

**MINUTES OF A REMOTE MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL HELD
ON 5TH JULY 2021**

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

Also in attendance County Cllr. K Etheridge

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors J Edwards, R Weeks, D Jones & A Short

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. County Borough Report

Cllr. A Farina-Childs reported that he had received numerous complaints about ASDA trolleys being found all around the town, and was in contact with the store regarding same.

He also reported that the Welsh Govt. had conceded defeat on the Persimmon Development proposed near Grove Park, prior to the judicial hearing planned for this month. This in effect means the decision by the Welsh Govt. to stop the 300 homes from being built has been quashed.

Cllr. K Etheridge, who had joined the meeting a little late, after experiencing connection issues, reiterated the position, and reported that he had contacted the new Minister asking how this decision had been suddenly reached, and requesting an urgent meeting to discuss same.

He also reported that members would be aware, via signage on the site, that Taylor Wimpey were due to build 164 houses on land at Cwmgelli. Representations had been made in respect of potential flooding and drainage issues on site, and the Planning Department have now requested a new planning application for site drainage.

The decision on the proposed Skateboard park at the Showfield would be made by members of the Project Board over the next month or so. This means local members will have no input regarding the decision and will be an officers/ Cabinet member decision.

Cllr. Etheridge also reported that following representation from a number of businesses in town, he was tabling a motion that car parking charges in town centres across the Borough be abolished. He had written to Cllrs. P Marsden & C Mann urging their support to make this a cross party issue. It is hoped this will be discussed by Scrutiny Committee in September, with a petition in support also being presented at that meeting.

The Mayor thanked the County members for their report.

4. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor had no visits to report due to current ongoing restrictions, but did inform members he had made contact with Hannah Williams from Ty Hafan, who was forwarding special packs re. the Charity

5. Correspondence

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

- Caerphilly C.B.C. Changes to bus services from June 27th.
56 Newport - Risca- Ynysddu- Blackwood-Tredegar
Monday to Saturday evening service will be restored to pre Covid levels
(forwarded to members)

Various changes to bus services run by Harris Coaches from 5 July 2021.

2nd. Replacement LDP – Member engagement – Level of Growth
invitation to Microsoft Teams meeting on 6th. September 17.00-19.00
(forwarded to members)
Also invitation for 25th. November 17.00-19.00 to discuss the Spacial
Distribution of Growth for the 2nd. Replacement LDP – forwarded to members
Also invitation for 24th. February 2022 17.00-19.00 to discuss the Preferred
Strategy for the 2nd. Replacement LDP – forwarded to members
- Aneurin Bevan UHB Covid Updates – forwarded to members
- Aneurin Bevan CHC User survey for people who access day services and/or respite care –
forwarded to members

Notification of Full Council Meeting to be held on 7th. July via Microsoft
Teams 5.30pm. – forwarded to members
- Keep Wales Safe Various Covid information – forwarded to members
- Audit Wales Information regarding audit process for this year
- One Voice Wales Copy of response to the Consultation on local authority power to trade draft
General Power of Competence (Commercial Purpose) Conditions Wales
Regulations and the proposal that community councils that meet certain
criteria be provided a power to trade - forwarded to members

Details of remote training sessions for June & July – forwarded to members

Notification of RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly Area Committee Meeting to be held
on 7th. July 7.00pm. – forwarded to Council nominated representative

Notification of new appointment – Local Places for Nature Officer and an offer

to make a presentation to Council

Local places for nature is a capital funding programme set up by Welsh government to halt and reverse the decline of biodiversity in Wales. Under the 'Environment act 2016' all local authorities have a section 6 duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity.

We want to see our member councils taking part and encourage their community to get involved in this exciting scheme.

Welsh Govt. Consultation on Qualification of Clerks in Wales Regulations. Eligible Community Councils – General Power of Competence – forwarded to members

Town & Comm. Councils Copy of Papers for Caerphilly Public Services Board Meeting 24th. June – forwarded to members

Blackwood Town Cricket Club A request that Town Council consider assisting the Club in an additional contribution towards unforeseen costs at their ground – drainage issues, posts/nets damaged and replaced due to April gales.

It was **agreed** this request be considered by the Policy & Finance Committee at its next meeting. The Clerk reported he would arrange same over the next few weeks.

