

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL HELD
REMOTELY ON MAY 19TH. 2021**

Present : Councillor G James (Mayor)

Councillors J Edwards, D Davies, R Mills, M Gwynne, Z Hammond, C Erasmus, D Jones,
A Davies, A Short, P Cook & G Edwards

Also present Ms D Box

1. To Receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors A Farina-Childs.

Councillor G James reported he had received a call from Councillor T Evans who was having broadband issues

Late apologies received from County Councillor K Etheridge

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations at this point

3. By Election – Acceptance of Office - George Edwards, newly elected for Blackwood North Ward

The Clerk reported that Mr. George Edwards had been elected as the member for Blackwood North Ward, and that he had signed the necessary Acceptance of Office in his presence on Friday 14th May.

Cllr. Edwards was congratulated and welcomed to the meeting.

4. Outgoing Mayoral Report

He thanked members for their support, and in bestowing him the honour of representing the town. He said he had enjoyed his two year term of office, albeit due to the Pandemic had not been in a position to attend as many events as he would of liked, but highlighted those he had, most recently undertaken –

Presentations via remote meetings of Young Persons Civic Award to Elly-may Smart and Special COVID Awards to Blackwood Primary School & Blackwood Comprehensive School in recognition of their outstanding contributions throughout the pandemic.

Attendance at the funeral of the 4 year old boy from Cefn Fforest who died after a tragic accident. Whilst held under current restrictions he reported that hundreds of people had lined the route of the funeral procession and outside the crematorium to show their respect and support to the family.

The Clerk congratulated Councillor James in fulfilling his duties under such unprecedented circumstances and placed on record his thanks to the Mayor for his support and assistance, especially for his work on the new Town Council web page.

Members in turn congratulated him for being the public face of the town, and for the all he had done to promote the town during his extended term of office and during such unprecedented times.

5. *To Elect a Mayor*

It was then proposed by Councillor D Jones, seconded by Councillor G James and *unanimously agreed* that Councillor Rhys Mills be elected as Mayor.

Councillor R Mills thanked members for their support in bestowing him the honour of representing the town over the coming year.

He then read the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, and the Clerk reported he would arrange or signature and counter signature when mutually convenient

Councillor R Mills then took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting

6. *To Elect a Deputy Mayor*

Cllr. M Gwynne was nominated by Cllr. P Cook and seconded by Cllr. R Mills and Cllr. G Edwards was nominated by Cllr. G James and seconded by Cllr. D Davies.

Cllr. D Jones requested that prior to a vote, since one member was a new addition to the Council, and he had not had the chance to meet, that both nominees give a very brief insight regarding their views on what their priorities would be. This was *agreed*.

Cllr. M Gwynne gave his views, but unfortunately before Cllr. G Edwards could continue, he lost connection to the meeting.

It was, therefore, suggested we move on with Agenda items, and return to Election of Deputy Mayor when connection returned.

Agenda items 7,8 & 9 were dealt with, and then Cllr. G Edwards was able to rejoin the meeting, along with Cllr T Evans.

Cllr. G Edwards outlined his views, and we moved towards a vote.

The Clerk stated that since Cllr. T Evans had joined the meeting part way through the Election of Deputy Mayor his view was that he was not entitled to a vote. Furthermore, for obvious reasons voting would be by show of hands.

Cllr. J Edwards proposed we defer the decision to the next meeting, this was seconded by Cllr. D Davies. Cllr. D Jones and others remarked that since we were quorate, there was no reason why we should not proceed to elect. On being put to the vote, there was a tie and the casting vote of the Mayor was that we continue with the Election.

A show of hands indicated that Cllr. M Gwynne received 5 votes and Cllr. G Edwards received 4 votes. The Mayor repeated the vote with the same outcome, and Cllr. M Gwynne was duly elected to serve as Deputy Mayor

7. To Nominate Members to the following –

Given the current position, with little likelihood of many Committee meetings (other than Policy & Finance) being called, it was **agreed** that current committee representation remain as at present, with the existing vacancies on the Planning & Licensing Committee & Environment Committee being filled by Cllrs. M Gwynne & P Cook respectively and the vacancies on the Newsletter/ Web Page Committee be filled by Cllrs. G James & G Edwards.

