

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL HELD
REMOTELY ON 12TH.APRIL 2021**

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

Also present County Councillor K Etheridge & Ms Donna Box

Prior to the start of the meeting the Mayor requested Members to observe a two minute silence to commemorate the death of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors T Evans & A Short

2. Request for Leave of Absence - Councillor Noel Turner

The Clerk reported Councillor N Turner had requested leave of absence.
Councillor Turner states that he is looking forward to meeting back at the Institute, but that currently his wife Pauline is not well, and as members were aware he has relied on her for many years.
Members were fully sympathetic to the request and it was **unanimously agreed** six month leave of absence be granted

3. Declarations of Interest

Personal & Prejudicial Declarations of Interest were made by Councillor A Farina- Childs in respect of Planning Application Ref. Case Ref. 21/0236/FULL in respect of 47 Beaumaris Way, Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1DF, being father to the applicant.

Councillor D Davies declared a similar Interest on the same issue, being well known to the applicant for many years

Councillor A Farina- Childs also declared a personal interest in an item of correspondence from Mr Gareth Rogers as he was referred to in the letter as also having been affected by the anti social behaviour

4. County Borough Report

County Councillor K Etheridge updated members on the following

Proposed Skateboard Park - Caerphilly C.B.C. to undertake a further consultation exercise
(The Clerk reminded the member this item was on the Agenda)

Persimmon Homes - The Company were taking Welsh Govt. To Judicial Review regarding the refusal of Planning Permission for 300 houses. Whilst no timescale has been given, he has been advised it is unlikely to be resolved for a number of months

A.S.B. Palmer Place/ Gibbs Close Ongoing issues, where residents felt terrorised

A.S.B. Twynyffald/ Park Area Police have issued dispersal orders/notices over the past two weekends in an effort to tackle the ever increasing problems. Requests made for additional community safety and policing Coun. A Farina-Childs reported he was due to hand in a 115 signature petition to C.C.B.C. regarding same

5. *Mayoral Announcements*

Due to the ongoing restrictions, the Mayor had no announcements of visits

6. *Correspondence*

The Clerk presented his report on items of correspondence , and all were *noted* -

Adam Lang (Gwent Police) Notice that Blackwood Sectional Meeting planned for March 18th had been cancelled – awaiting revised date

Aneurin Bevan UHB Covid Updates – forwarded to members

Keep Wales Safe Various information – forwarded to members

One Voice Wales Details of Training Opportunities – forwarded to members

Membership Renewal Notification for 2021/22 at £1,264
(compared with £1,225 for last year) - forwarded to members

Caerphilly CBC Continuation of Free Car Parking in Town – following press reports that CCBC were due to reconsider the extension of free parking, the Clerk reported that he had written on behalf of Town Council (together with a letter of support from several businesses in town) urging continuation of existing scheme. Messages of thanks from Leader & Deputy for Town Council and traders for our support – Extension agreed to at least 30th. September 2021 with a decision on whether to extend beyond Christmas at that time

Covid Support for businesses – forwarded to members

Nomination Packs for By Election forwarded to leading members and details also uploaded to Council Website – Nomination papers must be returned to Returning Officer by no later than 4pm. on 8th. April

Changes to Bus Services from 28/3/21- forwarded to members

Audit Wales

Notice of Audit for financial year ended 31st. March 2021 – Annual Return to be certified by the RFO approved by the Council by 30th June 2021 and the completed and approved Annual Return and all requested information forwarded to our external auditors by 1st. September 2021 at the latest

Welsh Government

Implementation of Local Govt. & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 From 1 May, local authorities will be required to make arrangements to ensure their meetings are capable of being held remotely. In addition, changes will be made to the way in which documents are accessed and are sent. The new regime will be largely based on the temporary regime introduced by the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”).

The 2020 Regulations only apply in relation to meetings held before 1 May. As such the right of the public and the press to attend meetings will be restored from that date, although that will be subject to any continuing public health regulations.

