

**MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD
REMOTELY ON 6TH. SEPTEMBER 2021**

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

Also in attendance Ms. Donna Box

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Clerk apologised to members for the delay, due to difficulties in organising attendance to Microsoft teams, and placed on record his thanks to Cllr Gerwyn James who had sorted out the problem.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors J Edwards, & D Davies together with County Cllr K Etheridge.

Cllr. A Farina-Childs had also contacted the Clerk to say he would be joining the meeting a little late

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations made at this point

3. County Borough Report

It was agreed to receive the report later in the Agenda when Cllr. A Farina-Childs joins.

Cllr. A Farina-Childs gave a brief update on matters he and other Borough members were dealing with, when he later joined the meeting (after Correspondence) –

ASDA trolleys continue to be an issue, with many strewn about the area and he was in contact with the store and Environmental Health.

Cllr. G James commented that a Biffa Industrial Bin needed to be retrieved from the river, an that he had made contact with the Company who had promised action.g

The old toilet block was a total eyesore again and having had overhanging weeds/brambles cleared previously, an order had again been served on the owner to clear the site later this week.

Weeds across the area was an ongoing issue, as apparently they are now treated once a year as opposed to 4 treatments previously using pesticidal chemicals.

The fight or the abolition of car parking charges goes on, albeit it was pleasing the current free parking had been extended or a further 12 months.

He also reported he had had lengthy conversations with Mr Colin Morris regarding Bedwellty Show returning to Blackwood. He had reiterated that the decision to move was not a Council decision but one made by the Agricultural Society.

He was aware there was a 2,000 signature petition for its return to the Showfield, and after contacting the Society had been informed it was not entirely down to financial issues and other matters had prompted the move.

4. *Mayoral Announcements*

The Mayor stated there was little to report, due to the ongoing issues, but had attended the official Opening of the Credit Union Office near the Methodist Church.

He was also pleased to announce he had raised in excess of £240 in respect of his nominated Charity

5. *Correspondence*

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

Caerphilly C.B.C.

Changes to bus services

151 Blackwood – Newbridge – Risca - Newport

Monday to Friday service reduced to every 12 minutes

(forwarded to members)

13 Manmoel to Blackwood (formerly Glyn Evans), Connect 2 from 3rd.

August 10 minutes earlier from Manmoel & Blackwood via Yard Coal Rise/
Chartist Bridge/ High Street (forwarded to members)

Numerous changes to services in September (new school term and change of rules allowing increase in capacity on vehicles). Some Stagecoach routes will see reductions in frequency due to shortage of drivers (forwarded to members)

Lane from junction of Gordon Rd. to the north east corner of the plot of land adjacent to 3 Fairfield Close becomes One way from 1st. September
(forwarded to members)

Notification of 2nd payment of precept (£29,520)

Notification of Winter Events – Saturday 11th. December - Blackwood Food & Craft Market – Little or no involvement from Town Council – no static performances or timed activities

Mid Valleys East Community Engagement Sessions Well Being Assessments

Employment Land Review – responses required by 16th. October

On line Focus Group meetings – 5 Year Promotion Strategy for Welsh Language

Various messages from Leader/ News Online etc.

Aneurin Bevan UHB Covid Updates – forwarded to members

Nye's Community Champions – recruitment - forwarded to members

Aneurin Bevan CHC Community Health Council Membership requests – forwarded to members

Keep Wales Safe Various Covid information – forwarded to members

One Voice Wales Establishing a Community Fridge - forwarded to members / contact with local Foodbanks

Details of Community Ownership Fund – forwarded to members / contacts to local groups/organisations

New Years Honours 2022 – Guidance & Citation forms – forwarded to members

Policing priorities for Gwent

Details of remote training sessions for September – forwarded to members

Local Places for Nature funding

Updated Guidance in support of 2016 Model Code of Conduct – forwarded to members

Remuneration Panel for Wales – Payments return for 2020/21

B.T. Scam via Gwent Police - forwarded to members

Details of Keep Wales Tidy Webinar on 15th September - forwarded to members

Monmouthshire Building Society Details of Charitable Foundation criteria

He also reported on two further items of correspondence received over the last couple of days, namely -