Committee representation is now as follows -

(a) Finance & Policy Committee – 7 members

Councillors P Cook, Z Hammond, D Davies, J Edwards, T Evans, A Short & R Mills

(b) Planning & Licensing Committee – 5 members

Councillors D Davies, J Edwards, Z Hammond, R Mills & M Gwynne

(c) Environment Committee – 5 members

Councillors T Evans, J Edwards, C Erasmus, R Mills & P Cook

(d) Newsletter/ Web Page Committee – 4 members

Councillors Z Hammond , P Cook , G James & G Edwards

(e) Twinning Committee -

This Committee is open to all members

(f) Events Committee

This is an advisory Committee, that the Town Council has delegated the role of managing the agreed budget. ***It is open to all members of the Council***, but members are requested to nominate a Chair & Vice Chair of the Committee.

8. To Nominate Members to the following –

Similarly, it was **agreed** that outside body representation remain as at present, with the exception that Cllr G Edwards replace Cllr. G James on the After Hours/Night Time Economy/Bus Station Multi Agency Group and that Cllr. P Cook becomes our representative on the Plas Mawr Community Centre Committee

Current representation is as follows –

(a) *Town & Community Council Joint Liaison Committee - 2 members*

This Committee comprises of delegates from each of the Town & Community Councils within C.C.B.C. It meets quarterly and its main purpose is to discuss matters of mutual interest and to agree topics to be discussed with Caerphilly C.B.C.

Councillors C Erasmus & D Davies

(b) *Caerphilly C.B.C. Community Council Liaison Sub Committee - 1 member*

This Committee is attended by Caerphilly C.B.C. members and also representatives from each of the Town & Community Councils. The Committee which meets quarterly considers matters of a common interest and also topics identified by the Joint Liaison Committee. Only one member may be nominated, and must be one of the two members nominated above.

Councillor C Erasmus be appointed with Councillor D Davies as Deputy

(c) *Blackwood Town Centre Management Group – 2 Members*

This Group represents a number of interested organisations located in the Blackwood area. These consist of local traders, local residents, Police together with Caerphilly C.B.C. and Town Council members. The Group meets quarterly.

Councillors Z Hammond & G James

(d) *Blackwood Retail Partnership - 2 members*

The Retail Partnership consists of staff from local businesses, Police & Caerphilly C.B.C.

Councillors J Edwards & A Short

(e) *After Hours/ Night time Economy Group/ Bus Station Multi Agency Group – 2 Members*

Councillors Z Hammond & G James

(f) *One Voice Wales Area Committee & Larger Councils Committee – 1 member for each*

One Voice Wales is the single All Wales representative body for Community & Town Councils in Wales, and ensures concerns of such Councils are heard at the Local level

Councillor C Erasmus

(g) *Plas Mawr Community Centre Committee – 1 Members*

One member is elected to serve on the Management Committee of the Community Centre

Councillor P Cook

(h) *Bi- Centenary Committee - 1 Member*

One member currently serves on this newly formed Committee

Councillor Gerwyn James (current Chair)

9. To Confirm Provisional Dates & Times of Future Council Meetings & Method of Notification (E mail)

The Clerk presented his report and it was **agreed** the dates of future Town Council meetings are as follows –

7th. June 2021

5th. July 2021

6th. September 2021

4th. October 2021

1st. November 2021

6th. December 2021

10th. January 2022

7th.. February 2022

7th. March 2022

4th.. April 2022

16th. May 2022 (Annual General Meeting)

It was also **agreed** these meetings be held remotely until it is safe to physically meet, and that meetings start at 6.30 p.m. Furthermore, notification of meetings, Agendas, Minutes and Reports continue to be forwarded via e mail.

10. Correspondence

The Clerk presented his report on correspondence received, and all were **noted**

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

Notification of RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly Area Committee Meeting to be held on April 28th – forwarded to our representative

Caerphilly C.B.C.

