

**MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD
REMOTELY ON 4TH. OCTOBER 2021**

Present : Councillor R Mills (Mayor)
Councillor M Gwynne (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors G James, D Davies, A Davies, T Evans, G Edwards , C Erasmus & A Short

Also in attendance County Cllr. K Etheridge & Ms.Donna Box

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors J Edwards, Z Hammond, P Cook, A Farina-Childs & D Jones

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllr. G Edwards declared an Interest in Item 14 Blackwood Bus Station , as Chair of the Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association.

Cllr. A Short declared an Interest in Item 17 Planning Applications as an Applicant

Cllr. M Gwynne declared an Interest in Item 9 Bedwellty Agricultural Show as a member of the Society

3. County Borough Report

County Cllr. K Etheridge updated members on the following –

Taylor Wimpey Development at Cwmgelli – all machinery and equipment has been taken off site

Presenting a petition from local residents to Caerphilly C.B.C. to bring Bedwellty Agricultural Show back to the Showfield

Presenting a petition from local residents and businesses to Caerphilly C.B.C. to abolish car parking charges throughout the Borough

Identified his support for a Children’s Playground at Plas Mawr Fields proposed by residents under the Community Empowerment Scheme

Continuing to press Caerphilly C.B.C. on the Day Centre issue, whilst understanding that current resource implications means that not all centres services can be safely provided as previously at present

Reported on Blackwood Sectional meeting where the police had identified new groups/gangs of youths being responsible for Anti social behaviour in and around town. Issues were highlighted at the Bus Station with a recent incidents in the ladies toilets suggesting drinking and shoplifting, the dodging of payment, and regular congregating of youths at night. Gravel Lane was also identified as another hot spot with individuals congregating and drinking throughout the day. It was stated by a police officer at the meeting that resources was not an issue.

The proposed skate park at the Showfield has received approval

County Cllr. Etheridge was thanked for his report

4. *Mayoral Announcements*

The Mayor reported that he had been asked by Emma Wilkins, ABUHB Fundraising Manager for Breast Services to assist in the judging of the Window Competition for Turn the Town Pink over the coming weeks.

He also reported that he was continuing to fund raise for his Charity at every opportunity, and had raised a further £90

5. *Correspondence*

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

Caerphilly C.B.C. News Online etc. - forwarded to members

Notification of Special Meeting of Community Council Liaison Committee to Discuss Gwent Well Being Assessment being held at 6.00pm on 27th. October via Microsoft Teams

Information relating to Empowerment Fund Grant - £4,493 per Ward Member – forwarded to members

Information relating to Transforming Towns Grant – forwarded to members

Notification of Chartist Bridge Multi Agency Meeting being held at 10.30am on 15th. October via Microsoft Teams

Joint message from Party Leaders of C.C.B.C. informing that Christina Harrhy is on extended sick leave, and that a report is proposing Dave Street, Director of Social Services & Housing be appointed Acting Chef Executive Officer

Aneurin Bevan UHB Covid Updates – forwarded to members

Keep Wales Safe Various Covid information – forwarded to member

One Voice Wales Notification of RCT/ Merthyr/Caerphilly Area Committee Meeting being held at 7.00pm on 6th. October via Starleaf

The Clerk also reported on two further items recently received, and both were *noted*

Boundary Commission Notification that under the Electoral Review of Caerphilly Borough Council, it is set to lose 4 members in total, down to 69, with the number of Wards being reduced from 33 to 31
Blackwood Ward retains its 3 seats, whilst Cefn Fforest & Pengam Wards merge with the loss of 1 seat

Blackwood R.F.C. Notification that the Firework Display has been cancelled gain this year

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 – September	972.44
Playworks	Fee – September	20.00
HMRC	Tax/ N.I. - September	290.76
Blackwood Town Cricket Club	Financial assistance	1,250.00
Aneurin Bevan UHB	Financial assistance	200.00
J S Lee Ltd.	Watering of Hanging Baskets (£2,895 + VAT)	3,474.00
SSE	Festive Lighting charges (£200.48 + VAT)	210.50

7. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 6th. September 2021*

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

8. *Matters Arising*

The Clerk reported that having responded to the consultation exercise on Inclusion of Taxi EV chargers and Bay markings in CCBC's Off Street Parking Places Order and queried whether the Borough were purely paying lip service, as the bays had already been marked out he had received a response stating the consultation related to the change in the Off Street Car Parking Order, to enable the enforcement of these new restrictions.

9. *Bedwellty Agricultural Society*

Cllr. Mark Gwynne having declared an Interest took no part in the debate or decision making

Having requested representatives of the Society to attend a Town Council meeting to discuss various issues and also details on the financial costs of the Show at Llancaeach Fawr as opposed to the Showfield, the Clerk presented the response from the Chair of the Society

Dear John,

Thank you for your email addressed to our secretary.

I appreciate the town council's interest in the show and the current petition which is circulating. It is extremely disappointing that such interest is only being shown some 6 years after our move.

As chairman of the society, I have met with councillor Etheridge and one of his colleagues, to explain the numerous reasons why the show moved.

The financial position was certainly a big reason but not the only one.