Caerphilly C.B.C. The Surveillance Camera Commissioner requires justification of continued use of cameras in Blackwood.
The Clerk reported that –
1907 targeted CCTV patrols had been carried out by operators in the last year
33 incidents reported to the police
116 incidents/situations monitored but not requiring police attendance
164 police requests for assistance for live incidents
78 police requests to view retrospective footage after incidents had occurred
84 DVD's provided for evidential purposes

After some discussion it was *unanimously agreed* the Clerk write expressing Town Councils full support for continuation of the Surveillance Cameras in Town and acknowledging the integral part they play in keeping the town a safer place for residents and visitors

Colin Morris Letter requesting financial assistance – grant/sponsorship/match funding to assist in the efforts to bring Bedwellty Agricultural Show back to Blackwood stating that the society had informed him one of the main reasons the Show re-located to Llancaeach Fawr was down to cost.

After some discussion, members *agreed* that perhaps it might be beneficial to make contact with the Agricultural Society and ask them for a representative to attend a Town Council meeting to properly understand the reasons for re-locating, and the difference in costs associated with holding the Show at Llancaeach Fawr as opposed to the Showfield

6. *Schedule of Payments*

The Clerk presented his report on payments made/are due or payment, and the following were *agreed*

		£. p
John Hold	Salary + Reimbursements - July	969.99
Playworks	Fee - July	20.00
HMRC	Tax/N.I.- July	290.96
John Hold	Salary + Reimbursements – August	972.44
Playworks	Fee – August	20.00
HMRC	Tax/N.I. August	290.76

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

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

8. *Matters Arising*

The Clerk reported on the following matters arising from the last meeting

Argoed Community Council Disabled Parking Scheme

The Clerk outlined the scheme which built on community spirit and appealed to the good will of local people to politely remind and ask people not to park directly outside the house of a disabled person who has a vehicle they rely on.

Their scheme was available to those registered disabled and a Blue Badge holder issued by Caerphilly County Borough Council, and once vetted would be sent a sign to place in their window or on their front gate.

This only applies to a vehicle belonging to a blue badge holder, and any person found to be abusing the scheme will automatically be excluded.

The Clerk promised to forward details from the Argoed C.C. webpage to members for their perusal

Proposed Blackwood Skate Park

The Clerk reported the response he had forwarded on behalf of Town Council regarding support for the proposed skate park

Blackwood Town Council are not against the project in principle, or for that matter any other recreational projects planned for our area, but from the responses, there appears to be continued concerns from respondees regarding potential anti - social behaviour.

The response from the local Police would be interesting, as would notification of any amendments

made to the original proposal that might mitigate these very real concerns of residents.

He stated he had contacted Lynne John on two occasions to ascertain whether the Project Board had reached a decision, but was still awaiting a response.

Letter in Support of Local Ward Members

The Clerk outlined his email to Caerphilly C.B.C., and the response was as follows -

Thank you for passing on the Town Council's comments and requests. On the specific issues:

- Request for traffic calming measures on Sunny Bank Road: there are already speed cushion traffic calming features on Sunnybank Road, so I would appreciate more detail on what specifically the town Council is requesting/proposing and why.
- Request for traffic calming measures at the Stonehouse junction: this is noted. As you may be aware a further review of this junction is ongoing in response to recent concerns and requests received from the ward Members. We will notify you of the outcome of this review.
- Request for the abolition of parking charges across the borough: this has been noted by the Council's senior management and will be brought to the attention of Cabinet when they review the current suspension of car parking charges due to end on 30th September 2021.

Letter to Minister

The Clerk reported the following response received in respect of e mail regarding proposed residential development in Cefn Fforest.

Thank you for your e-mail of 12 July to Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change, regarding planning appeal APP/K6920/A/19/3226294, which relates to proposed residential development in Cefn Fforest.

I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Minister.

The Minister's decision of 21 October 2020 to dismiss the appeal was quashed by Order of the Court on 30 June 2021. The Court Order requires the Welsh Ministers to re-determine the appeal. Details of the next steps in the re-determination process will be issued in due course. Due to the Minister's statutory role in the planning process it would not be appropriate for her to meet as you suggest as it could be seen as prejudging the outcome of the re-determination process and leave the Welsh Ministers open to further action in the Courts.

Defibrillators

Cllr. Gerwyn James reported on the outcome of our approach to have the same code on both of our 24 hour defibs to avoid possible problems and resultant delays in the future.