Request from Governor Support for Nomination for Community Councillor Governor to serve at Fleur-de-Lys /Pengam

Information on proposed positioning of Skate board Park at Showfield - forwarded to members

Notification of payment of 1st instalment of Precept £29,520

Information on Caerphilly Cares, a new initiative offering a Centralised coordination and triage service for borough residents

in need of support on issues such as food poverty, debt or rent arrears, isolation or loneliness - forwarded to members

Copy of Presentation on 2nd Replacement LDP, together with invitation to all members to future workshops to be held remotely via Teams

Blackwood Town Cricket Club Application or Financial Assistance

In respect of the request for Nomination of Community Councillor Governor to serve at Fleur-de-Lys/ Pengam, it was ***agreed*** Cllr. G Edwards be nominated

11. Schedule of Payments

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

		£. p
One Voice Wales	Membership Subscription 2021/2022	1,264.00
John Hold	Salary + Reimbursements April	965.63
Playworks	Fee April	20.00
HMRC	Tax/N.I. April	290.76
RBLI Shop	Tommy Symbol	200.00

12. To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held remotely on 12th. April 2021

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

13. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

Cllr. D Jones, having informed the meeting he had prior commitments left the meeting at this point (7.10pm)

14. To Receive the Minutes of the Working Group Meetings held remotely on 14th & 26th. April 2021

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

15. *Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 – Key provisions for Town & Community Councils*

The Clerk presented his report and gave a brief verbal overview of the implications which included:-

- 16 and 17 year olds voting in the Senedd elections in May 2021 and local government elections in May 2022.
- Extending the franchise to vote to citizens from any country provided that they meet certain criteria
- Principal councils being able to decide on the voting system to be used i.e. First Past the Post or Single Transferable Vote. The first elections STV could be used was those in 2027.
- Five year terms for Community & Town Councils.
- Eligibility criteria for candidates for local government elections amended to allow a citizen of any country to stand for election.
- Allowing council staff to stand for their own council, except those in politically restricted posts, only required to resign if elected.
- Disqualification criteria for those standing for election extended to those subject to the notification of an order under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- Introduces the General Power of Competence (GPOC) which will allow eligible councils to be more innovative and remove the need to identify a specific power in order to undertake an activity.
- To become an eligible council for GPOC a council would need:-
 - (i) (i) At least two thirds of the total members declared to be elected whether at ordinary election or by-election.
 - (ii) Clerk to hold recognised qualification
 - (iii) Council to satisfy audit condition:-
 - (1) An unqualified audit in the opinion of the Auditor General for Wales (AGW)
 - (2) The opinion to have been received by the council during the twelve month period ending on the day on which the council passes the resolution to become an eligible council.
 - (3) The AGW's opinion on the council's accounts which immediately preceded the opinion mentioned above is also an unqualified opinion.
- Wellbeing power to be repealed from 5 May 2022 anything started by councils under the power before 5th May 2022 can be completed.
- From 1st May 2021 permanent provision for community and town councils to meet remotely or through hybrid meetings.
- Minutes of council meetings to be made public within seven working days.
- From April 2022 community and town councils have a duty to prepare and publish a report about the council's priorities, activities and achievements. The first report relating to the financial year 2021-22 to be published as soon as practicable after April 2022.
- All community and town councillors continue to be required to adopt a code of conduct and expected to have high standards of conduct whether part of a political group or not.
- Community and town councils will have a duty to consider training from 5th May 2022 for councillors and staff and publish the first training plans by November 2022.
- Community polls abolished except for community governance polls in respect of a proposal to establish or dissolve a community council. Welsh Government would be consulting on some of the new obligations and One Voice Wales would be issuing further guidance and assistance.

