-term parking respectively it is suggested that charges are set at a current lower level.

3.3 To remove the parking charges at the 5 country parks agreed in 2014 in order to recognise the significant health benefits to residents

3.4 Caerphilly County Borough offer local businesses reduced charge parking permits for their staff to park in car parks, therefore officers to investigate most appropriate car parks where this could be offered, with the aim to reduce use of central car parks by workers and free them up for visitors/shoppers.

3.5 Where there are car parks in close proximity to schools, that are having parking issues during school drop off and pick up times, officers are given discretion to allow a free parking concession to parents/carers for a limited time and in consultation with local ward members.

3.6 Remove Sunday parking charges at Twyn Car park on Sundays – this has been an historical arrangement that is no longer required and will provide parity.

3.7 That the council not enforce car park charges on St David's day.

3.8 That Cabinet review their position on not charging at Park and Ride in view of the costs to maintain these car parks.

3.9 That consideration of charging at free car parks is deferred and reviewed at a later date once the coronavirus is no longer having an impact on people's ability to shop and socialise freely in the county borough.

3.10 That priority is given in the county wide review for consideration of zoning of residential parking areas of main towns.

3.11 That the criteria for residential parking permit areas is reviewed to offer a more flexible approach that takes into account areas outside of principal towns where customer parking to access local businesses impacts on residential areas.

3.12 That the current non-enforcement of parking charges at council owned car parks is extended after 31st December 2020 for three months and then reviewed to consider if the impact of covid-19 on town centres is ongoing at that time.

3.13 That the current approach to the use of car parks for trading and events be allowed to continue and officers are permitted to continue to use discretion in respect of applications that have community benefit.

3.14 That consideration should be given to cease locking the car parks at Thorncombe 3 and Wesley Road Blackwood during the night upon the retirement of the member of staff. To be done in consultation with local ward members. If night-time locking ends the impact should be monitored and options to install additional CCTV and/or upgrade the quality are explored if required.

3.15 All surplus income generated from parking charges to be ring fenced for maintenance and improvement of car parks, through a planned maintenance programme, including improved directional signage and lighting improvements.

3.16 That opportunities to improve existing CCTV be explored where grant funding or match funding is available.

***Following consideration of the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, and having agreed the inclusion of an additional recommendation, the Scrutiny Committee supported the following recommendations and recommended, by the majority present to Cabinet that:***

The current hourly tariffs at publicly available pay and display highway owned car parks be standardised across the county borough for long term and short-term parking respectively. It is suggested that charges are set at a current lower level.

Parking charges at the 5 country parks agreed in 2014 be removed in order to recognise the significant health benefits to residents.

Where there are car parks in close proximity to schools, that are having parking issues during school drop off and pick up times, Officers be given discretion to allow a free parking concession to parents/carers for a limited time and in consultation with local ward members.

The current approach to the use of car parks for trading and events be allowed to continue and Officers be permitted to continue to use discretion in respect of applications that have community benefit.

Opportunities to improve existing CCTV be explored where grant funding or match funding is available.

A programme to upgrade pay and display machines across the county borough be agreed and implemented

***Members noted the report***

## 12. Planning Applications

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

### **Case Ref. 20/0991/FULL**

Location: Ty Newydd House Heol Tynewydd Bedwellty Blackwood NP12 0AH )

Proposal: Erect two storey flat roof extension to rear of existing annexe

Case Officer: Anthony Pyne ☐ 01443 864523 ☐ [pynea@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:pynea@caerphilly.gov.uk)

### **Case Ref. 20/1015/FULL**

Location: 6 Kidwelly Close Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1GJ

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

Case Officer: Mike Jones ☐ 01443 864528 ☐ [jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk)

### **Case Ref. 20/1015/FULL**

Location: 6 Kidwelly Close Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1GJ

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

Case Officer: Mike Jones ( 01443 864528 : [jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk))

### **Case Ref. 20/1033/NCC**

Location: Asda Cliff Road Blackwood NP12 0NT

Proposal: Vary condition 1 (compaction) and remove condition 3 (temporary consent on delivery hours) of planning consent 19/0448/NCC (Vary condition 01 of planning consent P/02/1047 to allow unrestricted deliveries)

Case Officer: Chris Boardman ( 01443 864674 : [boardc@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:boardc@caerphilly.gov.uk))

No major concerns were raised regarding the first three applications to warrant any objections.

However, in considering the planning application by ASDA, members had numerous concerns regarding the potential impact on local residents, and it was *agreed* an objection be raised regarding the proposals

Members were mindful that the local residents already endured considerable disruption from noise of delivery throughout the current hours allowed – trolleys and reversing vehicles, but to expect much more of the same due to unrestricted hours is totally unreasonable.

Whilst understanding ASDA would try to mitigate some of the noise issues, members feel a full impact assessment of the noise levels should be carried out over a period of time to identify the actual levels that local residents would be subjected to.

Furthermore, concerns were expressed that allowing same might cause a precedent with other shops/stores in the area

## 13. Reports

There were no reports, but Cllr. Mark Gwynne took the opportunity to thank fellow members and the Clerk for the messages of condolence received on the recent death of his mother.