Gareth Rogers

Copy of letter that this resident of 3 School Way, Blackwood has forwarded to Rhiannon Passmore AM & Chris Evans MP regarding the increase of Anti Social Behaviour in the area forwarded to members

In respect of the One Voice Wales Membership for 2021/2022 it was *unanimously agreed* renewal of same in the sum of £1,264

In respect of the By Election, the Clerk reported there were 3 confirmed candidates, namely George Edwards (Independent), Jane Landcastle (Plaid Cymru) & Cathrine Clark (Conservative)

The Clerk also reported on two additional items of correspondence received since his report had been produced –

Caerphilly C.B.C.

Proposed experimental traffic regulation order to allow or the provision of Parklets.

Proposed removal of existing loading bay and replace with parklet and double yellow lines outside 84 High Street, Blackwood (Square Café)

Members raised several concerns and asked the Clerk to seek clarification as regards what form the parklet takes outside the Square Cafe in Blackwood, will it be a permanent structure (dependant upon usage by cafe) and whether same might compromise the existing disabled parking bays nearby ?

R.B.L.I.

Plans to celebrate VE Day on 8th. May 2021, and offer to purchase the unique outdoor Tommy figure.

Coun. D Davies declared an Interest as a serving member of the Royal British Legion, and took no part in the discussion or decision on this matter.

The Clerk reminded members that we had tried to purchase a Tommy figure a year or so ago, but were unable to do so due to shortage of stocks, and that the Mayor had approached the Little Theatre, and they had kindly made one in wood for us. After some discussion it was agreed to purchase a Tommy in the sum of £200 .

Discussion then returned to the maintenance/ upkeep of the Remembrance Garden and the promised shared input by the British Legion that had never materialised and that Town Council via Coun. A Short had maintained the area almost single handed

7. Schedule of Payments

The Clerk presented his report on payments made/ due for payment, and all were *agreed* -

		£. P
Caerphilly CBC	Web site maintenance	200.00
Don Elsbury	Repairs to lighting cable	102.00
HMRC	Tax/ N.I. March	291.45
John Hold	March Salary plus reimbursements	995.63
Playworks	March fee	20.00
Zurich Insurance	Insurance Premium 2021/22	1,329.13
One Voice Wales	Subscription 2021/22	1,264.00

Members reported that several pieces of lighting cable had been removed to assist in the ongoing works in the High Street, and asked the Clerk to ensure we would not be invoiced for this work

8. To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 8th. March 2021

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

9. Matters Arising

The Clerk reported that he had not yet actioned Coun. T Evans request regarding his £150 allowance being set to a Charity, due to ongoing uncertainty regarding taxation of these payments

10. To Receive Minutes of the Strategy Working Group Meeting held on 29th. March 2021

It was *resolved* the minutes be received

11. Update on Proposed Blackwood Showfield Skate Park

The Clerk presented his report, which consisted of copies of his letter to CCBC as instructed at the last Town Council meeting, and the response received.

He also reported that there appears to be a concerted campaign of support from amongst the skate board community, having received some 14 messages of support for the proposals from people within the area and neighbouring communities.

He had responded to each explaining that whilst Town Council have been consulted on the scheme, we have not been happy with the exercise and have requested a more meaningful consultation be undertaken which might better stand scrutiny, and that the decision ultimately rests with Caerphilly C.B.C., whilst also forwarding all messages to the relevant officer for their attention.

Good morning Lynne, I trust you are well ?

I reported your response to my queries at our meeting on Monday evening, and have been asked to write seeking further clarification/ information.

Is the funding time sensitive as this is certainly the impression gained ?

Surely given the current pandemic restrictions, which yourself highlighted curtailed the usual consultation exercise, some leeway should be available to ensure the proposals are more widely consulted upon and all stakeholders have a proper opportunity to share their views, so that the Project Board are confident that the decision they make is the correct one for the community.

Members also queried the time line of whole process.

I believe the scheme was originally identified back in 2018, albeit Town Council were consulted for the first time in September 2020 (initially July ? but forwarded to wrong email address), and that this was then a Mini Wheels project at a different location. Were any other potential schemes considered by the Project Board at that time, after your initial consultation ? - a copy of these consultation questions would be most beneficial.