The Clerk suggested members take the opportunity to study his report and identify and notify any issues they wish to seek clarification on, and would revisit at a future meeting. This was *agreed* by members

16. Planning Applications

Cllr. Z Hammond presented the report on the Planning Applications received since the last meeting

Case Ref. 21/0333/COU

Location: 123 - 127 High Street Blackwood

Proposal: Change the use from first-floor vacant premises above numbers 123, 125 and 127 High Street into 4 new residential units, infill flat roof portion to rear of property to increase internal floor area, access to be provided via door adjacent to No. 127, directly off High Street

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

Case Ref. 21/0346/TPO

Location: 29 Cwrt Y Coed Blackwood NP12 1GL

Proposal: Carry out various tree works (Tree Preservation Order 66/72/MCC)

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

Case Ref. 21/0352/TPO

Location: 9 Birchwood Close Blackwood NP12 1WX

Proposal: Fell Oak tree (Tree Preservation Order 66/72/MCC)

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

Case Ref. 21/0389/NCC

Location: The Chimneys Heol-Y-Bedw-Hirion Bedwellty Blackwood NP12 0BE

Proposal: Remove condition 3 of planning consent 08/0913/COU (Convert outbuilding to living accommodation to be used ancillary to residential use)

Case Officer: Carwyn Powell ☐ 01443 864424 ☐ powelc2@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 21/0379/FULL

Location: 73 Bloomfield Road Blackwood NP12 1LY

Proposal: Erect single storey rear extension and detached garage

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

Cllr. Hammond also reported on 2 further applications received since the report, namely -

Case Ref. 21/0465/FULL

Location: 7 Lilian Road Blackwood NP12 1DN

Proposal: Erect detached garage

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

Case Ref. 21/0466/NCC

Location: Rosebank Cottage Brookside Bungalows Cwmgelli Blackwood NP12 1BQ

Proposal: Vary condition 01 of planning consent 16/0453/FULL (Erect new dwelling with associated access) to extend the commencement by a further five years

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

In respect of Planning application 21/0333/COU. 123-127 High St., Blackwood, she reported that she had inspected the plans and the supporting information for the development of these flats and highlighted the following issues -

On the information provided within the report, the housing department had identified the lack of natural light to the bedrooms(due to only being fitted with skylights) could be considered a hazard.

Access to main sewers - Advice is followed and the developer should work within the recommended guidelines set out by welsh water and any supporting evidence be added to the planning application on how this has been implemented.

Access arrangements for waste collection was problematical, and solutions to support any potential resident, regarding the issue of bins being placed on the busy high street.

Off street parking provision

After some discussion, it was *agreed* the Clerk write to Planning objecting to the application as it stands and urging amendments in line with the above

In respect of Planning applications 21/0346/TPO (29 Cwrt Coed Blackwood), and 21/0352/TPO (9 Birchwood Close Blackwood) she suggested that officers look at the sites before any works are carried out and recommendations be made that any works that are carried out falls within the time frame issued that will not endanger wildlife or property. This was agreed by members.

17. Reports

CHAMPS Mental Health Support Group Update

The Mayor invited Ms Donna Box to make her presentation.
Donna thanked members for the opportunity to update them on the work of the Group.
She reported that the Group was established 2018, with two main aims -

Improve support for Mental Health in the area

Seek improvements to the Chartist Bridge

They had several meetings with Caerphilly C.B.C., and were also invited to attend Multi Agency Meetings to discuss possible improvements on the bridge including height of railings

They started weekly support meetings, which proved very popular, organised well being sessions, monthly talks and awareness sessions and organised trips out, meals, cinema etc., all of which yielded very positive outcomes.

They were also successful in securing a Lotto grant of £10,000

What Next?

They plan to continue to run weekly craft/walking groups and their monthly talks and awareness sessions,

Aim to set up similar groups in other communities in the area eg Cefn Fforest, Markham, Bargoed etc

Continue to work with CCBC to make improvements on the bridge

Secure additional funding

Donna rounded off by thanking the past Mayor, and indeed Town Council or their ongoing support and asked members if they might have any contacts with anyone who might be able to assist with venues for potential new groups to meet.

Cllr. A Davies stated he might be able to assist, and Cllr. G Evans identified Cefn Fforest Community Centre as a possible venue.

Cllr. P Cook asked where the craft sessions were held, and Cllr. A Short requested Donna's contact for future reference.

Cllr. G Edwards requested that given the difficulties encountered this evening Town Council consider using an alternative platform or meetings, other than Zoom, maybe Office Teams.

Cllr. D Davies informed members all C.C.B.C. meetings were held via Teams and seemed to work well.

The Mayor stated that we had used Zoom since 19th. October