I have contacted all of our committee members regarding your request for financial details and they have unanimously stated that no financial matters should be discussed with outside bodies. We are a registered charity and a limited company so all our finances are fully available.

We hope to hold a meeting within the next few weeks when your request for a meeting will be discussed, but I can inform you that the present committee has no appetite to return to the showfield.

Thank you

Regards

Glyn Davies

During discussion on this item there was some support for the Agricultural Show to return to what had been its home for decades, but also an understanding that the decision to move was taken by the Society itself, and nobody else.

Cllr. A Short questioned if we knew what the other reasons for moving were other than financial.

The Mayor asked if Cllr. M Gwynne might be able to answer this query.

Cllr. M Gwynne stated he was not part of the decision making process to move from the Showfield and could only give his personal views based on his experiences as a Steward at the Show for several years – Traffic management on and around the site had been problematical every year/ weather was another factor – there being alternative attractions/cover on site at Llancaeach Fawr in the event of poor weather / regular public abuse towards stewards during the show and setting up and ongoing right of access claimed by local residents.

Cllr. Gwynne was thanked for his personal views.

Following some further discussion it was *agreed* we wait to see if the Society respond favourably to our request for representation at a future meeting of Town Council but that until the Society wishes to engage there seems little that can be achieved.

10. Defibrillators

The Clerk explained the reason for the item on the Agenda.

Until now Cllr. G James had assumed total responsibility for the regular checking of the defibrillators to check they are rescue ready, and the Mayor was concerned that if for any reason Cllr. James was unavailable, Town Council would struggle and that we should have a contingency plan in place to ensure regular checks take place.

He reported that earlier in the week he had received correspondence from Calon Hearts Charity, offering regular maintenance of our devices, ensuring them to be rescue ready with pad checks etc. He had enquired on the likely costs involved in checking our 2 defibrillators and was assured this service was free of charge.

The Clerk suggested out of courtesy we contact Jacks Appeal (who donated the defibrillator at the Market Place and have recently offered to replace the one at the Maxime) to see if they have any objection to this course of action prior to discussing this offer from Calon further.

This was unanimously *agreed* by members

Cllr. G James informed members he had recently carried out a check on both defibrillators and both were fully operational.

11. Remembrance Services

The Clerk reported that he had received the following information regarding this years services from Andrew Doody the Poppy Appeal Organiser for Blackwood and District

The dates are as follows -

Thursday 28th October National launch of the poppy appeal 2021

Friday 12th November - Service market square

Saturday 13th November - Service Pontllanfraith

Sunday 14th November – Remembrance Service Blackwood Cenotaph.

As of this email the poppy appeal plans for a normal year with no Covid restrictions this of course is Covid dependant.

Cllr. G James reported that a number of our lamp post poppies had become damaged and that we needed replacements. After some discussion it was ***unanimously agreed*** we arrange purchase of 40 new poppies, together with approx 8/10 purple poppies to commemorate the animals who had died during the wars.

Cllr. A Short informed members he would ensure the remembrance garden was tidied over the coming weeks

12. Civic Awards Evening

With the ever fluctuating infection rates, and the fear of possibly exacerbating the problems, in the continued interests of both the public and Town Council, it is was ***unanimously agreed*** to postpone the Civic Awards Evening again this year.

13. Christmas Activities

The Clerk reported that the Welsh Government published the review of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No 5) (Wales) Regulations on 14th July 2021. An updated Coronavirus Control Plan has been published indicating a move to a new alert level zero on 7th August 2021. However Covid risk assessments will remain a legal requirement for businesses, employers and event organisers. Due to the nature of the Town Council events implementing measures to manage the risk of coronavirus presents logistical difficulties. The Town Council is also mindful of the increasing case rate in Wales and the uncertainty this brings.

Furthermore, with the Borough Council identifying that the Christmas Market/ Fair will not include any static entertainment this year to negate crowds forming, after some discussion it was reluctantly agreed that we do not go ahead with the Christmas Lights Switch On Event or the Christmas Lantern Parade/Carol Concert again this year.

The switch on of the Christmas Lights will go ahead, and is arranged for 4.00pm. on Saturday 27th November.

Members were conscious this would be very disappointing news, perhaps especially more so to the young children who regularly participated in the Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert, and after some discussion it was *unanimously agreed* Town Council arrange the purchase/ distribution of selection boxes to children in our local primary schools, whilst also arranging to deliver some festive goodies to Beatrice Webb, Cefn Glas & Highfields Residential/Nursing Homes.

14. Blackwood Bus Station – Update by Cllr. George Edwards

Having declared an Interest Cllr .G Edwards took no part in the discussion or decision making.

The Clerk read the letter (which forms part of the Minutes) from George Edwards as Chair of the Taxi Drivers Association.

Much discussion took place on its content.

Ms. Donna Box stated that as a resident and dog walker she felt there had been a marked decline in behaviour, and felt vulnerable in the early evening at the north of town, and that ASDA/KFC area was one to avoid. Furthermore, it wasn't children causing problems at the bottom of Gordon Road but older individuals.