When was the Showfield scheme then identified as the preferred location, and when was the diluted consultation exercise undertaken ?

My members wished me to reiterate they are not against this project in principal or for that matter any other recreational project planned in our area, but would want to ensure a full and meaningful consultation with all stakeholders has taken place before they can reach a properly informed decision regarding any potential financial contribution.

It is for this reason we ask any decision be delayed until after the pandemic restrictions are lifted and the proper meaningful consultation is undertaken to ensure proper use of public funds can be withstand any scrutiny.

Many thanks

Take care stay safe

John Clerk to Blackwood Town Council

Apologies John

In response, the WHQS Environmental Programme is has ended with regard to new projects and we are the delivery stage – all projects must be completed by December 2021.

The timeline of the process was

The overall WHQS Environmental Programme consultation was carried out in the Blackwood ward in 2018, when “something for the older children” was first highlighted by the community but it was not until early 2020 (as a result of the Attlee Rd site being unsuitable) that the showfield as a potential venue for the skate park was investigated.

Following initial discussions with our Parks department and checking if there were any restrictive covenants on the land I emailed the local councillors for their views – this was in June 2021.

No other potential leisure facilities were considered at that stage

The consultation letters, emails, snap survey and social media consultations were carried out during September and October 2020.

This being the only method available due to the lockdown and working from home. I certainly would have employed other methods for the consultation, i.e visiting schools, pop-ups and door-knocking if we were not in lockdown. Although from previous experience these methods don't necessarily make a huge impact to the outcome.

As the Covid virus and progress toward coming out of lockdown continue to be unpredictable, and the given deadline for completion (should the project go ahead) a more comprehensive snap survey will be released in the coming weeks, ensuring a relevant and extensive distribution as possible – this will be checked by our Consultation and Public Engagement Officer who will ensure that it meets with all the protocols. This information will be forwarded to the project board. I will of course forward a copy of the survey to the Town Council.

In the meantime, we will also continue to investigate methods of mitigating any potential anti-social behaviour that might be experienced at the location, (should the project go ahead)

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me, stay safe

Lynne John

Much discussion took place regarding the concerns raised by residents with regard the apparent lack of security and lighting at the proposed skatepark and the likely proposed siting near the bowling green/ band headquarters.

County Councillor K Etheridge expressed his concern that the final decision would be taken by the Board, with no representation/input from County or Town Council members.

The Clerk expressed his concerns that the new consultation exercise might only be online again.

12. Financial Out-turn for Year Ended 31st. March 2021

The Clerk presented the Out-turn report for the year, together with a report on the variances between 2020/21 & 2019/20. (Attached)

He also reported that he proposed to present the Annual Return to the next meeting.

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

The Clerk was thanked for his work in preparing the Final Accounts so quickly after the year end.

13. Planning Applications

The Clerk reported on the following planning applications received since the last meeting -

Case Ref. 21/0236/FULL

Location: 47 Beaumaris Way Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1DF

Proposal: Erect two storey side extension

Case Officer: Jacob Cooke ☐ 01443 864347 ☐ cookej1@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 21/0243/FULL

Location: 1 Greenwood Road Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1EZ

Proposal: Erect two storey extension to rear and single storey garage extension to side of dwelling

Case Officer: Elizabeth Rowley ☐ 01443 864776 ☐ rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 21/0254/FULL

Location: 39 Lilian Road Blackwood NP12 1DN

Proposal: Erect two storey extension to rear/side of property and erect new detached garage

Case Officer: Elizabeth Rowley ☐ 01443 864776 ☐ rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk

and an additional application received since the report was prepared, namely

Case Ref. 21/0284/ADV

Location: 132 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AF

Proposal: Erect fascia with LED illuminated lettering; projecting sign with LED illuminated logo; digital media screen to be displayed within 1 metre of the shopfront

Case Officer: Mike Jones ☐ 01443 864528 ☐ jonesm5@caerphilly.gov.uk

Coun. Z Hammond, Chair of Planning stated she could see no reason to raise any objections in respect of any of the applications before us, and members agreed no objections be raised

14. Reports

Coun. R Mills reported that an individual, well known by the police for rummaging through bins at the rear of the High Street, had recently been released, but as yet there were no further incidents.