6. *Schedule of Payments*

The Clerk presented his report on the following that were due for payment and all were **agreed** -

		£. p
John Hold	Salary + Reimbursements - May	1,010.63
Playworks	Fee - May	20.00
HMRC	Tax/N.I.- May	290.76
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Costs of Blackwood North By Election	1,635.79
Boverton Nurseries	Provision of Hanging Baskets (Incl. £240.20 VAT)	1,441.20
Rhys Mills	Mayors Allowance	400.00

7. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 7th. June 2021*

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

8. *Matters Arising*

The Clerk reported that as requested he had written to Marina Newth, Manager of the Institute expressing members disappointment at not having been consulted on the Love Locks Project undertaken earlier this year.

Her response was as follows

Please do accept my apologies, and please pass them on to the other members of the council. Of course you should have been consulted, that was an oversight on my part and I will ensure that you are included on any further discussions that relate to projects within the town. The purpose of the Love Locks project was to give the community a lift, and although we made an error in not consulting the Town Council and members, I hope that they can see the intentions behind the project.

As it stands we are aiming to reopen in September but with smaller season to allow for social distancing, and to allow for plenty of cleaning and decontamination time. Fingers crossed nothing happens to derail those plans!

I hope that you are keeping well and I look forward to seeing you again in the Stute before too long.
Best wishes Marina

He also reported on contacting the Caerphilly C.B.C. Events Officers querying if any discussions had taken place regarding possible Christmas Events in Blackwood.

The response was that they are still awaiting news on the Christmas programme from Heads of Service. They should have a decision within the next week or so, and will keep us posted as soon as they know what is happening.

The Clerk also informed members that he had requested a Blackwood Sectional meeting to be called as soon as possible, but that Adam Lang was currently unavailable, but promised to follow up asap.

9. *To Discuss Supporting Letter to C.C.B.C. regarding traffic and other issues*

The Mayor reminded members that this item was placed on the Agenda for them to consider showing Town Council support for the various ongoing issues raised by County members in their recent reports, namely traffic issues on Sunnybank Road and at the junction of Bloomfield Road near the Stonehouse.

After some discussion, it was **agreed** the Clerk send a letter of support to Caerphilly C.B.C. in respect of these traffic issues, but also in respect of the abolition of car parking charges across the Borough. (Town Council has for many years highlighted the disproportionate effect these charges have on Blackwood compared to the rest of the Borough)

It was also **agreed** the Clerk write to the Minister Rebecca Evans querying how the decision to back down on the Persimmon application was reached, and supporting the call for a meeting to discuss same.

10. Public Space Protection Order relating to Dog Control 2021 - Public Consultation on the making of a Public Spaces Protection Order Relating to Dog Control

The Clerk reported that Caerphilly County Borough Council is inviting local people to have their say on the proposal to amend the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) relating to dog control in Caerphilly County Borough to include the exclusion of dogs from marked sports pitches/areas. In 2017 Cabinet approved and adopted the Public Spaces Protection Order 2017 for a period of three years. This was subsequently extended for 1 further year in October 2020.

The new proposed Order includes the following restrictions:

- Excluding dogs from all enclosed children's play and multi-use games areas
- Requiring dogs to be kept on leads in enclosed memorial gardens
- Requiring dog owners to remove dog faeces in public places
- Requiring dog owners to carry an appropriate receptacle for dealing with the waste that their dogs produce (that is to always have the means to pick their dog faeces)
- Requiring dog owners to put their dogs on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised officer on any public land where the dog is considered to be out of control or causing harm or distress to prevent a nuisance.
- In addition to the above the Council propose to make it an offence if a person in charge of a dog takes the dog on to, or permits the dog to enter or remain on, any of the marked playing pitches/areas in appendix of the order.

After some discussion, it was proposed by Cllr. G James and seconded by Cllr.A Farina-Childs that Town Council fully support the proposed amendments. This was *unanimously agreed* by members

11. Publication of Members Remuneration 2020/2021

The Clerk reported that per the decision at the last meeting, and to ensure necessary deadlines are met that the Report on Members Remuneration be presented to the July meeting each year.