Unfortunately as the Jacks Appeal code is Pan-Gwent for all our Defib Safe IIs, they are reluctant to change it, as this might possibly cause more confusion on the Dispatch desk and would also have to be changed via the Circuit etc.

However, having discussed the problem, they are happy to donate a Defib Safe II for Maxime so the codes can be the same for both those Defibs. The cost of removing the old cabinet and installing the new one would be borne by ourselves.

After some discussion, it was *unanimously agreed* we accept the kind offer of a new defibrillator for outside the Maxime, and to arranging installation etc. Furthermore, that we consider offering the existing defibrillator to local organisations.

The Mayor requested that Defibrillators be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting, to discuss the continued responsibility for checking these on a regular basis (currently undertaken by Cllr. G James), but given upcoming elections and other uncertainties in life feels Town Council should place this responsibility on a more formal footing. This was *agreed* by members.

9. Budget Monitoring Report – Period 4 to 31st. July 2021

The Clerk presented his Budget Monitoring report for Period 4 to 31st. July 2021, and reported on the likely variations/savings anticipated (mainly due to the Pandemic, although final decision on Events Programme is still to be decided) – By Election £1,365, Events Programme £8,750.

The position is still fluid, and a more reliable position will be presented with the next Budget Monitoring Report

It was *agreed* the report be accepted

10. Applications for Financial Assistance - Blackwood Cricket Club

The Clerk presented his report, and after some discussion, members *unanimously agreed* £250 donation in respect of continued support of the various youth and female teams run by the Club. Furthermore, it was proposed by Cllr G James, seconded by Cllr. and *unanimously agreed* by all present that a grant of £1,000 be awarded to assist in the costs of the necessary works as a result of storms earlier in the year, and also place on record the offer of an Interest Free Loan if that would assist.

11. Statutory Consultation – Inclusion of Taxi EV chargers and Bay markings in CCBC's Off Street Parking Places Order

Cllr. G Edwards declared an Interest in this item, as Chair of the Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association, and took no part in any discussion or decision taken.

The Clerk presented the letter received from CCBC, and after some discussion it was *agreed* to write in support of the proposals.

The Clerk was also asked to register some concern that the markings etc. already appear to have been undertaken and wonder if CCBC are merely playing lip service to the consultation exercise

12. Consultation under Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England & Wales) Regs.1996 on Proposed Provision of Parking Restrictions in Blackwood Ward

The Clerk presented the letter from CCBC, and after much discussion, members accepted that in principle the proposals seemed reasonable in an attempt to solve what has become a major issue in and around the town. They were mindful, however, that residents affected by the individual orders on their particular streets may have some concerns/objections.

Furthermore,

13. Future Town Council Meetings and legal requirements

The Clerk presented his report, and after some discussion which highlighted the possible difficulties in finding a suitable venue with sufficient space and ventilation, whilst still needing to provide a remote access facility for members and the general public who feel more comfortable attending the meeting that way, it was ***agreed*** to continue meeting remotely via Microsoft Teams for the next 3 months (December Meeting) and review at that point.

14. Blackwood in Bloom 2021

The Clerk reported that to date he had only received nominations from Cefn Fforest & Blackwood North wards and asked members of the remaining wards – Blackwood Central & Blackwood South to forward nominations asap .

15. Nominations for Civic Awards

The Clerk reported that whilst no formal decision has been made regarding the Civic Awards Evening for this year, again, it is fair to say it is very unlikely it will be as in previous years. Nevertheless, members would presumably wish to continue with our Civic Awards Scheme, and it is, therefore, proposed that nominations for the Awards – Civic Award & Young Persons Award - are made by 15th. October, with members confirming recipients at the November Town Council meeting.

This was ***agreed*** by members.

Cllr. A Farina-Childs asked the Clerk if he had received the nominations he had forwarded. The Clerk confirmed he had received same.

16. Turn Blackwood Pink

The Clerk presented his report, and after some discussion it was ***unanimously agreed*** Town Council would Sponsor the Window Display competition £50, make a donation of £200 to this very worthwhile Charity, whilst also agreeing to fund the purchase of materials (up to £100)

17. Planning Applications

Cllrs. A Farina-Childs & G James declared an Interest in the application in respect of Blackwood Comprehensive School as Governors of the school.

Furthermore, Cllr.A Farina-Childs declared an Interest in the application in respect of Libanus Lifestyle Centre, having assisted the Centre in the past.