He also reported that a supposed homeless person begging outside Aldi had been referred to Cornerstone, who had identified him as a known professional beggar.

Coun. A Farina-Childs congratulated Coun. A Davies on his acceptance into the Ministry. He also took the opportunity of thanking those who had financially supported his 300,000 step challenge in aid of Maggie's Centre which had raised £770 for this worthwhile charity

Coun. D Davies reported that Gwent County Branch of Royal British Legion had been granted the Freedom of the Borough by Caerphilly C.B.C., and that some form of celebration was planned for Waunfawr Park when Covid restrictions permit

Agenda Item 12 - BUDGET MONITORING REPORT – OUT TURN TO 31/3/2021

EXPENDITURE	Orig. Budget 2020/2021 £	Out - Turn 31/03/2021 £	Variation to to Budget £
Audit Fee	450	450.00	-
Insurance	1,350	1,318.05	(31.95)
Postage/ Telephone	350	322.56	(27.44)
Printing/Room Hire/ Misc	1,500	596.77	(903.23)
Clerk/Typist Salary	15,430	14,826.92	(603.08)
Mayor's Allowance	400	400.00	-
Subs/ Courses	2,000	1,225.00	(775.00)
Office Furniture / Other	400	78.99	(321.01)
Grants to Local Orgs.	4,500	3,160.00	(1,340.00)
Sponsorship - Fireworks	1,000	-	(1,000.00)
Town Impts – Xmas Lights	2,000	813.20	(1,186.80)
Hanging Baskets	4,300	4,827.50	527.50
Rememb.Garden	500	-	(500.00)
Xmas Celebrations – Elsbury's	4,000	3,852.00	(148.00)
Parade/Concert	750	-	(750.00)
Market/Fair	2,750	-	(2,750.00)
Newsletter	1,500	-	(1,500.00)
Civic Awards Evening	1,750	250.00 (B in B)	(1,500.00)
Carnival	9,500	-	(9,500.00)
Bi- Centenary Celebrations	7,500	-	(7,500.00)
	61,930	32,120.99	(29,809.01)

INCOME

Interest	10	33.23	23.23
Loan Repayment – BLT	1,600	1,900.00	300.00
Studio 54	1,200	-	(1,200.00)
Precept	59,120	59,119.20	(.80)
Deficit/ (Surplus)	-	(28,931.44)	(28,931.44)
	61,930	32,120.99	(29,809.01)

Cash Book to 31 st March 2021	£. p	34,445.58	
Less VAT Claim o/s		1,868.74	

		32,576.84	
Less Sundry Creditors at 03/20		1,404.45	(Total still o/s £301.40) +
Add Sundry Creditors at 03/21		948.60	£1,250 as total below

		£ 32,120.99	
		=====	

BANK RECONCILIATION AS AT 31ST. MARCH 2021

		£. p
Per Bank Statements	Direct Plus Account	63,413.11
	14 Day Account	28,390.90
		<hr/>
		£91,804.01
		=====

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST. MARCH 2021

	£. p	
Sundry Debtors - VAT	1,802.46	VAT £1,798.13 / Co-op Bank £4.33
Cash as Above	91,804.01	
	<hr/>	
	93,606.47	
Less Sundry Creditors	1,250.00	Audit £750 /B in B £250/ Xmas Lights Elect £250
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	£ 92,356.47	
	=====	
Represented by Cumulative Fund March 2020	63,425.03	
Plus Surplus (as identified)	28,931.44	
	<hr/>	
	£92,356.47	
	=====	

	£
General Reserves	15,000
Coed Duon	10,000
Other Projects – Strategic Plan	28,346
Xmas Lights	18,547
Bi- Centenary	20,160
CIL	303
	<hr/>
	£ 92,356
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Prepared by John Hold
Clerk to the Council
7th. April 2021