He reported that the 2020/2021 return was the same as that for 2019/2020 with the only entry showing a £400 payment to Cllr. Gerwyn James in respect of the Mayors Allowance.

The Clerk assured members the return would be properly published by the required deadline.

12. Verbal Report on Defibrillators

The Clerk and Cllr. G James reported on an incident in town a couple of weeks ago, when an elderly gentleman collapsed and members of the public had some difficulty in accessing the defibrillators in town due to confusion/panic regarding the access codes.

Both had visited Clinton Cards and Select to thank the managers and staff who had assisted on the day in trying to retain the gentleman's dignity by utilising clothes rails to shield him from passers-by whilst being attended to.

The Clerk reported the incident to Phil Hill (Aneurin Bevan UHB & Jack's Appeal), who had already received a report of the incident. Apparently the calls made with regards the incident have been reviewed, and call takers debriefed with some small recommendations to them regards their performance. Thankfully, the gentleman survived the incident, thanks in no small measure to Sarah Wareham, owner of Woodies café, who initiated CPR before defibrillator and/or medical assistance arrived at the scene.

Cllr. G James proposed that if at all possible, we should look to change the code in one cabinet to match the other, therefore, negating any unnecessary confusion, and possibly saving vital time. This would mean that if the defibrillator is deployed in the future both cabinets would need to be checked, but if it speeds up the process during an emergency, an acceptable compromise.

Members were ***unanimous in agreeing*** to this proposal.

It was also ***agreed*** the Clerk write to Sarah Wareham thanking her for her quick actions which resulted in a positive outcome for the gentleman concerned.

13. Blackwood in Bloom 2021

The Clerk reminded members that this competition relies on them identifying 6 front gardens (visible from the public highway) within their respective wards.

For this to be successful, it is necessary for members to play their part in the process, which means some time & effort is given touring their wards and identifying the best front gardens on view.

Members in each ward should confer and agree on the nominations.

If members wish to proceed with the competition, each of the 4 wards should identify their nominations and forward to the Clerk by 29th. July and he will then arrange judging to take place as soon as possible afterwards.

14. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on Planning Applications received since the last meeting, namely -

Case Ref. 21/0272/COU

Location: Unit E 87 - 89 High Street Blackwood NP12 1PN

Proposal: Change the use of unit to a nail salon

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

Case Ref. 21/0580/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. 21/0645/FULL

Location: 8 Cardigan Way Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1GB

Proposal: Erect single storey side/rear extension

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

After some discussion, it was **agreed** the applications did not appear contentious and that no objections be raised.

15. Reports

The Mayor asked Cllr. K Etheridge if he was aware of a much wider consultation by Caerphilly C.B.C. regarding the proposed skateboard park, as Town Council had requested same when approached for potential funding towards the scheme.

At this point, Cllr. A Farina-Childs declared an interest in this matter, as advised by the Monitoring Officer, and took no part in the discussion.

Cllr. Etheridge responded by saying he was aware of some additional consultation with residents of surrounding areas to the proposed site, but thought the majority had again been via social media. He reiterated that the majority of queries from residents of Sunnybank Road, Greenwood Road and other neighbouring properties related to the lighting, security/enforcement of the project site, and was not aware if these issues had been resolved.

After some discussion it was **agreed** the Clerk contact Lynne John, Caerphilly C.B.C. to find out the latest position.

Cllr. G Edwards reported briefly on the recent closure of the bus station toilets and café due to flooding. This had apparently been caused by the rainwater goods having been blocked by various items, resulting in flooding of the boiler room, toilets, café and drivers rest rooms. The issues had now been resolved, but it had proved that better onsite maintenance could have averted the crisis.

Cllr. Edwards also reported that he had been in contact with Relay Taxis regarding a number of complaints of taxis parking on pavements, especially near their offices, whilst parking was available at the rear.

Cllr. A Farina-Childs reported that he had learned that Argoed Community Council were organising some form of community disabled parking scheme, asking that people respect those blue badge holders and not park in front of their properties. It was **agreed** the Clerk check out this initiative and report back to the next meeting to see if this might be something Town Council would wish to initiate.

Several members queried whether free car parking in town car parks should also apply to business vehicles, eg. taxis, but the consensus was that this would be difficult to administer, as what actually constituted a business vehicle