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

Case Ref. 21/0677/FULL

Location: 28 Clos Coed Bach Blackwood NP12 1GT

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

Case Officer: Joshua Burrows (07874 641749 : burroj@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 21/0652/COU

Location: Libanus Christian Community Centre Libanus Road Blackwood

Proposal: Change the use of the mezzanine floor and roof space to 2 No. residential units of accommodation together with erecting dormer window, raised balcony and external staircase and retention of 3 No. outdoor structures within the site cartilage

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

Case Ref. 21/0568/FULL

Location: 19 Greenwood Road Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1EZ

Proposal: Erect two storey extension to rear to incorporate balcony and 3 No. hardstandings with dropped kerb to front

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

Case Ref. 21/0777/FULL

Location: 3 The Boundary Blackwood NP12 1FE

Proposal: Replace existing 1.2m x 3m steel wall hung bracket supported balcony with a 4.6m x 6.15m steel wall hung and pillar supported balcony

Case Officer: Joshua Burrows (07874 641749 : burroj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 21/0732/FULL

Location: 13 Caldicot Close Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1HH

Proposal: Erect a single storey rear extension

Case Officer: Joshua Burrows (07874 641749 : burroj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 21/0795/LA

Location: Blackwood Comprehensive School Ty Isha Terrace Blackwood NP12 1ER

Proposal: Erect single storey pre-fabricated modular building to provide classroom with associated rooms

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

Case Ref. 21/0838/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)

Case Ref. 21/0844/FULL

Location: 107 Bloomfield Road Blackwood NP12 1LY

Proposal: Erect a single storey front extension

Case Officer: Joshua Burrows (07874 641749 : burroj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Cllr. Z Hammond reported that many of these applications have already been determined, as they cover a two month period, and with the majority being fairly non contentious sees no reason to make any objections.

After some discussion, it was **agreed** no objections be raised in respect of the applications.

However, it was also **agreed** to contact the Planning Department stating that whilst understanding that the revised application in respect of two residential units being developed at the Libanus Christian Community Centre now reflects officers recommendations, there are still concerns regarding parking for these units. With no on site parking being available concerns are that parking on the road outside will exacerbate the ongoing problems in the area.

Furthermore, whilst not a planning issue there are concerns that this application seems to be at odds with the original ethos of the Community Centre, with these units surely reducing space that was originally available for community/public use.

18. Reports

The Clerk reported that he was conscious the Strategy Document agreed by members for consultation with the public and other Agencies had lost momentum, and had, therefore, requested 3 quotations for printing 3,500 copies of the 12 page colour document together with the agreed Questionnaire.

He informed members that -

Cheetah Print had reported they did not undertake printing of that type anymore

Valley Print had reported the job was beyond their machines capabilities

K & R Print quoted £1,100 for the printing as outlined

The Clerk stated that on reflection we would probably need more than 3,500, but would check the figures and amend accordingly.

After some discussion, where members related that Town Council had a long connection with K & R Print for Carnival, Christmas & Awards printing, and had always received a first class and prompt service, it was **agreed** the Clerk make arrangements for any necessary required amendments to the Strategy Document and Questionnaire and agree the work be undertaken by K & R Print

Cllr. T Evans asked the Clerk if there was any update on his wish to donate his members payment to Charity. The Clerk responded he was still awaiting confirmation of the tax position, as One Voice Wales were lobbying for such payments to be tax free.

Cllr M Gwynne reported that he had received complaints from Mr Bennett of dog mess being a particular problem in and around the Pier Head area, and asked if the Clerk could pass this complaint onto C.C.B.C.

Cllr. A Farina-Childs reported that he had received a request from Mr. Colin Morris to attend Town Council with an associate to discuss their efforts to bring Bedwelty Show back to the Showfield in Cefn Fforest.

The Mayor referred the member to the decision taken earlier that a representative of the Bedwelty Agricultural Society be invited along to the next meeting if possible to discuss their reasons for leaving and re-siting at Llancaeach Fawr, whilst also trying to ascertain likely costs at both venues. As any decision to return must be made by the Society, he saw no benefits in meeting with other individuals at this time. Members **agreed**.

Cllr. Farina-Childs then invited the Mayor to the next session of the newly established Walking Football to be held at Blackwood Comprehensive School between 8.00 – 9.00 pm on Wednesday. The Mayor thanked him for the invite and stated he would try and attend