Cllr. A Short stated that he worked in the vicinity, and had over the past few weeks witnessed total chaos at the rear of Wilkinson's, with individuals breaking into bins; youths loitering at the top end of the bus station and problems with drunken individuals on Gravel Lane.

Cllr. T Evans queried that if as stated there was no resource issue, why the police were not more visible in town.

Cllr. M Gwynne stated that we hadn't had the police to a Town Council meeting since the start of the pandemic, and requested they be invited to attend our next meeting. This was *agreed*.

County Cllr. K Etheridge stated he had passed on information regarding incidents at Woodies & Wetherspoons, and like Cllr. G Edwards also requested that Wi –Fi and lighting be turned off at the bus station in the evenings in an attempt to deter individuals congregating. He was also concerned that the various agencies were not properly communicating the issues and were working in individual silos.

After further discussion, it was *unanimously agreed* that this situation cannot be allowed to continue. Members had major concerns that the town was becoming a no go area for many and that the Clerk write to the Police and Borough Council urging better partnership working between all relevant departments/agencies to rid our town of those individuals who are causing problems.

15. Turn Blackwood Pink

The Clerk reported that Emma Wilkins, ABUHB Fundraising Manager for Breast Services was delighted that Town Council were so enthusiastic, supportive and generous. He also stated it was unlikely members assistance would be required to position the ribbons/bows on the lamp posts.

16. Proposed Skateboard Park

The Clerk reported that following several e mails, he had received the following response from Lynne John, WHQS Environmental Officer at Caerphilly C.B.C.

Apologies for the delay in getting back to you John, - after 18 months of avoiding it, Covid caught up with me!!

I hope you are well. I can now inform you that after considering the data, information and comments obtained as a result of the extensive consultation and engagement undertaken, the Blackwood Skate park project has been approved by the WHQS Project Board. Our Communications team will be organising a media release shortly.

Following this email, he thought it might be worthwhile Town Council showing its support for the skateboard park, and after consulting with members, and having received majority support, the following was posted on our website and forwarded to Caerphilly C.B.C.

Blackwood Town Council welcomes the decision to build a skateboard park at the Showfield. Any additional recreational facility, especially one for the youth should be applauded. There are obviously concerns that this could become a magnet for anti social behaviour but let's have more faith in our young people. Surely if the skateboard fraternity, the local community and all other agencies work together we can prove the doubters wrong and this facility will be a major success, and who knows even provide us with another medallist at future Olympics.

Town Council look forward to working with the Borough and the community on the design of the facility once the tender has been let.

Cllr. G Edwards stated that once he supported the provision in principle, he has major concerns that this area might just become another gathering point for youths and leading to further anti social behaviour.

Cllr. A Short echoed these sentiments stating that without CCTV cameras and patrols this was very likely, as has apparently been the case in Oakdale. Other members voiced similar concerns.

The Clerk queried whether maybe alternative funding streams might be available – Community Empowerment Fund / Town Council Contribution to assist security at the site. Having made enquiries it was likely CCTV might cost approx £7,500 to install with ongoing costs of £2,500 per annum

After further discussion it was **agreed** the Clerk write to County Cllr. Lisa Phipps requesting ongoing consultation with County Members and Town Council once the tender has been let.

17. Planning Applications

Having declared an Interest Cllr. A Short took no part in the discussion or decision making on Application 21/0876/COU

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

Case Ref. 21/0876/COU

Location: AJM Auto Services And Miracle Van Hire Old Telephone Exchange Bus Station Road Blackwood NP12 1FA

Proposal: Change the use from B2 to A1

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

Case Ref. 21/0881/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 : burroj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 21/0897/FULL

Location: Beeches Sunnybank Road Blackwood NP12 1HT

Proposal: Erect two storey side extension

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

Case Ref. 21/0700/TPO

Location: Mormon Church (Latter Day Saints) Highfields Lane Blackwood NP12 1SG

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

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

Case Ref. 21/0901/COU

Location: Land At Pencoed Fawr Farm Pencoed Fawr Farm Lane Bedwellty Blackwood NP12 0BQ

Proposal: Change the use of barn to residential dwelling

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

He also reported on two new applications received since the report was prepared –

Case Ref. 21/0936/FULL

Location: 103 Cefn Road, Blackwood

Proposal: To erect a detached garage to the rear of the property

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

Case Ref. 21/0935/FULL

Location: 9 Cwrt y Coed, Blackwood

Proposal: To erect a two storey side extension

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

After some discussion it was **agreed** there was nothing controversial that required any objection

18. Reports

The Mayor reported that he had received an e-mail from Stagecoach Unite Union requesting support for the proposed drivers strike, and having spoken to other members it seems all have been contacted.

Having checked with the Clerk that no such e-mail had been sent to Town Council, he felt this matter was up to individuals to respond as they saw fit, but not an issue for Town Council as a body.

Cllr. G Edwards said he had sought advice from the Borough's Deputy Monitoring Officer who had advised along similar lines. Any support be a purely personal choice, and advised against Town Council taking a stance.

This was accepted by all present.

The Clerk stated that the Blackwood Sectional Meeting held on 29th. September via Microsoft Teams had already been reported upon earlier on the Agenda.